

VOLUME 16 ISSUE 4 | FALL 2022

# *in*FOCUS

QUARTERLY

What Makes America



**Roger Pilon** on American's Moral Foundations | **Dakota L. Wood** on U.S. Military Power | **Timothy Taylor** on Diversity | **Steve H. Hanke** on Public Land Use | **Hans A. von Spakovsky** on Election Integrity | **Mark Meiorowitz** on American Exceptionalism | **Annie Reneau** on the Consequences of Political Parties | **Ralph Nurnberger** on Presidential Assassinations | **Jonathan Greenberg** on Reaganism | **Sheri Few** on School Board Elections | **Tunku Varadarajan** on the U.S. Economic Model | **Shoshana Bryen** reviews books by Three Great Americans

Featuring an Interview with **Tevi Troy**

# LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Charles Dickens, said, “It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...” That was fine for him, but every so often, Americans think we are simply in the worst of times. And if it isn’t the worst of all times yet, it will be tomorrow. Nothing is going right and nothing will go right. We can’t live together and won’t. We won’t find our way to political, economic and social comity. We’re in one of those moments.

What does this have to do with the Fall issue of *inFOCUS* Quarterly?

We asked the question, “What Makes America?” Is there an “us,” and what makes us us? Are we only the sum of our political arguments? The answer by our authors is a resounding, “No.”

Start with Shoshana Bryen’s interview with historian Tevi Troy to determine whether this is – or is not – the worst time in America’s history.

Frequent, and among our favorite, authors Roger Pilon and Mark Meiwitz remind us of our origins in political philosophy rather than genealogy or birthplace. New contributor Annie Reneau describes George Washington’s abhorrence of political parties. Jonathan Greenberg evokes a time not long ago, when idealism



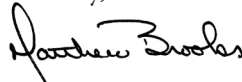
was high in political circles and elsewhere, tempered by Ralph Nurnberger’s caveat that political violence has always been with us. To keep what we have, warns Hans Von Spakovsky, election integrity must be ensured.

Power in the hands of the people informs Sheri Few’s view of parental responsibility for education, and Steve Hanke’s view that land – particularly in the Western part of the country – should not be publicly owned. Our military might, and capitalist and industrial entrepreneurialism are the purview of Dakota Wood and Tunku Varadarajan.

Shoshana Bryen’s book review has three books by three outstanding authors who – in very different ways – represent our best. Tim Taylor would agree, calling America neither a “melting pot nor a chopped salad, but chocolate fondue.”

If you appreciate what you’ve read, I encourage you to make a contribution to the Jewish Policy Center. As always, you can use our secure site: <http://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/donate>

Sincerely,



Matthew Brooks  
Publisher

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Matthew Brooks

**Editor**  
Shoshana Bryen

**Associate Editors**  
Michael Johnson  
Eric Rozenman

**Copy Editor**  
Shari Hillman

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## Featuring

**ROGER PILON**, Ph.D., J.D., is the inaugural holder of the Cato Institute’s B. Kenneth Simon Chair in Constitutional Studies. (3)

**DAKOTA L. WOOD**, is the senior research fellow for Defense Programs at the Heritage Foundation. (7)

**TIMOTHY TAYLOR** is managing editor of the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* at Macalester College. (11)

**STEVE H. HANKE**, Ph.D., is a Professor of Applied Economics at The Johns Hopkins University. (13)

**HANS A. VON SPAKOVSKY** is a Senior Legal Fellow at the Heritage Foundation and Manager of its Election Law Reform Initiative. (17)

**MARK MEIROWITZ**, Ph.D., is a professor at State University of New York (SUNY) Maritime College. (20)

**TEVI TROY** is a Senior Fellow at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a former Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Service (22)

**ANNIE RENEAU** is a writer and associate editor at Upworthy. (27)

**RALPH NURNBERGER** is a Professor at Georgetown University. (29)

**JONATHAN GREENBERG** is an ordained Reform rabbi who writes on Western civilization and culture. (33)

**SHERI FEW** is the founder and President of US Parents Involved in Education. (35)

**TUNKU VARADARAJAN** is a *Wall Street Journal* contributor and a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (38)

**SHOSHANA BRYEN** is the editor of *inFOCUS* Quarterly and the Senior Director of the Jewish Policy Center. (41)

# On the Moral Foundations of America

by **ROGER PILON**

**O**f all that makes America – the subject of this symposium – nothing has been more crucial or consequential than our having constituted ourselves as a people on sound moral, political, and legal principles – the “self-evident truths” set forth in our Declaration of Independence and then instituted through our Constitution as corrected by the Civil War Amendments – for those principles are the very foundation of our liberty.

Yet many Americans today seriously misunderstand them, while still others reject even their preconditions – reason, objectivity, and free speech. Focusing on a history of genuine sins – and oblivious or indifferent to the distinction between the principles and their execution by imperfect people – these critics claim that we’re a fundamentally flawed nation.

...the moral vision comes first, the political and legal vision, drawn from it, second.

Theirs is a utopian vision, the apotheosis of a collectivist turn the nation took during the Progressive Era.

I’ve told this tale in these pages before, but it’s worth retelling, with a focus on those foundational principles and their implications. Our war for independence secured them, practically, but that war was no mere revolt against oppressive rule. Its deeper meaning is revealed in the motto on the Great Seal of the United

States, commissioned on the evening of July 4, 1776, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*: a new order of the ages (is born). “We the people” were ordering our fortunes. And so, we begin our tale by plumbing, very briefly, our founding documents.

## ■ *The Declaration of Independence*

America’s birth certificate, the Declaration of Independence, memorialized the moment when we declared ourselves a distinct people, a new nation. Were it a mere political document, however, it would not have so endured in our national consciousness. Nor would it have inspired countless millions around the world ever since, leading many to leave their homelands to begin life anew under its promise. It has so inspired because, fundamentally, it is a profound

moral statement. Invoking “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” common to all who will reason, it was written not only to declare but to justify our independence.

In a few brief lines, penned near the start of our struggle for independence, the Founders distilled their moral and political vision: we were a nation of free people, endowed with equal natural rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of

happiness, secured by governments instituted for that purpose, their just powers derived from the consent of the governed.

Notice the order of things: the moral vision comes first, the political and legal vision drawn from it, second. The Founders were concerned ultimately with the principles of legitimate government, but those rest on moral principles. And the most basic of those is individual freedom, the equal right of all to pursue happiness as we wish, provided we respect the same right in others. Thus, equality, so misunderstood today, is for government to secure only insofar as it concerns equality before a law of equal basic rights.

Contrast that vision with today’s democratic order, which begins with government, increasingly conflates moral and legal rights, and dispenses rights, at best, as transient majorities will them, but more commonly as special interests manipulate the levers of power, rendering us all dependent on government in so many ways, while politicizing everything in its wake. For the Founders, rather than politics determining our rights, it was morality limiting politics and framing law: in short, liberty through limited government dedicated to that end. They were concerned mainly about what government could do to them – look at the Bill of Rights – not what it should do for them.

Indeed, when they turned to government, they wrote: “That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed.” Government is thus twice limited: by its end, to secure our rights;

**We the People** of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common Defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

## Article I.

*Section. 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.*

*Section. 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.*

*No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.*

*Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative; and until such Enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to chuse three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode Island, and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.*

*When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.*

*The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers, and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.*

*Section. 3. The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.*

*Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Clases. The Seats of the Senators of the first Clase shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Clase at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Clase at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or otherwise, during the Term of the Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such Vacancies.*

*No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.*

*The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided.*

*The Senate shall chuse their other Officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the Absence of the Vice President, or when he shall exercise the Office of President of the United States.*

*The Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmation. When the President is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present.*

and by its means, which must flow, if they're legitimate, from our consent. But in its many contexts, from ratification to periodic elections, consent can never be more than imperfect – the potential for the tyranny of the majority is ever present. Yet here's the silver lining in that: given the practical limits of consent, and our basic right to individual freedom, we derive a presumption against government and for living most of our lives freely, in the private sector. We're not, nor should we ever be, "all in this together," with everything subject to political determination. Government should be our last resort. For many today, it's their first. Here's how the Framers guarded against that.

## ■ The Constitution

We see their approach to political legitimacy throughout the Constitution. In the Preamble, all power rests initially with "We the People," who "do ordain and establish this Constitution."

Government does not give us our rights: we already have them – our natural rights. We give the government its powers. The first sentence after the Preamble says that: "All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress." By implication, not all such powers were "herein granted." Article I, Section 8, shows that Congress has only 18 such powers or ends. And the Tenth Amendment, the last documentary evidence from the founding period, shows that powers not granted to the federal government, nor prohibited to the states, are reserved to the states – or to the people, never having been granted to either level of government. Thus, federalism and individual freedom, respectively. Add the Ninth Amendment, which says that, in addition to the rights enumerated in the first eight amendments, others "retained by the people" shall not be "denied or disparaged." Thus, the natural rights we never gave up when we left the state of nature to create government.

There, in a nutshell, is the theory of the Constitution: a sea of rights, most secured by the states under the common law; islands of federal power, authorized by the people through ratification.

But in addition to the enumeration of federal powers and federalism, other constitutional restraints included: the separation of powers, with each branch defined functionally; a bicameral legislature, with each chamber constituted differently; a unitary executive with veto power, chosen through the Electoral College; an independent judiciary with implicit power, under our written Constitution, to check the political branches; and periodic elections, not to expand federal powers, a power that rests with the people through ratification, but to fill constitutional offices. All of that is explained in the Federalist, written to assuage Anti-Federalists who wanted even more limited government. There wasn't a socialist on either side.

The Framers knew, of course, that

the Constitution's oblique recognition of slavery, made necessary to secure unity among the 13 states, was inconsistent with their founding principles. They hoped the institution would wither away over time. It did not. It took a Civil War and the ratification of the Civil War Amendments to end slavery, to provide federal remedies against state violations

the 4 to 1 Democratic House would go along. Nonetheless, the Court got the message – the famous switch in time that saved nine. It began effectively rewriting the Constitution without benefit of constitutional amendment. In 1937 it gave vastly expanded readings of both Congress's power to tax and spend "for the General Welfare of the United States"

## ■ *Everything Politicized*

With that New Deal constitutional revolution, our Constitution for limited government was effectively inverted: the presumption was now for government programs and against liberty, except for certain "fundamental" rights as selected by judges. During his first term, Roosevelt ignored the White House faction that argued that his programs would require a constitutional amendment. Indeed, here he is writing to the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee in 1935: "I hope your committee will not permit doubts as to constitutionality, however reasonable, to block the suggested legislation." But perhaps no one put this new vision more starkly, and honestly, than Rexford Tugwell, a principal architect of Roosevelt's programs. Reflecting on his work some three decades later, he wrote: "To the extent that these new social virtues [i.e., New Deal policies] developed, they were tortured interpretations of a document [i.e., the Constitution] intended to prevent them." They knew exactly what they were doing; they were turning the Constitution on its head.

The modern administrative state has followed and grown exponentially,

...equality, so misunderstood today, is for government to secure only insofar as it concerns equality before a law of equal basic rights.

of our rights, and thus to "complete" the Constitution by incorporating at last the grand principles of the Declaration – in law, if not, alas, in fact.

## ■ *Progressivism*

With the rise of progressivism late in the 19th century, plus an ever-latent populism, that constitutional design came under systematic assault. Progressives were social engineers. Coming from the elite universities of the Northeast, enamored of the new social sciences, and looking to European political models, they were eager to bring change through government. Woodrow Wilson complained that the Constitution was a straitjacket – it was – while Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. deferred often to political majorities. Still, in the early decades of the 20th century the courts tended more often to enforce constitutional restraints on expansive government, especially after Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal came to power.

Things came to a head after the landslide election of 1936 when Roosevelt introduced his infamous threat to pack the Supreme Court with six new members. Uproar in the nation ensued: not even

and its power to regulate commerce "among the States," thus unleashing the modern welfare and regulatory states, respectively. In 1938 it bifurcated the Bill of Rights and instituted a bifurcated theory of judicial review, effectively reducing economic liberty to a second-class status. And in 1943 the Court enabled Congress to delegate ever more of its legislative

For the Founders, rather than politics determining our rights, it was morality limiting politics and framing law: in short, liberty through limited government dedicated to that end.

powers to the now ever-expanding executive branch agencies – the modern administrative state where most of our law today is made, executed, and adjudicated by politically unaccountable bureaucrats, thus undermining the separation of powers principle.

the redistributive and regulatory state we know and love so well. But as we've come to demand ever more goods and services from governments at every level – and have politicized everything from business to education, health care, the arts, news (NPR), and the rule of law

itself – we’ve also grown less willing to pay for all that we demand. So, we borrow. The national debt today exceeds \$30 trillion – that’s trillion – and unfunded liabilities vastly exceed that. Worse still, those debts are growing, even as our major “entitlement” programs will soon ex-

we’ve seen for some time now, people and firms are voting with their feet to find that mix of taxes, regulations, and even social policy that they wish to enjoy. The political market will restore discipline, eventually, if the federal government does not intervene.

every level goes far toward explaining our current situation. That can be addressed only by getting government monopolies out of the business, for education is a private good, like other such goods, notwithstanding government’s legitimate interest in the welfare of children. Recent court decisions from around the country have opened that possibility.

Finally, the franchise today is wider than it has ever been, and our elections are generally fair. Guaranteed by the documents that make America America, those elections are crucial. James Madison, the principal author of the Constitution, wrote in *Federalist No. 51*: “A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.” I have outlined those auxiliary precautions and the moral principles on which they rest. It is now up to us, the people, to become “the primary control on the government” through our votes and our attention to the principles that define us as a nation.

## Government does not give us our rights: we already have them – our natural rights. We give the government its powers.

haust their so-called trust funds. As history demonstrates, this cannot end well.

The original design was one for individual liberty – and individual responsibility. It was meant to limit the scope of government, mainly by limiting the ends of government and the powers of government officials, thus to discipline them. But it was meant also to discipline us, the people. The core misunderstanding of so many today is that government was created to solve our every problem, from health care to childcare, education, housing, inequality, student debt, and on, and on, *ad infinitum*.

Second, over the last few decades we’ve seen our independent courts – the envy of every other nation – rediscover our written Constitution in numerous ways. In a seminal 1995 decision, the Supreme Court revived the doctrine of enumerated powers – albeit only at the edges – when it invoked “First Principles”

## The modern administrative state has ... grown exponentially...

### ■ *Grounds for Hope*

But all is not lost, yet, for elements of the Constitution remain, and in recent years we’ve seen them employed. There is first, federalism. True, in 1913, when progressivism was ascending, two constitutional amendments enhanced the centralization of power in Washington: the Sixteenth Amendment, creating the federal income tax; and the Seventeenth Amendment, which provided for the direct election of senators who then became more interested in their constituents than in their states as states. But states retain enough independent sovereignty to enable the original design for “competitive federalism” to work. As

in holding, for the first time in 58 years, that Congress had exceeded its authority to regulate interstate commerce, a finding the Court has since repeated several times. More recently, the Court has also taken steps to rein in the administrative state, which has become a law unto itself. And in the rights area, here too courts have been increasingly active in restoring the original understanding of freedom in several domains – the economy, religion, education, and more.

Third, speaking of education, and the politicization thereof, here especially there is reason for hope, not least because the decline of educational standards at

No less than Benjamin Franklin alluded to that when he was asked, upon leaving Independence Hall at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention, what kind of government the Framers had given us: “A republic,” he replied, “if you can keep it.”

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ROGER PILON, *Ph.D., J.D.*, is the inaugural holder of the *Cato Institute’s B. Kenneth Simon Chair in Constitutional Studies*. He is the founding director emeritus of *Cato’s Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies* and the founding publisher emeritus of the *Cato Supreme Court Review*.

# Military Might: Are We Still a Superpower?

by **DAKOTA L. WOOD**

“Superpower.” The word conjures the image of a colossus standing astride the world, supremely confident of itself and its capabilities that seem nearly limitless in their reach and power: unrivaled economically, unmatched militarily, politically a force always to be considered by other countries as they make decisions on trade, affiliation, and activities. A superpower is admired, feared, resented, envied, and respected in the way one respects the power of a storm. When a superpower speaks or moves, everyone else listens and watches.

A superpower’s heft is underwritten by its wealth and military power; its ability to defend itself and its interests creates a space for its economy to flourish that provides the wherewithal to maintain and modernize the military force. Increasingly for the United States, however, both are under pressure, which begs the question: Is America still a superpower?

## ■ **A Qualified ‘Yes’**

With respect to its military, the answer is a heavily qualified “yes.” The U.S. remains a military superpower, but several important caveats reveal that its status is neither secure nor assured even for the near future. To understand the context for “yes, but” a quick stroll down memory lane is in order.

The United States assumed superpower status in the wake of World War II. In stark contrast to Europe, Russia, and Japan, the U.S. emerged as an economic and military behemoth, its industrial, intellectual, and societal might not only

undamaged by the war but enhanced and energized. Much of the manufacturing base that had been developed to sustain a global war was rapidly reconfigured to supply the material needed for the world to rebuild. However, the Soviet and Chinese Communist threats incentivized the United States to retain and improve its military posture, to include the dramatic evolution of nuclear weapons that both supplemented and served as a strategic backstop for enormous conventional military power. The wartime basing posture and alliance relationships provided the foundation

...the Soviet and Chinese Communist threats incentivized the United States to retain and improve its military posture...

for America to counter the expansion of Communism in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and even in northern Africa and parts of the Americas. The country’s commitment to its military pillar of national power established the U.S. as the leader of free nations and guarantor of a global order that valued free markets, the rule of law, the worth of the individual, religious freedom, and forms of government established by and (presumably) responsive to popular will. Critically, it also reflected a public attitude that such military investments were not only necessary but good and that serving one’s country in uniform was noble and something of which to be proud.

This sentiment prevailed in the U.S. throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, was shaken somewhat by the social upheaval of the late 1960s and public dismay over the war in Vietnam, but saw a resurgence as tensions with the Soviet Union mounted in the 1970s and 1980s. Battle lines – ideologically, physically, and economically – were in stark relief across Europe, in the Middle East, in North Africa, and in the fleet actions, air power contests, and strategic missile inventories routinely covered in the evening news. Military power was important, and the investment was worth it.

Ironically, the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and the stunning battlefield victory of Desert Storm, the crushing U.S. defeat of the Soviet-equipped and trained Iraqi military, set the stage for domestic and strategic complacency in military affairs. Anxious to reap a “peace dividend” from the collapse of the USSR, the U.S. dramatically slashed its military forces, nearly halving its active-duty component. 1991’s breathtaking 100-hour ground war in Iraq appeared to prove that the U.S. military was unstoppable. What need was there to sustain massive investment in it? The absence of a singular enemy of global capability also

meant that the defense establishment had nothing against which to measure its capabilities. As the 1990s waned, “big thinkers” mused about what the military might want to do against an imagined opponent, harnessing promising technologies to sense anything and

no longer existed and for a type of war wholly different from the one it was waging. Defense accounts were funded to sustain current operations that aged the force and mortgaged its future, a situation made even worse by the decade-long budget cuts imposed through the

is projected to fall as low as 445,000 by the end of next year. During the Cold War, the U.S. Air Force maintained 29 squadrons of fighters in Europe and 14 in the Pacific in addition to many more at home; today, it has just 32 squadrons in the whole of its active component, a mere five of which are based in Europe. The Navy had 592 ships in its fleet in 1989; today, it has 299. In the mid-1980s, the U.S. Marine Corps could draw on 27 infantry battalions; it has only 22 battalions today and will shrink to 21 next year.

Along with the reduction in size, the military is now much older across its suite of combat platforms. Nearly all were designed and procured in the 1980s and fielded in the 1990s. The average age of an Air Force fighter is 32 years. Over half of the Navy’s ships are more than 20 years old. The Army’s M1A1 Abrams main battle tank averages 30 years old. The Corps’ amphibious assault vehicle was fielded in the 1970s, though the service is well on its way to replacing it with a wheeled armored vehicle. Even the land-based leg of our strategic nuclear triad is geriatric. The Minuteman III ICBM was introduced in 1970. It was meant to serve for just 10 years, yet the missiles remain in their silos and are not scheduled to be

## The absence of a singular enemy of global capability also meant that the defense establishment had nothing against which to measure its capabilities.

strike anywhere almost instantaneously. Billions of dollars were spent on what might be possible rather than on solving real-world problems referenced against an actual opponent.

ill-conceived Budget Control Act of 2011 and the annual continuing resolutions that sap spending power; the military receives funding eventually, but only months after the fiscal year starts.

### ■ *Post 9/11*

Then came the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. After a decade wandering around a landscape of theoretical problems, the military had a new mission: defeating terrorism wherever it might lurk. The military built to defeat heavy Soviet forces unleashed itself on enemies that possessed no airpower, no conventional land power, and certainly no naval power. U.S. forces went where national security leadership wanted them to be. They attacked with little concern for counterattack, save the occasional nasty roadside bomb or small unit ambush. Operations were sustained with minimal interruption to supply lines and then only in the “last tactical mile.” Defense spending increases were driven by consumables (fuel, ammunition, repair parts, etc.) and the need to replace blown up trucks rather than modernizing the forces to ensure their relevance for a future fight.

For nearly two decades, the U.S. military consumed capabilities purchased during the Reagan era, drawing on ammunition, parts, and replacement equipment stockpiled for an enemy that

### ■ *Aging and Downsizing*

At the end of it, with the withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 and from Afghanistan in 2021, the American public might reasonably ask what it got for all the tax dollars spent over two decades. Is its military – presumably ready to defend critical national security interests, deter adversaries from bad behavior, and

The shrinkage and aging of America’s military and the consolidation of its defense industrial base to single points of vulnerability would not be problems if the world remained as relatively threat-free as it was in the 1990s. Alas, it has not.

reassure allies and partners that the United States is a good, reliable, and capable friend to have – up to the task that only it can perform? Is it still the military of a superpower?

By the numbers, the picture is not encouraging. At the end of the Cold War, the U.S. Army had 770,000 soldiers; it now has fewer than 470,000 and

retired until 2029, a half-century longer than planned. Moreover, the U.S. has not conducted a yield-producing test of its nuclear weapons since 1992 – 30 years ago. But we assure ourselves that everything will work as intended.

Across the defense industrial base, key items are no longer made or production lines limp along with just enough





An F-35C Lightning II joint strike fighter preparing to launch from the USS Nimitz. (Photo: U.S. Navy / Brett Cote)

work to keep them from shutting down. The F-22 Raptor line has been closed for 20 years; the F-16 line remains open but effectively only for foreign sales; manufacture of the F-15 Strike Eagle continues only because the Air Force decided to purchase a small batch of F-15EX aircraft; and the F-18 Super Hornet line is projected to close by 2025. The Department of Defense hasn't bought a Stinger shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile in 17 years; the manufacturer has said it can provide replacement weapons in three years once an order has been placed. The U.S. has only one manufacturer of main battle tanks (with just one facility) and just one final assembly plant for the F-35 Lightning II.

A military that generates no orders for major equipment or munitions means a commensurate reduction and stagnation of the industrial base that provides the platforms and materials needed for war. Resurrecting the capability takes years, not just in the physical

expansion of manufacturing capabilities but, perhaps more critically, in the hiring and training of the highly skilled workers needed to produce the advanced equipment used in modern warfare.

### ■ **Facing New Threats**

The shrinkage and aging of America's military and the consolidation of its defense industrial base to single points of vulnerability would not be problems if the world remained as relatively threat-free as it was in the 1990s. Alas, it has not. Russia has expanded its inventory of nuclear weapons, and though its naval surface fleet is a shadow of its former self, its submarines remain very capable. Russian President Vladimir Putin felt his army was powerful enough to invade Ukraine. Yes, the Russian army has been battered over the past six months, but it will be rebuilt with the windfall of revenue coming from energy sales and the economic support of countries like China, Iran, and India.

China has certainly shifted its focus from internal security to outward-looking power projection. This is to be expected for a nation intent on dominating global markets and leveraging the political influence that it believes should come with its outsized economic status and billion-person market. It has invested in a military commensurate with such ambition. It is tripling its inventory of long-range nuclear missiles, is fielding fifth-generation fighter aircraft, has expanded its navy to 360 ships, and is adding the equivalent of the British Royal Navy to its ship count each year.

Since the end of the Cold War, North Korea has become a nuclear power and possesses missiles capable of reaching the United States, and Iran is on the verge of possessing its own inventory of such weapons. It has the means to deliver a nuclear warhead at a range that covers half of Europe; it just needs the warhead and is working feverishly to get it.

The world is a more devilishly difficult, volatile, and challenging place than existed during the Cold War when the U.S. could focus its efforts on one capital instead of four or more. The globe has not shrunk in step with the U.S. mili-

interest in serving. Whatever the overlap between the 9 percent having any interest and the percentage of youth who are eligible, it is likely to be small. In short, few Americans have both the interest and the ability to serve.

of miles from home. It fields the best technologies and has decades of experience executing highly complex operations, something no other military in the world can boast. So, yes, militarily speaking, the United States is a superpower. But when regional and situational contexts are included – the U.S. military deploying to a distant theater to engage a major enemy power in large-scale conventional war – America’s superpower status becomes questionable.

The world is a more devilishly difficult, volatile, and challenging place than existed during the Cold War when the U.S. could focus its efforts on one capital instead of four or more...

tary, and more players with better capabilities that are optimized for regional employment have replaced the unitary Soviet threat.

### ■ **Superpower Status**

Compared to nearly every other country, the U.S. remains a military superpower. But America is not primarily concerned with threats emanating from Brazil or South Africa or Cambodia. It must be concerned with how it compares to others in its league or those that can seriously threaten its most important interests. Being seen as a military superpower has everything to do with whether the country’s military is relevant to its interests and that its capacity, modernity, and readiness for combat are such that others perceive it to be the military of a superpower.

Importantly, both our military’s viability and external perceptions of national will – which feed perceptions of deterrence and reassurance – are affected by society’s support for and interest in national defense and military affairs. Sadly, trends in the U.S. are not encouraging here either. More than three-quarters of America’s 17 to 24-year-old youth, who normally constitute the pool of potential recruits, are ineligible because of health problems, obesity, substance abuse, or criminal records. Overall, only 9 percent of American youth express

Superpower status is much more than a simple counting of tanks, ships, aircraft, people, and dollars. Raw power is one thing; having the will, purpose, and ability to use it effectively is something quite different and arguably more important. Military power is a relative thing. Unused, undeployed, kept at home even if in good material shape, and untested, the U.S. military can be seen as a force-in-being. It has the potential for action and

### ■ **Yes, But...**

War places extraordinary demands on initial capacity, the ability to replace losses, tactical competence, technological relevance, and ready access to a pool of people willing to serve the country in a time of war. At present, all these factors are troubled: The U.S. military is too small, too old, and lacks necessary levels of readiness. America’s defense industrial base is constrained and, in many areas, moribund. And, speaking quite broadly, the American public appears to lack interest in military affairs or sees the need to ensure that defense invest-

The globe has not shrunk in step with the U.S. military, and more players with better capabilities that are optimized for regional employment have replaced the unitary Soviet threat.

can be assumed to be able to meet national security requirements, but until tested, the perception is one of belief rather than proof. Once the force is deployed to a specific region to meet a specific enemy in combat, the reality of its reach, sustainability, competence, effectiveness, and relevance becomes clear and concrete.

In direct comparison with any other country, save perhaps China, America’s military is a colossus. Only the U.S. military can conduct operations thousands

of miles from home. It fields the best technologies and has decades of experience executing highly complex operations, something no other military in the world can boast. So, yes, militarily speaking, the United States is a superpower. But when regional and situational contexts are included – the U.S. military deploying to a distant theater to engage a major enemy power in large-scale conventional war – America’s superpower status becomes questionable.

ments are commensurate with the country’s interests and account for a world much different from the one that existed in the immediate wake of the Cold War. Is America still a military superpower? Yes, but... The question that hangs in the air should concern all Americans.

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DAKOTA L. WOOD is the senior research fellow for Defense Programs at the Heritage Foundation. He served America for two decades in the U.S. Marine Corps.

# America: Melting Pot, Tossed Salad, or Chocolate Fondue?

by **TIMOTHY TAYLOR**

**M**elting pot or salad bowl? For decades now, these two contestants have been slugging it out in the contest for most appropriate metaphor for how the cultures and ethnicities of America fit together. But my preference is to think of America as chocolate fondue.

## ■ **The Melting Pot**

The popularization of “the melting pot” metaphor is usually traced to a soppy, sentimental, and very popular play of that name by an immigrant named Israel Zangwill that opened in Washington, DC, in 1908. The melting pot metaphor is a way of expressing “E pluribus unum” – “Out of many, one” – the already-old saying adopted in 1782 for the Great Seal of the United States, which has also been imprinted on US coins since the 18th century, as well as on the back of the \$1 bill.

The traditional criticism about the melting pot was that what is special about American culture isn’t the way in which it blends everyone into homogeneity, but rather that it absorbs the elements of many cultures, which then belong to everyone. As John F. Kennedy wrote in his 1958 book, *A Nation of Immigrants*:

*One writer has suggested that a “typical American menu” might include some of the following dishes: “Irish stew, chop suey, goulash, chile con carne, ravioli, knockwurst mit sauerkraut, Yorkshire pudding, Welsh rarebit, borscht, gefilte fish, Spanish omelette, caviar, mayonnaise, antipasto, baumkuchen, English muffins,*

*gruyère cheese, Danish pastry, Canadian bacon, hot tamales, wienerschnitzel, petit fours, spumoni, bouillabaisse, mate, scones, Turkish coffee, minestrone, filet mignon.”*

America is chocolate fondue ... we are dipped in America. We swim in America. We are coated in America. Because Americans can and do come from all ethnicities and races, we all look like Americans.

Of course, a modern version of Kennedy’s list would go beyond his distinctly European slant and include dishes from countries across Asia, Latin America, and Africa as part of the “typical American menu.”

In our multicultural and individualist age, the more common complaint is that the melting pot metaphor implicitly requires Americans to surrender our cultural and ethnic identities. This critique strikes me as overwrought. Yes, the culture of the country where you live is inevitably constraining. But what’s distinctive about modern America – as opposed to many places around the world – is the looseness of these constraints, and the array of available choices.

However, the melting pot metaphor does feel to me like a relic of a bygone time, when melting different metals together and creating products from the results was a common task for many industrial workers. It also bothers me that the melting pot produces a desired

outcome only if you adhere to a formula. Bronze is copper and tin. Brass is copper and zinc. Steel is iron, carbon, and certain trace elements. If you just dump different metals into a melting pot hap-

hazardly, what comes out is likely to be flawed and brittle, not strong or useful. When supporters of the melting pot metaphor start talking, it often turns out that they have a clear and inflexible mental formula for what it means to be American – and their recipe often differs from my own.

## ■ **The Salad Bowl**

The notion of America as a salad bowl seems to have been popularized by the eminent historian Carl Degler. His book *Out of Our Past: The Forces that Shaped Modern America* was a commonly used textbook from the 1950s up through the 1980s. In the 1959 edition, Degler wrote:

*[S]ome habits from the old country were not discarded; in those instances, the children of immigrants even into the third and fourth generations retained their differences. In view of such failure to melt and fuse, the*



People walking down Fifth Avenue in New York City.

*metaphor of the melting pot is unfortunate and misleading. A more accurate analogy would be a salad bowl, for, although the salad is an entity, the lettuce can still be distinguished from the chicory, the tomatoes from the cabbage.*

While the salad bowl metaphor has a healthy, crunchy “eat your vegetables” resonance to it, it seems awkward to me as well. After all, who is the pale and crunchy iceberg lettuce? Who is arugula? Who are the artificial bacon bits? Who are anchovies? Salad ingredients are not all created equal. A tossed salad is always falling apart, and you can almost never get all of the ingredients, in just the right proportions, into your mouth at the same time.

Consider the oversized modern salad bar, with multiple kinds of lettuces and vegetables, but also seeds and nuts, tuna salad, slices of chicken or ham, bean salad, hard-boiled eggs, crackers and popcorn, along with choice of soup and dessert. It misses what is cohesive and distinctive about America to see the country as an all-you-can-eat buffet line, in which we all choose to exclude or include various

ingredients according to our transient appetites of day.

### ■ **Chocolate Fondue**

My own suggestion is that America is chocolate fondue. Our different cultural and ethnic backgrounds are the strawberries, pineapple, and cherries, the graham crackers and cookies, the pound cake and brownies, the rice crispy treats and marshmallows, the popcorn and the peppermint sticks. Then we are dipped in America. We swim in America. We are coated in America. Because Americans can and do come from all ethnicities and races, we all look like Americans.

Of course, chocolate doesn’t always deliver on its promise. It can become grainy, rancid, burnt, and bitter. Some people have no taste for chocolate, or are even allergic to it. America has often not lived up to its promises and ideals. But when I consider all the human beings who have ever lived, in all the different places and times around the world, I feel profoundly fortunate to be living in modern America.

I remember the old story of when heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis

decided to enlist in the US Army in 1942, at a time when racial segregation was openly practiced both inside and outside the armed forces. One of Louis’s friends objected, and said: “It’s a white man’s Army, Joe, not a black man’s Army.” But Joe Louis had observed the Nazi propaganda machine up close, as the result of his two epic fights against the German Max Schmeling (who was not a Nazi, but whose public image the Nazis attempted to exploit). So, Louis responded to his friend: “Lots of things wrong with America, but Hitler ain’t going to fix them.”

In that spirit, I’d say lots of things are wrong with America, but often, the best answers for what’s wrong with America are a bigger dose of what’s right with America. For me, patriotism is when we choose to savor the textures and sweetness of our shared American experience.

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TIMOTHY TAYLOR is managing editor of the Journal of Economic Perspectives, based at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. An earlier version of this essay appeared in the Star Tribune newspaper on June 29, 2013. Taylor blogs at <http://conversableeconomist.blogspot.com>.

# Public Lands: America's Great Anomaly

by **STEVE H. HANKE**

**P**ublicly-owned land, land owned by the government, represents a large, integral part of the U.S. economy. Over 40 percent of the total surface area of the United States is publicly-owned. For perspective, that area is slightly more than six times larger than the surface area of France. Publicly-owned lands are found in every county of the U.S., with the largest acreages in the Western states. For example, 80.1 percent of Nevada and an average of 45.9 percent of the 11 contiguous Western states are owned by the federal government. In Alaska, federal ownership is outsized, too, accounting for 60.9 percent of the state's total. Of the remaining states, federal ownership accounts for 4.1 percent of their total.

Publicly-owned lands of this magnitude are America's greatest anomaly. After all, the United States is perceived to be the citadel of capitalism, private ownership, and private enterprise. How did the United States end up with such a massive, anomalous inventory of publicly-owned land?

Initially, Americans displayed great ingenuity in amassing land. The acquisition of lands occupied by American Indians posed little problem. The Law of Capture was invoked. The advance of the armed frontier simply beat back the Indians, displacing them to reservations set aside by the federal government. But the federal government made other huge acquisitions. Between 1781 and 1868, approximately 2.5 billion acres were acquired: the Northwest Territory, the Louisiana Purchase from France, the Florida Purchase from Spain, the

Gadsden Purchase from Mexico, the purchase of Alaska from Russia, and so on. These purchases represented an area 15.7 times the entire surface area of France.

## ■ *Amassing Land and Selling It*

The federal government not only acquired land on a massive scale, but it also disposed of a massive amount of newly acquired lands. In reality, the federal government was primarily in the land business. Indeed, it was the largest real estate operator in the world.

...the management of government property is put in the hands of politicians and bureaucrats who pay no price for mismanagement.

Initially, America's leaders favored the disposal of all the federal government's land holdings. The private ownership of land was viewed as an important element in America's development strategy. America was relatively short in labor and capital, but long in land. So, land was seen as an abundant resource that should be privately-owned and used to fuel the country's development.

Additionally, the nation's founders, to a man, saw the public domain as a means to generate revenue via land sales. Indeed, one of the first actions taken by Congress during President George

Washington's administration was to pass the Public Debt Act of 1790. That Act declared that the revenue from land sales was to be used to discharge the federal government's debts. From 1796 until the start of the Civil War in 1861, the fast-paced disposal of the public domain through federal land sales was highly successful. By 1862, the federal government had sold acreage equivalent to 67 percent of the public domain it held in 1802. These land sales constituted a major source of federal revenues. Over the period 1820-1860, receipts from land

sales averaged 10.8 percent of total federal revenues. At the peak of their importance in 1836, revenues from land sales accounted for a stunning 48 percent of federal revenues.

After the Civil War, the disposal of publicly-owned lands continued. But, instead of sales, the public domain was disposed of via grants. These amounted to almost 600 million acres, a surface area 3.8 times larger than that of France. The largest of those disposals, 214 million acres, took place under the Homestead Act of 1862. The second-largest disposal was to the railroads. It

amounted to approximately 129 million acres. States were the third largest recipients of land grants, receiving a little over 73 million acres. Another large distribution, approximately 64 million acres of so-called swamp grants, was also made to states.

The disposal of publicly-owned lands via sales and grants petered out with the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934. Perceiving a rush to home-

revenues only amount to 8.5 percent of their total expenditures.

In addition, when it comes to husbandry and ecology, the publicly-owned lands are in bad shape. BLM grazing lands are over-grazed and in poor condition, when compared to their private counterparts. The U.S. forestlands are also in much worse shape than private timberlands. National Parks are poorly maintained and receive low marks.

80.1 percent of Nevada and an average of 45.9 percent of the 11 contiguous Western states are owned by the federal government. In Alaska, federal ownership is outsized, too, accounting for 60.9 percent of the state's total.

stead lands scheduled for inclusion in grazing districts, President Franklin Roosevelt withdrew virtually all of the remaining public domain lands from the possibility of transfer to private ownership. With that, the United States was left with a massive inventory of publicly-owned lands – a surface area over six times larger than France, a great American anomaly.

### ■ **Government Mismanagement**

These federal public lands are managed, in large part, by the National Park Service (NPS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and the Department of Defense. The lands are, in fact, mismanaged. Rather than adding to the government's coffers as the original land sales did prior to the Civil War, the federal lands are drains. While the publicly-owned lands were valued at \$1.8 trillion in 2015 by the U.S. Department of Commerce (Bureau of Economic Analysis), they generate massive negative cash flows. Indeed, for the NPS, BLM, and USFS, aggregate total

The mismanagement of publicly-owned property of any kind should not surprise anyone. After all, the management of government property is put in the hands of politicians and bureaucrats who pay no price for mismanagement. When it comes to publicly-owned lands, Adam Smith diagnosed the mismanagement problem in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). He concluded that “no two characters seem more inconsistent than those of the trader and the sovereign,” since people are more prodigal with the wealth of others than with their own. In that vein, he estimated that lands owned by the state were only about 25 percent as productive as comparable private holdings. Smith believed Europe's great tracts of crown lands to be “a mere waste and loss of country in respect both of produce and population.”

### ■ **The Sagebrush Rebellion**

Over time, those who used and relied on public lands in the United States for commercial purposes became squeezed out of the political-bureaucratic, non-market processes that

determined the way public lands were to be used. For example, in 1940, ranchers comprised 100 percent of the representation on the National Public Lands Advisory Council. By 1980, their representation had dropped to 12 percent. Accompanying their reduced political access, there was a sharp reduction in the public range allocated to commercial grazing. Indeed, from 1959 to 1980 the capacity allocated to grazing declined by 40 percent.

Faced with these dramatic changes and continued threats, the political-bureaucratic processes for allocating public grazing lands were bound to break down. The first formal manifestation of the frustration came from Nevada, a state in which the federal government owns 80.1 percent of the land. In 1979, the Nevada State Legislature passed Assembly Bill 413 by a vote of 55 to 4, with one abstention. This bill declared that the State of Nevada was the legal owner of federal public domain lands within the state's boundaries.

Nevada's claim gave birth to the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion, the objective of which was to transfer federal lands to state ownership. The Rebellion quickly spread to other Western states, and was framed as a states-rights issue in which the rebels were attempting to transfer land ownership and control from Washington to their respective state capitals. By accomplishing this, the rebels thought they could once again dictate land-use policy.

With the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and the appointment of James Watt as Secretary of the Interior, the Sagebrush Rebels were buoyed up. Their enthusiasm was encouraged when Watt openly embraced their cause. With that, public lands became a hot-button issue.

At the time, I was serving as a senior economist on Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers, where I was tasked with the public lands portfolio and was in charge of preparing a brief and policy recommendations for President Reagan. I argued that the Sagebrush Rebellion

was fundamentally flawed. It would merely substitute one form of public ownership and political-bureaucratic processes for another via land grants from the federal government to state governments. As such, it offered no sub-

side. Better yet, he swiftly made my proposals his administration's policy. In addition to Reagan's endorsement, the proposal had the backing of one of the President's best friends, who was none other than Senator Paul Laxalt of Nevada.

*protecting miners as well. Basically, Dr. Hanke has proposed that ranchers currently holding grazing permits be given the right to purchase, on a first refusal basis, the public grazing permits that they currently rent from the BLM.*

Adam Smith (1776)... concluded that "no two characters seem more inconsistent than those of the trader and the sovereign," since people are more prodigal with the wealth of others than with their own.

stantive solution for the problems inherent in government ownership and control of land and other resources.

### ■ "Privatize Those Lands"

I first publicly presented my recommendations to sell public lands at a Public Lands Council meeting in Reno, Nevada in September 1981. The title of my speech was "Privatize Those Lands." It was eventually published in *Reason Magazine*. An interesting aspect of my speech turned out to be its title. As Mrs. Hanke reviewed a draft of my speech, she said that I had to change the language to say that it was "privatization" that I was advocating. At that time, that word wasn't in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* because it was a French word that Mrs. Hanke, who is a Parisian, had brought with her from France. We eventually convinced Webster's to enter the word into *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. "Privatize" was entered in the 1983, 9th edition.

My Reno speech caused a stir. Secretary Watt was furious. He was adamantly opposed to privatizing public lands. Instead, he favored the transfer of federal lands to state governments – exchanging one form of socialism for another. Needless to say, I thought I was in deep trouble. Much to my surprise, Reagan instantly responded, taking my

### ■ Senator Paul Laxalt

Here's some of what Senator Laxalt had to say in a five-page press release titled "Senator Laxalt on the Sale of Public Lands" (April 16, 1982):

*Before we proceed any further, let me tell you where I stand. I believe a need does exist to sell some of our excess public lands. However, I intend to do all in my power to protect existing public land users from being "locked out." To this end, I endorse a proposal developed by Dr.*

Importantly, Laxalt knew the details of my proposal because we had spent a good bit of time together reviewing and fine-tuning it. For Reagan, Laxalt's "thumbs up" was important. That's why the privatization of public lands received "top billing" in the President's Budget Message for Fiscal Year 1983. That is when Reagan formally endorsed the privatization of public lands, and returned to a position taken by the Founders:

*[W]e will move systematically to reduce the vast holdings of surplus land and real property, [since] some of this property is not in use and would be of greater value to society if transferred to the private sector. In the next 3 years we would save \$9 billion by shedding these unnecessary properties while fully protecting and preserving our national parks, forests, wilderness and scenic areas.*

...when it comes to husbandry and ecology, the publicly-owned lands are in bad shape...lands are overgrazed..forest lands are in much worse shape than their private counterparts. Parks are poorly maintained...

*Steve Hanke, a senior economist on the President's Council of Economic Advisers, that deals with the protection of existing grazing rights which, I believe, can serve as a model for*

### ■ Reagan's Executive Order

In addition to his budget statement, the President issued Executive Order 12348 on February 25, 1982, which established a Property Review Board



(Photo: Stina Sieg/Colorado Public Radio)

as part of the Executive Office of the President. The Board was directed to:

- develop and review federal real property acquisition, utilization, and disposal policies;
- advise the administrator of the General Services Administration (GSA) in setting standards and procedures to ensure that real property no longer essential be promptly identified and released for appropriate disposition;
- review prior disposals of surplus property made at discounts for the “public good” to ensure that the property is being used and maintained for the purpose intended;
- receive the reports made by or to the GSA on federal real property, placing particular emphasis on resolving conflicting claims on and alternate uses for property described in these reports;
- establish a target amount of real property to be identified as excess for

each executive agency.

The Executive Order also required the head of each federal agency to survey public property holdings and identify those that were underutilized or unused. Real property identified by the various agencies and the GSA as surplus was ordered to be promptly made available for its most beneficial use.

President Reagan’s privatization policies would have generated considerable benefits for the nation. For example, the following benefits would result from privatizing federal, publicly-owned commercial grazing lands.

1. The productivity of grazing lands would increase, over-grazing would be reduced, and the quality of grazing lands would be improved.
2. Privatization would eliminate the government’s negative cash flows from grazing lands. This would obviously benefit all U.S. taxpayers, who must now

pay taxes to support the federal government’s retention of public grazing lands.

3. Current federal revenues would be generated and earmarked to reduce the national debt. Hence, the liabilities we bequeath to future generations would be reduced.

4. State and local tax bases would be created. Western dependence on in-lieu payments from Washington would be eliminated.

Similar benefits would be generated if publicly-owned commercial timberlands were privatized.

Unfortunately, President Reagan’s embrace of the Founding Fathers’ vision of what to do with the public domain was stillborn, and ended up as a missed opportunity.

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STEVE H. HANKE, *Ph.D.*, is a Professor of Applied Economics at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD.



# Election Integrity and the American Republic

by HANS VON SPAKOVSKY

**E**lection integrity and voter fraud have become so controversial that even if you try to discuss them rationally and reasonably, and cite incontrovertible evidence, you will likely be banned by social media platforms and labelled a conspiratorial vote suppressor by the major media organizations that dominate our airwaves.

But ensuring fair and honest elections is fundamental to maintaining a democratic republic and wanting to ensure integrity and security does not make you a vote suppressor. These days, that is simply an inflammatory term used to oppose any and all election re-

...ensuring fair and honest elections is fundamental to maintaining a democratic republic and wanting to ensure integrity and security does not make you a vote suppressor.

forms that progressives (and certain political consultants) don't like.

Those same opponents of reforms are constantly claiming that fraud doesn't happen or is so rare that we don't need to worry about it. Of course, that brings up the question of how much fraud they think is acceptable, a question to which they never seem to have any answer.

Does election fraud occur? Are there actually individuals willing to cheat in order to win elections or cast a fraudulent vote? Does fraud ever affect election outcomes?

## ■ Historical Roots

Those who would answer "no" to those questions don't know much about our political history, which has been filled with incidents of fraud in our elections. As the U.S. Supreme Court reflected in 2008 in *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board* when it upheld Indiana's new voter ID law as constitutional and not a burden on voters:

*It remains true...that flagrant examples of such fraud in other parts of the country have been documented throughout this Nation's history by respected historians and journalists,*

*that occasional examples have surfaced in recent years...that...demonstrate that not only is the risk of voter fraud real but that it could affect the outcome of a close election.*

We have close elections all the time in this country, particularly in local elections, and that is where the fraud that sometimes occurs can really make a difference. Like the 2021 city council election in Compton, CA, that was overturned by a judge after she determined that four votes had been cast by voters who didn't actually live in Compton. The margin of

victory was only one vote in that election, and five defendants were convicted of fraud – including the city councilman who won the race by one vote.

Or how about the 2018 Ninth Congressional District race in North Carolina that was overturned by the state board of elections after its investigation found absentee ballot fraud orchestrated by a political consultant and his henchmen? The fraud there was so "pervasive" that it affected the outcome of the election, which had a margin of only 905 votes.

## ■ Election Fraud

I have been falsely accused of saying that we have massive election fraud, something I have never said or claimed. We don't know how much election fraud occurs because of all the vulnerabilities in our system, and anybody who tells you otherwise is simply not telling the truth. But we do know that fraud occurs often enough that we should be concerned about it and take the steps necessary to deter it and make it hard to commit. Voters want both access and security. And contrary to the claims of critics, you can provide both. Making sure that every eligible citizen is able to vote does not prevent you from implementing measures intended to safeguard that vote.

If you doubt that fraud occurs often enough to warrant taking any steps to combat it, check out the Election Fraud Database maintained by the Heritage Foundation, the only one of its kind. This database presents a sampling of recent proven instances of election fraud from across the country. Every case

represents an instance in which a public official, usually a prosecutor, thought it serious enough to act upon it. It includes cases where there were criminal convictions, civil penalties, and judicial or other official findings of fraud. Keep in

of Brotherly Love, previously pleaded guilty to accepting those bribes and engaging in election fraud. And the chief of police and a member of the city council of Amite, LA, also recently pleaded guilty to organizing and carrying out a

many local prosecutors don't seem to have any interest in actually investigating and prosecuting these crimes when they are discovered.

That latter problem is illustrated by a report released in November 2021 by the Public Interest Legal Foundation (on whose board I serve). The foundation used Florida's sunshine law to request information from 10 counties on all election officials' criminal referrals arising out of the 2020 election. Nine counties responded, saying they had sent 156 referrals to local prosecutors about criminal violations of state election law, including instances of double voting and aliens registering and voting. The foundation then checked Florida's criminal databases and court records and found that none of the cases had been prosecuted. Heritage's entire database would be about 10 percent larger if just these cases in nine counties had actually been pursued.

Want another clue as to how much bigger this problem is than what is shown in the Heritage database? In 2020, the Public Interest Legal Foundation released a report called

We don't know how much election fraud occurs because of all the vulnerabilities in our system, and anybody who tells you otherwise is simply not telling the truth.

mind that it is not an exhaustive or comprehensive list, nor is it intended to be. It is constantly growing as more cases are added to the almost 1,400 cases that already exist in the database.

Unfortunately, as the database demonstrates, fraud occurs in our elections in a wide variety of ways. That includes the fraudulent use of absentee ballots; voting by ineligible individuals such as aliens and felons; impersonation of registered voters; buying votes; duplicate voting by individuals registered twice, sometimes in the same state and other times in multiple states; false registrations like in the Compton case; and illegal "assistance" of voters where political activists and guns-for-hire are coercing and intimidating voters to cast ballots for particular candidates, not actually assisting them. And even old-fashioned ballot-box stuffing.

Doubt that ballot-box stuffing or vote-buying, which have a long, infamous history in American elections, still occur? Former Democratic U.S. Rep. Michael "Ozzie" Myers, now a political consultant, recently pleaded guilty to bribing local election officials in Philadelphia, his hometown, to stuff ballot boxes in their polling places with fraudulent votes in multiple elections for multiple candidates. Two of those election officials, Domenick Demuro and Marie Benson, who managed several polling places in the City

conspiracy to pay cash to voters to get themselves and other favored candidates elected.

Of course, not every instance of election fraud is a scheme like these by a group of conspirators to steal an election. In many cases, individuals simply take advantage of the insecure system we have in too many states. Take Melissa Fisher of Quakertown, PA, and Elizabeth Gale of San Diego, CA, who forged the signatures of their deceased mothers on absentee ballots and submit-

ted them to election officials. They got caught, but plenty of others aren't, due to inadequate safeguards in the election process, as well as neglect and incompetence by election officials.

### ■ *How Big is the Problem?*

The cases in the Heritage database are just the tip of the iceberg. You can't detect fraud if you aren't looking for it, and if you don't have measures in place like an ID requirement, how are you even going to detect it? Also, too

"Critical Condition." The foundation obtained the statewide voter registration list and voter histories from the 2016 and 2018 elections from 42 states, then very carefully set up a complex matching program to compare the states and check the data against other government and commercial databases.

The report documented over 144,000 cases of potential fraud. This included almost 15,000 voters who were recorded by state election officials as having cast ballots after they were dead. They found

tens of thousands of individuals who voted twice. They also found 34,000 individuals who voted in either the 2016 or 2018 election whose registered address where they supposedly lived turned out to be gas stations, vacant lots, restaurants, parks, and numerous other obviously fraudulent addresses. Not a single election official or prosecutor in any of the 42 states contacted the foundation to ask that the relevant files on voters in their states be sent to them for investigation. Not a single one.

### ■ *Is there a Fix?*

So, the question becomes – what do we do about this? There are a whole series of steps state legislators and election officials can take to improve security while at the same time maintaining the ability of eligible citizens to easily register and vote. In fact, in February 2021, after the 2020 presidential election, the Heritage Foundation published a list of best practices recommendations for improving the security of the election process.

It includes commonsense recommendations such as requiring an ID to vote—both in-person and absentee—something that many states have already implemented, with a free ID provided to anyone who does not already have one. Contrary to the false claims of opponents, turnout from states that have implemented ID laws, such as Georgia and Indiana, shows that such a requirement does not “suppress” votes.

A 2019 study by the National Bureau of Economic Research that reviewed 10 years of turnout data from across the country concluded that voter ID laws “have no negative effect on registration or turnout, overall or for any group defined by race, gender, age, or party affiliation.” In fact, that point of view—that African Americans and other minorities cannot deal with voter ID or other requirements such as voter registration—is evidence of a patronizingly racist view towards minority voters. Polling shows that the public overwhelmingly supports voter ID (84 percent, to be specific), and that includes

a majority of all voters regardless of race, ethnicity, or political affiliation.

But states can also do a much better job of maintaining the accuracy of their voter registration lists by accessing other available information, such as state driver’s license, federal alien, and commercial databases. They need to ban ballot trafficking and not allow

Contrary to the false claims of opponents, turnout from states that have implemented ID laws, such as Georgia and Indiana, shows that such a requirement does not “suppress” votes.

third parties, such as political activists, candidates, and party representatives who have a stake in the outcome of the election, from collecting absentee ballots from voters.

The Heritage Foundation has established an Election Integrity Scorecard that grades every state on these standards and provides an easy guide to the public and legislators for improving both access and security in their elections. Of course, the Scorecard just rates the quality of election laws in each state. A law that is not rigorously enforced is not worth the paper it’s written on. It is up to the public to hold their election officials accountable for how those laws are enforced.

### ■ *Keeping it Non-Partisan*

What is most unfortunate is that the issue of election integrity has become so partisan. The claim by the progressive left that any attempts to improve integrity are voter suppression is a relatively new phenomenon. In 2005, the bipartisan National Commission on Federal Election Reform, chaired by former Democratic President Jimmy Carter and former Republican Secretary of State

James Baker, issued a report making a long series of recommendations on how to improve the integrity of the election process. Their recommendations included everything from voter ID to better maintenance of voter registration lists – recommendations that today are anathema to reform opponents who label them as voter suppression.

The bottom line is that we can fix the problems that currently exist to protect voters and ensure the honesty of our elections, and we shouldn’t let unfair, unwise, and unjustified opposition prevent us from doing so.

Carter and Baker succinctly summarized the importance of guaranteeing the integrity of our election process in their 2005 report:

*Elections are the heart of democracy. They are the instrument for the people to choose leaders and hold them accountable. At the same time, elections are a core public function upon which all other government responsibilities depend. If elections are defective, the entire democratic system is at risk.*

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HANS A. VON SPAKOVSKY is a Senior Legal Fellow at the Heritage Foundation and Manager of its Election Law Reform Initiative. He is a former Justice Department lawyer and FEC commissioner. He is the coauthor of *Our Broken Elections: How the Left Changed the Way You Vote*.

# Not An Ordinary Country

by MARK MEIROWITZ

*John Locke said it well: “in the beginning, all the world was America.”*

Since its inception, America has been different and special. Never ordinary. No class systems or caste systems. No monarchs, royals, lords, and ladies and addressing a mortal human being as “your majesty.” Indeed, George Washington eschewed the title of “His Highness, the President of the United States.”

When Washington decided to return to his farm after America won the Revolutionary War and give up his military position, King George III of Great Britain said that this made Washington “the greatest man in the world.”

Washington made a further world impact when he stepped down voluntarily after two terms as President. No one forced Washington to do this.

Our American ideal is to fight over our principles but to defend the right to have that debate about those issues. Americans may disagree vehemently over what the Constitution means, but the opportunity to engage in that debate is sacrosanct.

## ■ **Testimonial to Limited Government**

Our Constitution is a testimonial to limited government. Alexander Hamilton said it best:

*If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. (Federalist Papers No. 51)*

It is not enough to provide government with enough power to govern, but (more importantly), checks and balances must be put in place to make sure that government does not spin out of control. As Lord Acton famously said, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Dictators make sure that they have complete power and no controls at all.

America’s government is a lesson plan in limited government. The concept of limited government set this nation apart from the beginning. The military does not run the country; the president is the commander-in-chief.

We have had some recent experience with dictators. Vladimir Putin launched an aggressive war against Ukraine on his own, and Xi Jinping is the unchecked leader for life of China. Facial recognition and surveillance are ubiquitous in China. Human rights are suppressed. Is it even believable that in the 21st century, a group of speech therapists in Hong Kong were recently convicted of sedition for publishing children’s books about sheep warriors battling evil wolves? The regime thought there was a hidden message about rebellion. Throughout the world, we see the suppression of freedom of speech and expression. Not in America, however.

## ■ **God-given rights.**

The people of the world have been inspired throughout history by Jefferson’s majestic words in the Declaration of Independence, that “all men are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights.” This statement was meant not just for Americans but for the entire world, and for posterity. Indeed, the Declaration makes clear that the Founding Fathers wanted to explain to the world what they were doing and that they understood that

they were creating something unique in world history. Says the Declaration, “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation” from Great Britain.

The founding fathers wanted to describe how and why America could achieve what had never been done before – seceding from an empire (where the sun never set, no less!)

## ■ **A City on the Hill**

The Puritans came to the Massachusetts Bay to flee religious persecution. For the Puritans, said John Winthrop, their settlement would be like “a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us.” President Ronald Reagan was inspired by this idea and applied it to America as a shining city on a hill to the world. In his farewell speech to the nation in 1989, Reagan said “I’ve spoken of the shining city all my political life... in my mind it was a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace...”

Since its inception, America has been a haven for those seeking freedom of expression and freedom of opportunity, the chance to pursue a better life and breathe the fresh air of freedom.

## ■ **Immigrants**

There is something different about America, which has attracted millions over these centuries. America has been there to help the oppressed and to spread freedom in the world. Emma Lazarus’ poem, “The New Colossus”, says it poignantly: “Give me your tired, your poor. Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...” America has beckoned to millions of immigrants throughout our history. One cannot forget the

impression of America by a penniless immigrant from Europe on arriving in the New York harbor in *The Rise of David Levinsky* by Abraham Cahan:

*When the discoverers of America saw land at last they fell on their knees and a hymn of thanksgiving burst from their souls. The scene, which is one of the most thrilling in history, repeats itself in the heart of every immigrant as he comes in sight of the American shores...The immigrant's arrival in his new home is like a second birth to him. Imagine a newborn babe in possession of a fully developed intellect. Would it ever forget its entry into the world? Neither does the immigrant ever forget his entry into a country which is, to him, a new world in the profoundest sense of the term and in which he expects to pass the rest of his life. I conjure up the spectacle as it appeared to me on that clear gorgeousness of that clear June morning: the magnificent verdure of Staten Island, the tender blue of sea and sky, the dignified bustle of passing craft... It was all so utterly unlike anything I had ever seen or dreamed of before. It unfolded itself like a divine revelation. I was in a trance or in something closely resembling one. "This, then, is America!"*

America has been there throughout our history sacrificing our national treasure, our young people, so that people everywhere can live freely and without religious or political persecution.

### ■ **Our Constitution and Theirs**

Madison worried that the founding documents would be mere "parchment barriers," but our Constitution and Declaration of Independence have remained strong and influential throughout our history. Indeed, and ironically, many nations have had "constitutions," but these are truly not worth the paper they are printed on.

The constitution of the Soviet Union

guaranteed freedom of religion, freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of conscience, but in point of fact, none of these freedoms were actually available to the people of the USSR,

## The concept of limited government set this nation apart from the beginning.

because of the primacy of the Communist Party and Soviet law which provided that the censorship bodies had the power to exercise "ideological leadership."

As Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh stated in his concurring opinion in a recent case, "In our system of government, as this Court has often stated, no one is above the law."

When Alexis de Tocqueville visited America in the 19th century, he observed the uniqueness of America and the fact that America was a democracy. He noted that:

*If there is a single country in the world where one can hope to appreciate the dogma of the sovereignty of the people at its just value, to study it in its application to the affairs of society, and to judge its advantages and its dangers, that country is surely America.*

America has been a beacon to the world, a light in the darkness.

### ■ **The Rule of Law**

America is committed to the rule of law, not only domestically, but also throughout the world. When American naval vessels ships traverse the South China Sea, they are not doing so just for America's safety and freedom. They are there promoting freedom of navigation so that the entire world can have that freedom, and China cannot claim territory belonging to other nations.

Our foreign policy has always been oriented to supporting international law and international comity, often to the detriment of American national interests. America has the pre-eminent military in

the world which has saved the world on many occasions from utter catastrophe in order to achieve peace and stability. In foreign policy, America has functioned as the main balancer of world stability.

It would have been very easy for America to succumb to its isolationists and sit out World War I, World War II and the Korean War, and many other world conflicts, but America was there on the march for freedom. Who else would have done this? Only America, the extraordinary and exceptional country, has been a bastion of freedom in a world in chaos.

In a letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island on September 9, 1790, George Washington observed that

*[T]he citizens of the United States of America have the right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy worthy of imitation.*

Americans, indeed, should be proud of what we have accomplished and our contributions to the world. These actions have made America stand out as a unique and extraordinary force for good in the world. America is truly the exceptional nation and is not in any way (nor has it ever been) ordinary.

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MARK MEIROWITZ, Ph.D., is professor, State University of New York (SUNY) Maritime College.

# “Liberty Binds Us Together”

## An *in*FOCUS interview with Dr. TEVI TROY

Tevi Troy is a Senior Fellow at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a former Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services and a best-selling presidential historian. His latest book is *Fight House: Rivalries in the White House from Truman to Trump*, named as one of 2020's top political books by the *Wall Street Journal*. His White House experience in the George W. Bush administration culminated in service as Deputy Assistant and then Acting Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy. Dr. Troy has held high-level positions on Capitol Hill as well. *in*FOCUS Quarterly editor Shoshana Bryen spoke with him in recently.

***in*FOCUS: THIS ISSUE OF *in*FOCUS QUARTERLY IS CALLED “WHAT MAKES AMERICA?” WHAT MAKES US WHO WE ARE, AND WHERE DO WE GET OUR AMERICAN IDENTITY? ARE WE ROOTED IN THE FOUNDING DOCUMENTS? DO PEOPLE STILL READ THOSE TODAY?**

**Tevi Troy:** Those are very different questions. We, as Americans, are indeed rooted in these founding documents. Ronald Reagan said, “Liberty binds us together.” We’re not bound by the color of our skin or our gender or our religion or our race or ethnicity. None of that is what binds us together as Americans. It’s liberty and a belief that this is a place where you can have institutions that foster liberty and allow people to live in a free society with certain rights, including the right to free speech and freedom of religion. And you can maintain that system with different waves of immigrants from different places over centuries. Thus far, this experiment has been working really well.

For the second part of your question, my answer is less optimistic and more disturbing. “Do we still read these founding documents?” I find the answer, disturbingly, is no. Not enough people are reading the documents. Not enough people are celebrating the values – like free speech. And not enough people are seeing that what binds us together is liberty, as Ronald Reagan said.

Instead, they’re saying we’re bound, not just by race or ethnicity or gender, but also by our grievances. I don’t think

that is a healthy way to foster a long-term free society where people respect the rights of others.

***iF: YOU CAN’T BECOME CHINESE; THEY ARE DEFINED BY RACE. YOU CAN BECOME A CITIZEN OF FRANCE, BUT CAN YOU REALLY BECOME FRENCH? IN RUSSIA, THEY LOOK AT IT AS THE LAND YOU LIVE ON. IF RUSSIAN PEOPLE LIVE IN UKRAINE, THEY’RE NOT UKRAINIANS, THEY’RE RUSSIANS. WHAT DOES THAT SAY ABOUT ASSIMILATION?***

**Troy:** Assimilation is crucial. But I just want to be clear on what assimilation is. Assimilation, in some quarters, is a dirty word because it means you’re rejecting your heritage – you’re a sellout. But here assimilation means accepting the ideals of America, buying into the American system, part of a larger project that’s trying to advance freedom.

Bari Weiss has a great statement that I think encapsulates what assimilation is in her book on antisemitism. She says, “In Europe, Protestants and Catholics used to kill each other. In America, they have brunch.”

Protestant and Catholic, they’re assimilated in that they are no longer holding the angers and the grievances of the old country. They’re still Protestant. They’re still Catholic. They go to different church services on Sunday morning. But they can meet together after and have brunch, recognizing that they’re both citizens of a free society.

You and I are both observant Jews.

I consider myself a fully assimilated American. I believe in America. I believe in American ideals. I want my kids to stay in America. I am patriotic. I love July 4th. But also, I keep the Sabbath. I keep kosher. I wear a kippah. I do all these things that indicate that I am Jewish and continue to respect the Jewish traditions, but I am American in every way.

That is possible in America. It does not seem to be possible in many other places in the world.

***iF: HOW MUCH OF A CHANGE CAME IN THE UNITED STATES WITH THE PRESIDENCY OF JOHN F. KENNEDY?***

**Troy:** Absolutely. Kennedy wasn’t the first to run for president as Catholic, but he was the first to win. And he handled that question adeptly by saying that he’s loyal to America. He had a religion, but his country is America. And he was not adherent to the Pope in politics or national policy or in strategic thinking. He was an American.

And he’s still pretty well viewed by most Americans – obviously, the tragic assassination made him a martyr. But I think we got over that Catholic hump with the Kennedy administration. And it’s interesting. You look at Joe Biden as Catholic. Nobody talks about it. Nobody said in the 2020 race, “Oh, my gosh. Joe Biden’s a Catholic. Is he ever going to be able to win? Is that possible, to run and win as a Catholic? Is he going to show fealty to the Pope instead of America?”

There is criticism on the other side, as in, “As someone who’s so ardently pro-choice, is he an adherent enough in his Catholic faith and Catholic tradition?” I think we’ve gotten past that issue. And I also think, if you look, there’s the Jewish question. Look at Sen. Joe Lieberman in the 2000 race, where it seemed as if Lieberman was a benefit to Vice President Al Gore rather than a detriment. Obviously, Gore didn’t win, but it wasn’t because of people rejecting Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew, for being on the ticket.

**iF: ARE WE LOSING OUR LIMITED GOVERNMENT IN A WAY THAT COULD AFFECT US IN TERMS OF ASSIMILATION, IN TERMS OF OUR IDENTITY?**

**Troy:** It’s a really good question. I am a proponent of limited government, but we are not in a place of limited government. It has gone away over the course of the century for multiple reasons. Even things such as the creation of the automobile and highways led to a situation where you had government in charge of roads and traffic laws.

People who were in America over a century ago, let’s say the beginning of the 20th century, had almost no interaction with the federal government other than the US mail.

But then, you had the creation of the income tax, and you started having the road system. And now we have all sorts of transfer payments, and the federal government is part of everybody’s life on an almost daily basis. It’s just a different country. I would’ve made some different policy choices over the years, and I’d like to see less government and more freedom. But we are going to have to find a way to make this democratic experiment work, even with the much larger government we have today than we have in the past.

**iF: WASN’T FDR THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN LESS GOVERNMENT AND MORE GOVERNMENT?**



*Dr. Tevi Troy*

**Troy:** It’s a bit like the frog in water. As the water heats up, eventually it starts to boil. I wouldn’t – put it any one demarcation. And I think the creation of the income tax was a big step. But the creation of the automobile was important.

In the Second World War, you got your healthcare from the army if you were called up into service. Then, you went back to your farm, and said, “Well, there’s no healthcare here.” But people wanted healthcare in a way they didn’t before, so the government became much more involved. These are elements of the government growing. And FDR definitely gave it a push. LBJ gave it a push. But I don’t think that there’s one single demarcation.

**■ Pruning Government**

**iF: CAN WE CUT IT BACK?**

**Troy:** It’s not easy. But Calvin Coolidge came into office and said he was going to prune things back. Obviously, he was pruning a smaller tree. Government was smaller at the end of Coolidge’s tenure than it was beforehand. I would like to

see a Republican president in the future talk about this.

I served with George W. Bush, and there was some talk about limiting government, but there was never much action on it. In fact, Bush, after 9-11, was not really thinking about shrinking government, but about developing a Homeland Security state to keep us safe. I understand why he made that strategic shift. But you have not had a Republican president who seriously talked about reducing the size of the federal government in a very long time.

**iF: DID DONALD TRUMP TALK ABOUT THAT?**

**Troy:** Shrinking government was not part of his mantra. And he famously rejected ideas about trimming, reforming Social Security and Medicare so that it would be available for future generations, and stave off bankruptcy. He didn’t think that was politically where he was going to get his voters. He really didn’t talk about shrinking the size of government.

## ■ *The Role of the Draft*

**iF:** EVERYBODY TODAY WHO CAME OF AGE AFTER THE DRAFT WAS ABOLISHED IN 1973 HAS NOT HAD TO GO TO WAR FOR OUR COUNTRY. THE FIRST GULF WAR, AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ. ALL THESE WERE DONE BY VOLUNTEERS. FIRST, DOES THAT CHANGE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT? THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT ORDER YOU TO GO AND DIE FOR IT, WHICH IT COULD BEFORE. AND SECOND, DOES IT CHANGE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GROUPS OF AMERICANS, AS IN SERVICE PEOPLE AND VETERANS, AND THOSE WHO CHOSE NOT TO SERVE?

**Troy:** Absolutely. It's a very different thing when you have a strictly volunteer military and you don't have a draft. There's no sense that, if there's a war, you would be called up.

There were reasons to abolish the draft, and maybe there are other ways to bring about that sense of devotion to the nation. William F. Buckley wrote a book about national service, although I'd be wary of what the national service people did. I wouldn't want them to create left-wing activists on the government dime. We already have enough of those. But there are things to consider that we can make people more integrated into the American system without necessarily instituting a mandatory military draft.

## ■ *National Service and Conservatives*

**iF:** COULD YOU, FOR EXAMPLE, DO NATIONAL SERVICE IN EXCHANGE FOR COLLEGE TUITION, AS YOU DO WITH SERVICE PEOPLE?

**Troy:** Potentially. This could be a whole other conversation, but I've got concerns with what's going on in colleges, right now – the type of education you get, the type of indoctrination you get, and whether you can actually get an education that celebrates America and

recognizes the merits of our system. It seems as if in college, you go in, and on orientation day one, you learn how terrible America is and how terrible Americans are. And that's not the kind of thing you want to learn.

Students go on campus and never hear an alternative point of view. I think that's dangerous. And having some

There were reasons to abolish the draft, and maybe there are other ways to bring about that sense of devotion to the nation.

kind of mandatory national service that the goal of is to get everyone into a college that will not necessarily be teaching American values, I think it is problematic.

You have a system where you have to pretend to be something you are not in order to advance. Natan Sharansky talks about the double think in the Soviet Union. People say things, but not what they believe. They have to hide who they are in order to survive and advance.

## ■ *Creating Intellectual Diversity*

**iF:** COULDN'T A DRAFT ALSO WORK IN TERMS OF OVERCOMING BARRIERS? BECAUSE YOU ALL HAVE TO LIVE TOGETHER, TRAIN TOGETHER, EAT TOGETHER. COULD THAT HELP ENCOURAGE INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY?

**Troy:** College is also supposed to do that. But yes, there is value to some kind of program that requires people to give something back to the country. You would have to be really careful how you design it so it doesn't become an indoctrination camp that makes people who think a certain way have to hide who they are.

## ■ *"Nones"*

**iF:** IN RECENT (DIVERSIFIED) POLLING, ABOUT 20 PERCENT OF THE

POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES NOW RESPONDS, "NONE," WHEN ASKED ABOUT RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION. BUT JOHN ADAMS SAID, "OUR CONSTITUTION WAS MADE ONLY FOR A MORAL AND RELIGIOUS PEOPLE. IT IS WHOLLY INADEQUATE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ANY OTHER." WAS HE RIGHT?

**Troy:** I think he was right. You do, in a limited government society, need to have some level of trust that your fellow citizens are going to act in a moral and appropriate way. Religion can be a check on people's bad behaviors. It can also, as we've seen in many places, lead to certain bad behaviors and fanaticism. We have to be careful on that front.

But I'm more comfortable in a society where there are more religious people. Those people tend to get married and have children and go to church, and also be happier. Happiness is an important part of the equation, because there's a sense that gratitude is one of the key tenets of conservatism. People who are happy and grateful will be more likely to want to preserve the great system that we have. Whereas people who are aggrieved and unhappy and ungrateful want to tear everything down.

**iF:** YOU'RE SUGGESTING THAT THE LEFT IS MOTIVATED BY GRIEVANCE.

**Troy:** If you look at some of these new language policing efforts, things like saying "the American dream" or "hard work" are not allowed, that there's somehow some kind of an offense or microaggression. There is a sense that each group is rated based on its level of grievance. The more grievance you



have, the more celebrated you are.

That is not a fruitful way to advance. People should be looking for ways to advance themselves and celebrate and appreciate the American system and thrive in the American system, rather than necessarily looking back to things that happened in the past. Obviously, we talked about assimilation, you don't want to reject your past. But you can't let it handcuff you, either.

## ■ *The American Dream*

**iF: AS AN OBSERVANT JEW, A PROUD AMERICAN, AND A PATRIOTIC GUY, HOW DO YOU SEE THE AMERICAN DREAM?**

**Troy:** The American dream is the ability to leave your children better off than you were. You go, you participate in the system, the system gives enough freedom for you to find rewarding work, to find the level of education you need. Then your children can go off and potentially be even more successful than you are.

If people can't advance and don't feel like their children have a chance and don't feel like they can make things better for themselves and the future generations, then you get a sense that the American dream is lost.

**iF: HOW DOES THAT WORK IF YOU'RE LOOKING AT REPARATIONS? IF YOU ARE LOOKING FORWARD IN YOUR AMERICAN DREAM, CAN YOU GO BACKWARDS AND FIX THINGS?**

**Troy:** Ronald Reagan said, "I believe that, for America, there's always a brighter day ahead. The future's always brighter." I try to look at it from that perspective. We are trying to make things better for the future than trying to fix a past that can never be fixed, because, by definition it is in the past. As Faulkner said, "In the South, the past isn't dead. It's not even past."

That's not the American way. While celebrating and honoring and recognizing our history, flaws, and warts, and all, we need to look forward. And America

has been a forward-looking nation throughout our history. The way out of our current challenges is to continue to be a forward-looking nation.

**iF: IT WAS REAGAN WHO SAID, "MORNING IN AMERICA," THE IMPLICATION OF WHICH IS, IN THE MORNING, YOU GET UP AND MOVE FORWARD.**

## ■ *The Worst Time?*

**QUESTION FROM iF STAFF MEMBER: I HAVE FRIENDS, ON THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT, WHO ARE RELATIVELY PLUGGED IN. BOTH GROUPS SAY WE ARE LIVING IN THE WORST TIME IN AMERICAN HISTORY. AND THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO KNOW SOME HISTORY – THE CIVIL WAR, THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, AND THE LA RIOTS. WHERE'S THE DISCONNECT? HOW DO WE GET PEOPLE TO NOT LOOK SO NEGATIVELY AND TO THINK ABOUT**

While celebrating and honoring and recognizing our history, flaws, and warts, and all, we need to look forward. And America has been a forward-looking nation throughout our history.

**THE LONG TERM AND THE TRAJECTORY WE'RE ON VERSUS IN THE MOMENT, RIGHT NOW? THIS MAY BE A CYCLE QUESTION.**

**Troy:** It's a great question. If you obsess in sites like Twitter, which is just about getting clicks through finding the latest outrage, you're going to see things that make you think things are worse now than ever. But it is just affirmatively not so.

I actually wrote an article about ways that the world is better today than 25 years ago. I didn't want to go back a hundred years, just 25 years – within our lifetimes. I looked at things like

your ability to travel, food, entertainment, the intellectual opportunities out there, and more.

We have so much more today than just 25 years ago, but I don't think people recognize that. Now, people talk about how we're so divided. They're right to point to the Civil War, but what about the 1960s when there are race riots every summer in Lyndon Johnson's presidency? Nobody talks about that.

And crime in the 70s? You were afraid to walk the streets in New York. Yes, things have gotten worse recently in New York, but they're still not as bad as they were in the 70s and 80s. As late as 1990, there were 2200 murders a year in New York City.

There are more opportunities. The Internet, in addition to creating Twitter and some of the hysteria, also opened up worlds of possibilities that didn't exist for us. So, it's hard to see it, but perhaps we're living in the best of all possible

worlds rather than the worst of all possible worlds.

I remember the 1990s, which everybody looks on today as some kind of halcyon wonderful era, but the 1990s seemed – at the time – pretty tumultuous. I was not sitting around saying, "Oh, peace and prosperity." I was sitting around saying, "Oh, my gosh. The Republicans want to impeach Clinton. There's such division. And the Congress is turning over. And there's a new fight every day. And there's an independent council. And what's going to happen?"

I think the 2020s are just not as bad as people are portraying.

## ■ *Geographic and Political Sorting*

I'm not Pangloss. There are divisions in this country. You don't have the same kind of bipartisan legislation that you had in the past. But that's not necessarily because Republicans and Democrats hate each other more. It's because a great geographic sorting took place in the 90s, where you no longer had conservative Southern Democrats and no longer had liberal Northeastern Republicans.

The parties actually resorted themselves into what their natural tendencies were. The conservatives are in one party

The natural tendency of humanity is to fall into your affinity groups. But democratic capitalism requires you to break out of your affinity groups and have economically rational relationships.

and the liberals are in the other party, reflected in our current divisions in the political world. But if you get out outside of Washington, DC, we are still in a country where the Protestants and the Catholics have brunch.

**iF: IS THIS THE COMING OF GEORGE WASHINGTON'S BELIEF THAT POLITICAL PARTIES WERE GOING TO DRIVE PEOPLE IN THE WRONG DIRECTION?**

**Troy:** Yes. Madison talked about the problems of faction. And the parties are problematic. A typical person will say, "I don't necessarily endorse everything that Democrats do. I don't necessarily endorse everything the Republicans do, but I've got to pick a home."

I think if there was a kind of Manchin-Romney-type party, that would probably get plurality, if not a majority, of the vote. But structurally, that party is not going to exist.

## ■ *Democratic Capitalism Abroad*

**iF: SOME FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSTS ARGUE THAT WHERE THE AMERICAN MILITARY HAS STAYED, WE HAD HAD AN IMPACT ON THE EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRATIC CAPITALISM IN PLACES THAT HADN'T HAD IT BEFORE. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAD SOME REALLY MISERABLE FAILURES AFTER THE ARAB SPRING. SO, DO WE HELP? DO WE HURT? DO WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOING? OR DO PEOPLE EVOLVE INDEPENDENT OF US?**

**Troy:** Jonah Goldberg wrote a great book, *The Suicide of the West*, where he talked about this spirit of democratic capitalism not being natural to humanity. The natural tendency of humanity is to fall into your affinity groups. But democratic capitalism requires you to break out of your affinity groups and have economically rational relationships.

It's not easy. You can't always impose that on every society. The U.S. military and U.S. aid has been able to do it successfully in some places, including Japan and South Korea. Those are two of the best examples. It's not easy to do it in the Middle East. Part of the issue is America's lack of certainty with itself and its own system. We don't feel comfortable saying our system is something that should be replicated. And there was a lack of constancy about our efforts, certainly, in Afghanistan.

It's hard to get people who, for centuries, have thought a different way to think differently and in a new way. And

especially today, when we talk about "cultural imperialism," it's hard to get America on board with the project and to doing it for a long term.

Walter Russell Mead wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that there was a time when people from all around the world wanted to come to American campuses. And now, that is less so because of some of what they're learning in class, but also, from our perspective, the broader lesson. People come from countries that may not have free societies and the lesson they learn on our campuses is that it's acceptable to limit speech that we find uncomfortable. And what's going to happen when those people go back to Saudi Arabia or China? They'll say, "Well, on American campuses, they limit speech. We should continue to do it in our country."

**iF: WOULD YOU CALL YOURSELF AN OPTIMIST AS YOU LOOK AT THE SCENE HERE?**

**Troy:** I'm absolutely an optimist. My mentor was Ben Wattenberg, a Democrat speech writer who migrated to the right. Although he denied it; he said the Democrats left him. He always had an optimistic view on things. He wrote the famous book called *The Good News is the Bad News is Wrong*. He me taught me how to look behind and beyond the headlines. The headlines are designed to sell news by giving you the worst possible spin on everything. And it's not necessarily the case. Look at data.

And I think things are even better now than when he was giving me those lessons in the early 1990s.

We need to have the courage of our convictions and recognize the benefits of the great rights that were asserted in the Bill of Rights and believe in those rights and make the case for them.

**iF: TEVI TROY, ON BEHALF OF inFOCUS QUARTERLY AND OUR READERS, THANK YOU FOR A VERY ENLIGHTENING CONVERSATION.**

# Political Parties are America's Worst Enemy

by ANNIE RENEAU

President George Washington warned Americans of the dangers of partisanship in his 1796 farewell address – and he didn't mince words.

The entire address is worth a read but Washington's descriptions of "the Spirit of Party," which he said, "is seen in its greatest rankness" in freely elected democracies and "is truly their worst enemy," are particularly intriguing.

Check out a bit of what he said about partisanship:

*It serves always to distract the Public Councils and enfeeble the Public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, fomented occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus, the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.*

He was prophetic?

Of course, when Washington wrote those lines, the parties we now see dominating American politics didn't exist. The "Spirit of Party" was burgeoning, however, and it doesn't take a political genius to see that the partisan divide we're currently experiencing was an inevitable outcome of such a spirit.

After all, partisan politics is divisive in its very nature. This is especially true in our two-party system, where supposedly opposite forces compete in a

constant tug-of-war for power. In the abstract, that may seem like some form of balance, but in actuality, as Washington noted, it's a recipe for deadlock and potential disaster:

*There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This within certain limits is probably true; and in governments of a monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party.*

## Partisan politics is a recipe for gridlock and potential disaster...

*But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged . . . there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be by force of public opinion, to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume.*

Perhaps that's why the largest American voting block identifies as Independent.

I count myself among the 42 percent of U.S. voters who don't align themselves with a political party.

Raised in a definitively non-partisan

household, I've never felt any desire to call myself Democrat or Republican, Libertarian or Green, or any other party affiliation. In addition, I avoid arguments that center on partisanship, and quickly grow weary of the childish, name-calling bickering that too often takes places between people who see themselves as mortal enemies based on red vs. blue.

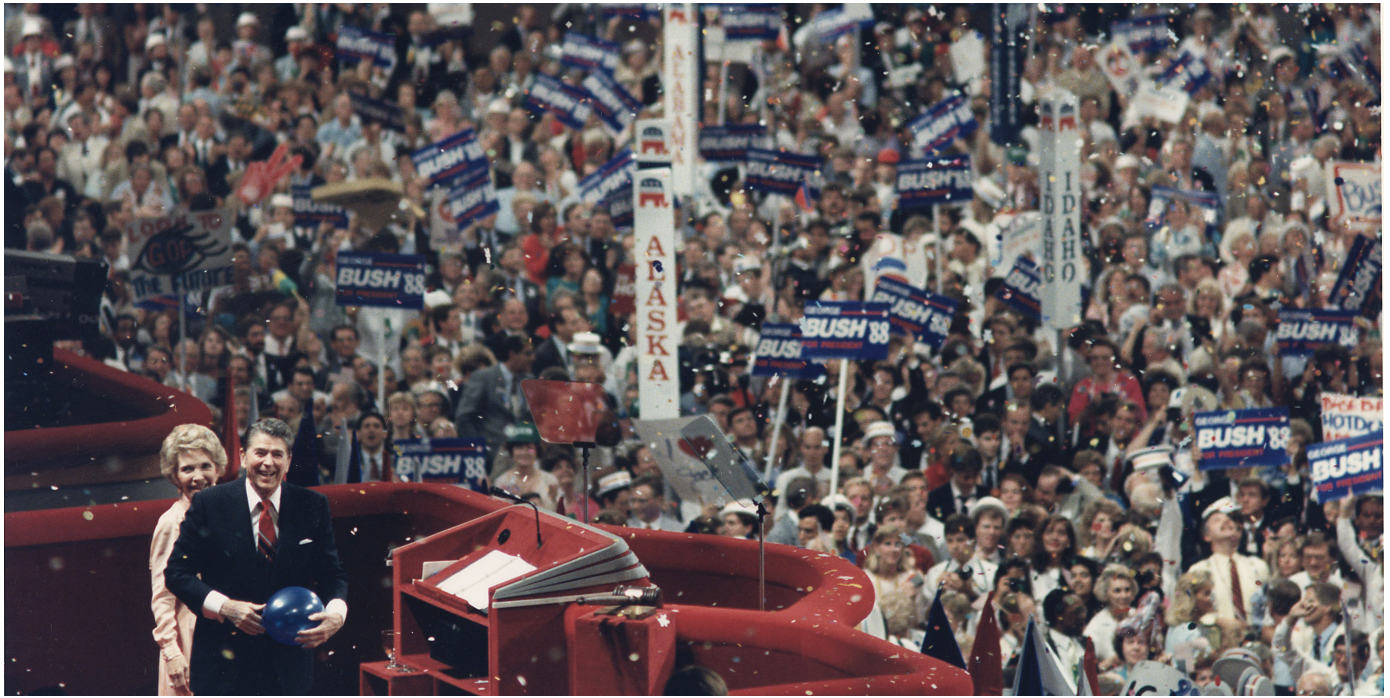
However, I still get labeled with a political party almost every time I share an opinion on an issue – especially online – despite never stating any party preference. It's virtually impossible

to discuss any political or social issue these days without someone assigning you to a party, and then assuming you support the party's platform and ideology whole cloth.

Our brains naturally categorize things, and the prevalence of partisanship leads people to automatically sort individuals into one of two distinct camps. Far too many people don't seem to grasp that it's possible to engage in social and political discourse without being entrenched in "the spirit of party."

People's beliefs and views don't fall neatly into two categories, so let's stop behaving as if they do.

When we step back and think about the depth and diversity of human



*The Reagans at the 1988 Republican National Convention.*

thought, it's immediately clear that each of us has a unique combination of beliefs and experiences. That makes sorting millions of Americans into two political categories absurd.

And yet, that's what people do all the time when they assign labels like liberal/conservative, Democrat/Republican, blue/red, and left/right to people based on one expressed opinion. They do it without thinking. They do it without investigating. And they do it with deeply ingrained prejudices and assumptions that are not only unfair, but dangerous, as they lead to factionalism and blind loyalty.

Many people decry blind loyalty to party, but don't recognize it in themselves.

The view from top of the political fence is interesting. From what I can see, the problem with partisan politics isn't the partisans who take it to the extreme; it's the nature of the beast itself. Each side demonizes the other so viciously that when one heads down the path of partisan thinking, aligning with one side seems the only truly virtuous thing to do.

If your first response to that

statement is, "But the [fill in opposing party] truly IS evil! Someone has to stop them!" take a step back. Folks on the other side are saying exactly the same thing about you, and they believe it just as strongly, for reasons they feel are just as legitimate. That kind of *us vs. them* thinking can easily lead to a righteous sense of party loyalty, which can easily lead to putting party before country.

Washington saw this coming when he expressed concern that political parties could result in loyalty to one's party overriding one's loyalty to the nation and to the common good. He also pointed out the corruptive influence they can have:

*The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power*

*of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty.*

*Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight), the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.*

We would be wise to heed Washington's warnings, on an individual level if not on a national one. Obviously, America's two-party system isn't going anywhere anytime soon, but it's only fueled by our participation. Let's discuss the issues but ditch the partisanship. If we continue to cling to divisive modes of governing, we'll never find the unity we so desperately need.

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ANNIE RENEAU is a writer and associate editor at Upworthy and can be found on Twitter: @MotherhoodnMore. This article first appeared at Upworthy.

# Aiming at the President, Not the Government

by **RALPH NURNBERGER**

**T**hroughout American history, there have been numerous plots and efforts to assassinate American presidents, vice presidents, leading candidates for the presidency and even a former president.

The first known attack on a sitting president took place on Jan. 30, 1835, when a house painter named Richard Lawrence attempted to shoot President Andrew Jackson. Both of Lawrence's pistols misfired.

Six American presidents were shot. Four were murdered during their terms in office: Abraham Lincoln in 1865; James A. Garfield in 1881; William McKinley in 1901; and John F. Kennedy 1963. Ronald Reagan was severely wounded in 1981 and former president Theodore Roosevelt was shot while he was campaigning to regain the White House in 1912.

## ■ **Common Characteristics**

Although the personal backgrounds and motives of the various assailants differed significantly, there are common characteristics.

The overarching – and remarkable – commonality is that, unlike political assassins in other countries, none of the American assailants were seeking to overthrow the existing form of government and only one sought to change the policies of the government.

None of the American attackers were active in political parties or supported alternative political leaders who could replace a murdered president. With the exception of the plot to assassinate Lincoln, the attempts focused only on the designated victim and not a desire to promote political objectives. In

fact, since vice presidents who assume office if a president dies in office are of the same political party, killing a president alone would likely not bring about significant changes in policies.

All of the American assailants were either apprehended quickly or sought to flee rather than become leaders of any political movement. Two of the assassins, John Wilkes Booth who shot Lincoln and Lee Harvey Oswald who shot Kennedy, were themselves shot and killed a few days after they murdered the president.

With the exception of the two women who tried to shoot President Gerald Ford, all of the assassins were men. Most used some form of firearm. With the exception of John Wilkes Booth who had assembled a small band of conspirators, all of the others acted alone. Booth, a well-known actor, was the only one of the assassins who was not in poor economic straits at the time of their acts of violence and he is also an outlier when it comes to motive – seeking revenge for Confederate losses in the Civil War. All of the other assailants provided incoherent explanations for their actions, which led many to be accused of mental instability.

## ■ **Abraham Lincoln**

A sniper shot at President Abraham Lincoln in August 1864 when he was traveling from the White House to the Soldiers' Home in Washington, DC. The lone rifle shot passed harmlessly through Lincoln's hat.

John Wilkes Booth had collaborated with the Confederate secret service during the Civil War. He had originally developed a plan to kidnap Lincoln and

exchange him for Confederate prisoners being held by the Union Army. The kidnap plot was no longer viable after Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865.

Five days later, Lincoln and his wife Mary attended a play at Ford's Theatre in Washington.

The guard who had been assigned to sit outside the president's box had left his post, which enabled Booth to enter behind Lincoln. Using a .44-caliber Derringer pistol, Booth shot Lincoln in the back of the head. The president never regained consciousness and died the next morning.

After the shooting, Booth evaded Union soldiers for 12 days, at which time he was killed hiding in a barn about 70 miles south of Washington.

## ■ **James A. Garfield**

On Saturday, July 2, 1881, less than four months after he took office, President James A. Garfield was shot twice while waiting to board a train at the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station in Washington, DC.

One bullet grazed the president's shoulder, and the other pierced his back. Garfield's doctors, especially his self-appointed chief physician Doctor Willard Bliss, probed the wound with their fingers and unsterilized instruments, which eventually led to infections. Garfield survived for 11 weeks enduring ever increasing pain. He died on Sept. 19, 1881.

His assailant was a lawyer named Charles J. Guiteau who was immediately arrested after the shooting. During his trial, he explained that he shot Garfield because he felt he deserved to have

received a high-level appointment from the new administration in gratitude for his efforts during the campaign.

Guiteau, having been found guilty, was hanged on June 30, 1882.

### ■ **William McKinley**

President William McKinley was shot and killed while attending the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, NY on Sept. 6, 1901. Leon Czolgosz, an anarchist, was armed with a .32 caliber revolver.

At first, it appeared that McKinley would recover from his wound, but his condition worsened when gangrene set in. He died on Sept. 14.

Czolgosz claimed to have been impressed by a number of political assassinations that had taken place in Europe. He refused to defend himself and was executed on Oct. 29, 1901.

In 1906, Congress authorized the Secret Service to protect the president. In 1917, Congress passed a law making it a federal felony to threaten the chief executive.

### ■ **Theodore Roosevelt**

President Theodore Roosevelt was the only president to be shot after he left the White House. He was followed in 1909 by William Howard Taft, who was threatened by a 52-year-old man named Julius Bergerson in Minneapolis. Bergerson was declared insane and sent to an asylum.

Roosevelt became disenchanted with Taft and decided to run against him in 1912. After Taft was renominated by the Republican Party, Roosevelt formed the Progressive Party, which soon became known as the “Bull Moose Party.”

Campaigning in Milwaukee, WI on Oct. 14, 1912, Roosevelt was shot in the chest by a saloonkeeper named John Flammang Schrank. Roosevelt had a 50-page campaign document and a metal glasses case in his breast pocket. These slowed the bullet and saved his life.

Remarkably, Roosevelt refused to go immediately to the hospital. Instead, he

gave an 84-minute speech even though blood was clearly visible on his shirt. He began this speech: “Ladies and gentlemen, I don’t know whether you fully understand that I have just been shot, but it takes more than that to kill a Bull Moose.”

The ex-president returned to the campaign trail after only two weeks.

Schrank was found legally insane and institutionalized until his death in 1943.

### ■ **Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

Seventeen days before Franklin Delano Franklin Roosevelt’s first inauguration, an Italian immigrant named Giuseppe Zangara fired five shots at the president-elect.

On Feb. 15, 1933, Roosevelt had been giving an impromptu speech from the back of an open car in the Bayfront Park area of Miami, FL. Zangara hit Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak and four

In the ensuing gunfight, White House policeman Leslie Coffelt and Torresola were killed. Collazo wounded an officer before being shot in the stomach. Truman was upstairs in the Blair House and was not harmed.

Collazo was tried and received the death sentence, which Truman then commuted to life in prison. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter further commuted Collazo’s sentence to time served.

### ■ **John F. Kennedy**

After winning the presidential election in Nov. 1960, President-elect John Kennedy vacationed in Palm Beach, FL. On Dec. 11, Richard Paul Pavlick, a 73-year-old former postal worker, intended to crash his dynamite-laden Buick into Kennedy’s vehicle. He changed his mind after seeing Kennedy with his wife and young daughter.

Pavlick was arrested three days later by the Secret Service. The police found

Unlike political assassins in other countries, none of the American assailants were seeking to overthrow the existing form of government and only one sought to change the policies of the government.

other people. Roosevelt was unhurt, but Cermak died, and the others were injured. During his trial, Zangara pled guilty to the murder of Cermak but did not provide any additional information. He was executed on March 20, 1933.

### ■ **Harry S. Truman**

On Nov. 1, 1950, President Harry S. Truman was the target of an assassination attempt by two pro-Puerto Rican independence nationalists, Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola. President Truman was then living at the Blair House, as the White House was undergoing major renovations.

the dynamite in his car and arrested him after he admitted that he was driven by hatred of Catholics. He was committed to a mental hospital and later indicted for threatening Kennedy’s life. Pavlick was released in 1966.

Kennedy became the fourth president to be murdered when he was shot on Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, TX, during a presidential motorcade. Kennedy was sitting next to his wife, Jacqueline, when he was shot once in the back, the bullet exiting via his throat, and once in the head.

The shots were fired by former U.S. Marine Lee Harvey Oswald, perched in



*President Reagan outside the Washington Hilton moments before he was shot on March 30, 1981.*

a sixth floor window in the Texas School Book Depository. After a chase and an altercation in which Dallas policeman J. D. Tippit was killed, Oswald was arrested and charged with the assassination of Kennedy and the murder of Tippit. Oswald maintained his innocence.

On Sunday, November 24, Oswald was shot fatally by Dallas nightclub owner Jack Ruby while being transferred from the city jail to the county jail. Ruby said he was motivated by grief at the death of President Kennedy and his concern that this event took place in Dallas. Ruby was convicted of Oswald's murder, but the verdict was overturned on appeal. In 1967, Ruby died in prison while awaiting a new trial.

### ■ **Richard Nixon & George Wallace**

President Richard Nixon was the target of a number of assassination plots.

Arthur Bremer was a former part-time janitor at an elementary school, who had previously been arrested for carrying a concealed weapon. A court-appointed psychiatrist declared Bremer mentally ill, yet stable enough to continue to live in the community. On March 1, the then-unemployed Bremer wrote in his diary that "It is my personal plan

to assassinate by pistol either Richard Nixon or George Wallace."

Bremer intended to shoot Nixon on April 13, 1972, but the president's car went by too fast for him to get a good shot. He tried again the next day but was not able to get close enough.

A few weeks later, he shot and seriously injured Alabama Governor George Wallace, who was campaigning in the Democratic presidential primary in Maryland. Three other people were unintentionally wounded. Wallace survived but was paralyzed from the waist down until his death in 1998. Bremer served 35 years in prison for shooting Wallace.

Another attempt on the life of President Nixon was carried out by Samuel Byck, who was suffering from severe bouts of depression after his wife divorced him and he endured several job-related financial failures. Byck concluded that Richard Nixon's policies were the cause of his misfortunes.

In early 1974, Byck decided to assassinate Nixon by hijacking an airliner and crashing it into the White House. He stole a revolver to use in the hijacking and also made a bomb out of two gallon jugs of gasoline and an igniter. He made audio recordings explaining his motives

and plans. He expected to be considered a hero for his actions and wanted to fully document his plan.

On Feb. 22, 1974, he attempted to hijack a plane at Baltimore/Washington International Airport, intending to crash into the White House in the hopes of killing Nixon. During the incident, Byck killed a policeman and a pilot, but was shot and wounded by another policeman before committing suicide.

### ■ **Gerald Ford**

President Gerald Ford was not injured during two assassination attempts, both carried out by women.

On Sept. 5, 1975, President Ford was greeting people near the California State Capitol. Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, a follower of Charles Manson, leader of a murderous cult, drew a pistol when he reached to shake her hand. Fromme was sentenced to life in prison but was released on Aug. 14, 2009.

On Sept. 22, 1975, in San Francisco, 17 days after Fromme's failed attempt, Sara Jane Moore fired a revolver at Ford from 40 feet away. Just as she was set to shoot, a bystander grabbed Moore's arm and the shot missed Ford.

Moore was tried and convicted in federal court and sentenced to life in prison. She was paroled on Dec. 31, 2007.

### ■ **Jimmy Carter**

President Jimmy Carter was targeted by Raymond Lee Harvey, an unemployed man with a history of mental illness. Harvey was arrested on May 5, 1979, while carrying a pistol to the Civic Center Mall in Los Angeles where Carter was to give a speech. Harvey claimed that he was part of a plot to assassinate Carter. Together with a 21-year-old illegal immigrant from Mexico, Osvaldo Espinoza Ortiz, Harvey was arrested and jailed, but ultimately released for a lack of evidence.

### ■ **Ronald Reagan**

On March 30, 1981, after Reagan gave a speech at the Washington Hilton

Hotel, John Hinckley Jr. fired six gunshots toward him, striking the president and three others, including press secretary James Brady, who suffered permanent brain damage.

Reagan was seriously wounded. When he reached George Washington University Hospital, doctors concluded that the president was “close to death.” He underwent emergency surgery and was released from the hospital on April 11.

Hinckley was arrested at the scene. He later explained that he had wanted to kill Reagan to impress actress Jodie Foster. He was deemed mentally ill and confined to an institution. Hinckley was released from institutional psychiatric care in 2016 and from all oversight this year.

### ■ **George H.W. Bush**

President George H. W. Bush may have been the target of an assassination plot after he left the White House, the first attempt of foreign origin. In April 1993, former President Bush visited Kuwait to commemorate the U.S.-led victory over Iraq in the first Persian Gulf War. During Bush’s visit, Kuwaiti authorities arrested 17 people allegedly involved in a plot to kill the president using a car bomb.

### ■ **Bill Clinton**

President Bill Clinton was targeted a number of times. Ronald Gene Barbour, a retired military officer, plotted to kill Clinton while the president was jogging. Barbour was sentenced to five years in prison and was released in 1998.

Frank Eugene Corder, a truck driver from Maryland, flew a stolen single-engine Cessna 150 onto the White House lawn and it crashed into a tree Sept. 12, 1994. He was killed in the crash and was the only fatality.

On Oct. 29, 1994, Francisco Martin Duran fired at least 29 shots with a semi-automatic rifle at the White House from a fence overlooking the North Lawn. Three tourists tackled Duran, who was arrested, tried, and sentenced to 40 years in prison.

### ■ **George W. Bush**

President George W. Bush was the target of a foreign assassination attempt while giving a speech on May 10, 2005, in Tbilisi, Georgia. Vladimir Arutyunian threw a Soviet-made grenade toward the podium. The grenade did not explode; Arutyunian escaped but was arrested in July of that year. During his arrest, he killed an Interior Ministry agent. He was convicted in January 2006 and given a life sentence.

Bush was also targeted in the United States. Shihab Ahmed Shihab Shihab, an Iraqi citizen who lived in Columbus, OH, was arrested for involvement in an assassination plot. The evidence against him came from conversations he held with several undercover FBI informants where he stated that his motivation was anger over the Iraq War.

### ■ **Barak Obama**

In December 2008, a 20-year-old U.S. Marine, Kody Brittingham, wrote that he planned to assassinate President-elect Barack Obama, whom he identified as a “domestic enemy.” He was arrested, tried, and sentenced to 100 months in federal prison in June 2010.

In November 2011, 21-year-old Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez attempted to kill Obama by firing several rounds at the White House from a semi-automatic rifle. No one was injured. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

A far-right terrorist group named “FEAR” plotted to carry out a series of terror attacks in 2011-2012, including the assassination of President Obama. The plot was foiled when four members of the

group were arrested on murder charges.

A man diagnosed with mental illness, Mitchell Kusick, was arrested after confessing to his therapist that he intended to kill Obama with a shotgun at a campaign stop in Boulder, CO.

### ■ **Donald Trump**

One of the more bizarre attempts on the life of a president was planned by 42-year-old man Gregory Lee Leingang. He planned to assassinate President

All of the American assailants were either apprehended quickly or sought to flee rather than become leaders of any political movement.

Donald Trump in Mandan, ND while Trump was visiting the state to rally public support. Leingang stole a forklift from an oil refinery and drove toward the presidential motorcade. After he was arrested, he admitted his intent to murder the president by flipping the presidential limousine.

Although his defense attorney asked for leniency on grounds of a “serious psychiatric crisis,” Leingang was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

### ■ **Conclusion**

There has been more violence directed at presidents and vice presidents than most American are generally aware of. But the record suggests that while U.S. presidents and presidential candidates often have been targeted by assassins or would-be assassins, such violence has rarely if ever – the Lincoln assassination plot being perhaps a partial exception – been intended to overthrow the American government.

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RALPH NURNBERGER is a Professor at Georgetown University. He is a frequent speaker for Smithsonian Journeys as well as at the Smithsonian Associates program.



# The Reaganism We All Need in Today's Politics

by **JONATHAN GREENBERG**

**M**ark Twain is said to have observed that “conservatism is the blind and fear-filled worship of dead radicals.” And, as one would expect from Twain, even a conservative has to acknowledge that there's truth to it. The American Founding, to pick an easy example, was a radical revolutionary movement now lauded by conservatives. Its leaders, reviled as traitorous extremists by the conservatives of their day, are today revered in conservative circles to the point of hagiography as amaranthine heroes.

Surely, it is appropriate to pay homage to and learn from legendary leaders. And yet there is, on the right, an increasingly vocal movement to stop engaging in what some believe is a wistful, counterproductive longing for the Reagan years.

Opponents of “Zombie Reaganism,” as they call it, argue that Ronald Reagan died 18 years ago, the world he led died long before that, and that he hasn't been on a ballot in almost 40 years. And yet many contemporary conservatives look to him not just for basic principles and rhetoric that can still be useful today, but to specific policy prescriptions and priorities that, opponents argue, are simply no longer relevant to American reality.

There is, however, one aspect of Reaganism that we should all be able to agree on: the West, by which we mean a set of ideas and principles rather than a geographical locus, is worthy of our loyalty and protection. Unfortunately, it's not at all clear that the free people of the world are still willing to make the choices – let alone the requisite sacrifices – to engage in that defense.

At the 1984 Republican National Convention, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick delivered a defense of America's role in the world known today as the “blame America first” speech. She reeled off a list of the challenges the free world faced and noted that contemporary Democrats typically found causation for those problems in American policy rather than in a readily identifiable bad actor. “But then,” she twisted the knife, “they always blame America first.”

This compliment – that we knew beating up on ourselves was both factually inaccurate and strategically and culturally dangerous – was true of the American people in 1984. Today, a large and ascendant portion of our citizenry believes the United States and the West are oppressive, colonialist, racist, misogynistic bad actors in the world and that our history is something of which to be ashamed.

In July of 2017, President Trump delivered a speech in Warsaw at least one section of which was surely recognizable

Reaganism that we should all be able to agree on: the West, by which we mean a set of ideas and principles rather than a geographical locus, is worthy of our loyalty and protection.

In 1984, this was a scathing indictment. Kirkpatrick's speech both reinforced the way President Reagan had made the country feel about itself – a renewed belief in our own greatness and mission in the world – and hammered the post-Vietnam moral uncertainty (or worse) of the American Left.

Kirkpatrick continued: “The American people...understand, just as the distinguished French writer, Jean Francois Revel, understands the dangers of endless self-criticism and self-denigration. He wrote, ‘Clearly a civilization that feels guilty for everything it is and does will lack the energy and conviction to defend itself.’”

to anyone who had lived through the Cold War. “The fundamental question of our time,” Trump said, “is whether the West has the will to survive. Do we have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost? Do we have enough respect for our citizens to protect our borders? Do we have the desire and the courage to preserve our civilization in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it?”

There is nothing in that paragraph that could not have been delivered by post-war presidents like Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy, or Lyndon Johnson. To those Democrats, the West was a set of ideas and institutions to be celebrated

and emulated. But times change. When it heard Trump's defense of Western civilization, the Left lost its mind.

Leftist writers called this section "shocking," "white nationalist rhetoric," "white-nationalist dog-whistling." One claimed, "the West is a racial and religious term." These reactions are illustrative of the effect of a long, slow decline in Western self-confidence. And while this decline isn't merely a phenomenon of the Left, the full-throated denunciations of our history and institutions are almost exclusively leftist.

Today, our decades-long failure to confront and mitigate this simmering disaffection has reached critical mass. At root are two major problems: our division on fundamental principles on which there used to be virtually unquestioned agreement, and the unsuitability

To most conservatives and many others, the institutions the West has built are, rightly, a source of tremendous pride. Unfortunately, those institutions mostly languish in varying states of distrust and disrepair, rendering them unsuited to the task of safeguarding our civilization. Ask yourself which of these formerly venerated institutions are trusted by most Americans: government, the courts, the military, and the engines of American culture such as Hollywood, schools, media, organized religion, the financial system, and the family. Of those, only the military still commands the trust of a significant majority of Americans.

In her 1984 speech, Kirkpatrick noted the success of the Reagan administration in achieving a "reaffirmation of historic American ideals." President Reagan,

institutions constrained our baser passions and culture motivated us to self-suppress destructive elements, electing a certain number of finger-in-the-wind snake oil salesmen was a survivable malady. Today, it's fatal.

Where possible, we must rebuild and reassert the value of proven institutions around which Western civilization has been built. The family unit and organized religion, both victims of decades of well-choreographed siege, misuse, and neglect, are nonetheless institutions we can't afford to lose.

And, yes, we must let much of what we loved about President Reagan recede into the mists of time. Our challenges today are not the challenges of the late 1970s. In Reagan's day, an enormous cohort of middle-aged Americans had spent their early 20s freeing Europe and the Pacific and experiencing firsthand the preferability of the American system. But we should retain his confidence in the greatness and goodness of America and Americans and his willingness to bring lifelong Democrats – like Ambassador Kirkpatrick – into the tent provided there was agreement on broad principles.

President Reagan, in his farewell speech from the Oval Office, touched on our failure to use his presidency to re-institutionalize what he called "the new patriotism." He knew, even then, that we risked forgetting the very confidence that Ambassador Kirkpatrick talked about in her 1984 Convention speech. "If we forget what we did," the president warned, "we won't know who we are."

There is no quick, easy way out of the mess in which we find ourselves. But without purposeful, immediate action, there is little chance of changing course. And time is running out.

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JONATHAN GREENBERG *is an ordained Reform rabbi who advises a family foundation and writes on Western civilization and culture, Judaism, and Israel. You can follow him on Twitter @jgreenbergsez.*

## Kirkpatrick's speech ... reinforced the way President Reagan had made the country feel about itself – a renewed belief in our own greatness and mission in the world.

of and lack of trust in the institutions we have established in the post-war era.

Our divisions on major questions render us virtually incapable of addressing the serious threats facing us. And these divisions seem to grow deeper and more paralyzing by the day. Many of these differences – are America and her power good? Are our past failures permanently morally disqualifying? Would the world be better if a non-Western power confronted us? – are nearly irreconcilable. No project of the Left better encapsulates the corrosive nature of this problem than the *New York Times's* 1619 Project which seeks to reorient the American Founding in the worldview of race fetishism and American self-loathing.

she said, "brought to the presidency confidence in the American experience, confidence in the legitimacy and success of American institutions, confidence in the decency of the American people, and confidence in the relevance of our experience to the rest of the world."

Creating an environment in which Americans and our Western allies can again believe in the goodness and rightness of our motives and actions should be pushing on an open door – especially since it will have the benefit of being true. But how?

We must get serious about electing leaders. That is far less simple than it seems. We have developed a bad habit of rewarding people who tell us what we want to hear. In an era in which

# Start with the School Board

by SHERI FEW

*“The education of all children, from the moment that they can get along without a mother’s care, shall be in state institutions.” – Karl Marx*

Imagine your child comes home from school one day, sullen and quiet. You ask what is wrong, but he will not say anything. Or your child says he must watch a video for school as homework, but the teacher says it is not for parents. Or your child suddenly announces at dinner that the only reason you live in a nice house, drive nice cars, and have delicious food on your table is because you have white privilege, not because you worked hard to earn success.

Not very long ago, you might have thought these examples extreme and impossible. “Not at my kid’s school,” you’d say. But more and more parents across the country are reporting incidents like these and others. This is no longer a hypothetical. It is really happening, and it is highly likely to be happening in your neighborhood school.

In November, voters all over America will go to the polls to elect their government representatives. As always, a significant amount of money will be spent on political ads for U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, governor, and state legislature races. Down-ballot candidates for local school boards don’t typically spend a lot of money on campaigns and are often overlooked by voters who either won’t vote in these races, or they will choose a candidate unknown to them.

A new precedent must be set. Outcomes of local school board elections this November are critical to protecting America’s children and our country’s freedom. Whether or not you have children or even grandchildren in government schools, school board elections will be the most important vote you cast on November 8!

## ■ **New School Curricula**

Government schools are assigning books that are pornographic in nature, teaching anti-American propaganda and Marxist critical theories. Without the consent of their family, government school children are being groomed, counseled, and even medicated to transition into a gender contrary to their biological gender.

Even worse is a form of pedagogy known as Culturally Relevant Teaching. This is the umbrella to several critical theories: critical race theory, critical queer theory, critical feminist theory, critical gender theory, and critical religion theory. Teachers are being trained to embed Culturally Relevant Teaching into every subject at every grade level. This nefarious pedagogy separates groups of people and pits them against one another. White, heterosexual men of good socio-economic status who are also Protestant are viewed as oppressors while every other race and ethnicity, women, LGBTQ, and what is termed “minority religions” are considered op-

pressed. This divisive view of American culture is harmful to the future of our country and threatens American freedom.

points out that while there are a lot of important issues like abortion, the economy, and more, all these issues cut across education. He says, “If we lose on education, it doesn’t matter what else we win.”

This important and timely film covers how critical race theory and other Marxist critical theories are embedded in America’s government schools. It addresses the sexualization of children with heavy transgender influences, and inaccurate, anti-American history.

In the film, April, a young mother of two, embarks on an eye-opening exploration of the current state of America’s government schools and makes some alarming discoveries regarding agendas kept hidden from the eyes of both students and parents like her. Through a series of interviews with educational experts, she explores the following questions:

## Teachers are being trained to embed Culturally Relevant Teaching into every subject at every grade level.

• Are public schools forming a wedge between parents and children?

• Are children being trained to become political activists for the political left?

• What is the true aim of so-called comprehensive sexuality education?

• How much transgender influence is there in government schools?

• How is critical race theory indoctrinating American children?

• Is there a federal education scheme to control the nation’s workforce?

April meets the authors of several books that guide her journey of discovery and give her a newfound mission – to educate parents of school-aged children about the indoctrination taking place in government schools.



Opponents of Critical Race Theory protest outside of the Loudoun County School Board headquarters, in Ashburn, Virginia in 2021. (Photo: Reuters/Evelyn Hockstein)

## ■ Gender & Politics in the Schools

One expert April interviews in the film is attorney and president of Child and Parental Rights Campaign Vernadette Broyles, who says,

*More and more, we are seeing school officials affirming and endorsing children in their gender dysphoria, in their assumed identities, purposefully excluding the parents from the conversation. Teachers or school officials, who appear to be responding to a coordinated message because we're seeing the same thing, almost the same verbiage and the same guidance, in different parts of the country that are separated by hundreds or even a thousand miles away: Massachusetts, Florida, Oregon, Washington, Ohio, different parts of the country. And the message is this: immediately affirm a child in school if they trans-identify and do not tell parents! Deliberately, do not inform parents!*

Retired professor and education advocate Dr. Carol Swain is also featured in *Truth & Lies in American Education*, and she addresses inaccurate history, saying,

*The New York Times, in the summer of 2019, launched the 1619 project that re-imagined America in the sense that it had a different birth date for our nation. Instead of 1776 and the Declaration of Independence, it listed 1619, the year when the first Africans came to America. The project argued that racism is in the DNA of America, that America was birthed in racism, that the Revolutionary War was fought to maintain slavery. And all of that was a false narrative and yet thousands of schools embraced that flawed curriculum that had been criticized by liberals, as well as conservatives.*

Director of FreedomProject Academy and professor at the University of Wisconsin, Dr. Duke Pesta is one of

the all-star cast members in this timely film exposing the Marxist agenda of the critical theorists. In the film he explains,

*Even left-wing college professors say, "This is not actual history, you made it up." The response of critical race people? "Doesn't matter if it's true or not. It's emotionally true. My lived experience as a black woman, whose ancestors were slaves, that's what's important here. Our whole history is rotten. Tear it down!" We are not preparing children for anything but revolution! This is how all socialist revolutions happen, right? You get people so dishonestly angry about the culture they live in that they throw it all away without even thinking about what we do next.*

## ■ Howard Zinn

Howard Zinn, an avowed communist, authored a textbook in 1980 that poisoned history in America's school. Professor Mary Grabar is interviewed in the documentary about the book she

wrote, *Debunking Howard Zinn*. Of his history textbook, she says:

*It is clearly an anti-American book. The hatred of America in that book just oozes out of every page. And he did it with such moral fervor, as he pretended to uncover historical secrets, so as to disabuse any sophomore of a desire to read these historians or anyone other than Howard Zinn, champion of the oppressed. Most school administrators would deny using his book, you know, back in the '80s or the '90s, or even the early 2000s, because they recognize that it was pretty radical.*

She explains that she was motivated to write her book because she hates communism, and she hates liars. “I get angered by these educators, these professors, who lie to indoctrinate students and to convert them to Marxism.”

## ■ **The Department of Education**

Most of the nefarious pedagogies being taught in government schools are pushed onto states by the U.S. Department of Education and other national influences. It is vital that concerned Americans are involved in the upcoming school board elections to ensure people are in office who are ready to take a stand for the children of America.

With only minor exceptions, the General Education Provisions Act, the Department of Education Organization Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, ban the U.S. Department of Education from directing, supervising, or controlling elementary and secondary school curriculum, programs of instruction and instructional materials. Despite these prohibitions, the Department of Education routinely uses federal money to bribe states to implement policies of great political significance intruding on power reserved for states. With the

Common Core standards, it was Race-to-the-Top grants, and with COVID-19 relief funds, it is critical race theory.

Despite dramatic increases in federal intervention and funding in the public education system since the 1960s, educational achievement has not improved. The most widely used measure of school achievement are scores from National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which has shown no signifi-

Despite dramatic increases in federal intervention and funding in the public education system since the 1960s, educational achievement has not improved.

cant change since the 60s, and with the COVID school shutdowns, the latest NAEP scores have plummeted.

Efforts to improve educational outcomes for low-income children have also been expensive and unproductive. Even the federal college grant and loan programs have been ineffective for students. The evidence is inarguable – the federal government’s intervention in education has been a dismal failure.

The U.S. Department of Education has existed because it is about control and not about children. Control through federal dollars used to bribe and blackmail states to push a toxic agenda on states and American children. Although this experiment with federal control of local public schools has gone on for half a century, it has failed. We need to stop treating children like guinea pigs in some social engineering laboratory and start embracing children as human beings to be supported and inspired to achieve their own dreams and aspirations.

## ■ **Start with the School Board**

It starts at the school boards. School boards are the ones influencing what our children are learning in federally funded schools, therefore they need to be filled with people who represent

those who have our children’s best interests at heart.

U.S. Parents Involved in Education (USPIE) seeks to return education to its proper local roots and restore parental authority over their children’s education by helping parents and local communities to escape federal and other national influences. Grassroots leaders from around the country are working through USPIE to 1) expose the lies being taught

in government schools that harm children and threaten freedom, 2) encourage parents to take back responsibility to educate their children, 3) initiate and support efforts to return complete local control of government schools, and 4) encourage states to wean themselves off the federal education dole.

It is the vision of USPIE to create a culture where parents, empowered with the authority to choose what and how their children learn, are the undisputed primary educators of their children; where local schools operate in support of families, and where education is unencumbered by federal mandates. The best tool we have in our toolbox for achieving this vision is local school board elections. Do your homework and know which candidates for school board in your community will work to restore truth and dispel lies in your local schools. Protecting children and our country’s freedom is dependent upon it.

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SHERI FEW is the founder and has served as president of South Carolina Parents Involved in Education since June 2000. She expanded into a national organization: U.S. Parents Involved in Education (USPIE) in 2014 and continues to serve as resident.

# America Needs a Return to First Principles

by **TUNKU VARADARAJAN**

**T**he 21st century so far hasn't been the best of times for America. First 9/11, then a precedent. The economy has suffered, and politics has been upended. American self-confidence has been badly bruised, and public trust in institutions has plummeted. What can we do about it?

That's the question that John Cogan and Kevin Warsh, both policy veterans, asked themselves in September 2020 when prompted by former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. She had just taken over as director of Stanford University's Hoover Institution, where both men are affiliated, and she made a pained but probing observation.

As Warsh tells it, Rice said that while "people know what we conservatives believe about economic policy, it doesn't seem like we're winning. It doesn't seem like we're persuading people." American policy makers and businesspeople, and leaders around the world, "are less sure why we believe what we believe, and they're less sure why they should believe it, too."

The two men treated Rice's lament as a challenge and set out to write what Mr. Cogan describes as "a call to action." Titled *Reinvigorating Economic Governance* and released in January, it outlines a policy framework based "on our nation's foundational principle of natural liberty." Governments at all levels, Cogan says, aren't dealing effectively with America's challenges: "It's because economic policy has strayed from what I think of as the first principles."

The two are well suited for the role. Cogan, 75, is an economist at Hoover who served in Ronald Reagan's budget office and is the author of an

encyclopedia book on the history of U.S. entitlement programs. Warsh, 52, worked in the George W. Bush White House and was a governor at the Federal Reserve during the financial crisis.

## ■ *A Force for Good*

Their paper is optimistic, almost revivalist, in tone, even as it highlights the many faults with American policy. The U.S. economy, it states, "is among the most powerful forces for good in the history of humankind." The authors credit the "micro-foundations of the economy" for having driven living standards "to heights unimaginable at the nation's founding."

Those foundations – Cogan's first principles – are private property rights, the rule of law, free and competitive markets, and limited government. The last includes "subsidiarity," meaning that no central authority should do what

with these microfoundations in place."

The pair aim to stir debate and perhaps shape policy platforms before the next presidential campaign: "We are far enough from campaigning," Warsh says, "for it to be an incubator, a laboratory, of the next ideas that can motivate a series of candidates." He insists it isn't merely a "messaging exercise" but an attempt to "make relevant and resonant the lessons of history and apply them to the challenges of today."

Cogan says the paper is aimed at "one, the general American public; two, informed citizens; and three, policy makers. I guess I'd put them in that order." Warsh adds that they're "trying to distill a whole lot of intellectual history and make it accessible. If we can't convince the man on the street, then good luck convincing the man in Washington."

...no central authority should do what can be done by a more local body, and no public institution should do what can be left to private enterprise.

can be done by a more local body, and no public institution should do what can be left to private enterprise.

"When you think about what drives America's GDP," Cogan says, "it's millions of individuals working, investing, saving and making allocative decisions

## ■ *Ideas, Individuals, Institutions*

The authors identify as the "sine qua non" of American prosperity the "three I's" – ideas, individuals, and institutions – as they put it in our conversation by Zoom. (Cogan speaks from his house in Portola Valley, CA, Warsh from his

apartment in Manhattan.) Their paper states that “a sound economic governance framework liberates the individual, encourages the promulgation of new ideas, and ensures the proper functioning of institutions.” A policy that offends any of these elements – by restricting the individual, stifling ideas, or letting institutions stray beyond their proper limits – is likely to harm the economy.

“This isn’t a model-centric view of how to maximize prosperity,” Warsh says, “but one based on experience, history and intuition.” Individuals who enjoy the fruits of their talents, ideas that enhance human welfare, and accountable institutions that don’t get in the way have “motivated this incredibly successful experiment in prosperity over 150 years. We’re trying to connect economic results to culture, to the Founding Fathers, so that we enact policies that ensure that the 21st century is as good for American prosperity as the 20th century was.”

In their paper, Cogan and Warsh write that “America’s constitutional design and civil order were designed to incline the individual toward good.” The nation’s commitment to its foundational principles, they say, “has yielded unrivaled economic gains.”

## ■ *The Chinese Model*

A major challenge to this worldview comes from China, which has achieved growth despite Communist Party control of much of the economy and the lack of political freedom. The Chinese model may look less attractive in light of Xi Jinping’s heavy-handed rule and his brutal and economically repressive zero-Covid policy, yet Warsh says there’s still a tendency in the U.S. to “want to adopt a set of industrial policies, to ensure that certain institutions are too big to fail, to make some private institutions quasi-public so that they’ll take their orders from central command.”

He elaborates by pointing to “this newfound trend to ensure that private companies now have a multitude of

interests,” a reference to the “stakeholder capitalism” movement that purports to subordinate profit to “environmental, social and governance” (ESG) objectives. The effort to hold large businesses to standards of “public responsibility,” Cogan adds, “is a way that government is trying to get corporations to carry out its public-policy preferences.”

Public institutions have been similarly politicized. “When they wander from their core remit,” Warsh says, “they create uncertainty that undermines the ability of households and businesses to make decisions.” He points to the Federal Reserve, where at 35 he was the youngest governor in Fed history after five and a-half years in markets at Morgan Stanley.

Congress mandates that the Fed control inflation. “Prices are now run-

in 2009 of our financial system created a profound fear that our financial institutions weren’t capable of meeting the stresses of markets.” The pandemic caused Americans to fear for their health. These three very different shocks led to a common result.

“What we know about governments,” Cogan says, “is that they continue to try to expand their roles in society. And what we find is, very often, emergencies allow government to expand its authority.” Warsh concurs, adding that with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, “a fourth shock in such a short period of time, there’s the risk that we normalize the extraordinary in the conduct of government policy. Therein lies the problem – that we’ll never go back to the equilibrium in the level of government that pre-

The effort to hold large businesses to standards of “public responsibility,” Cogan adds, “is a way that government is trying to get corporations to carry out its public-policy preferences.”

ning four times what the Fed’s definition of price stability is,” Warsh says. “I don’t think it’s a coincidence that it’s happening at the same time as they’ve wandered into other areas outside their remit – such as ESG and the role that the Federal Reserve should play with respect to racial equality.” The paper is scathing on the subject: “Under Chairman Jerome Powell, newfangled Federal Reserve policy is at odds with the prior 40 years of precedent in the conduct of policy.”

## ■ *Arrogating Power*

Major crises give public institutions an excuse to arrogate ever more power, Cogan says: “The 9/11 attacks created a national-security fear. The collapse

dated the 21st century.”

Cultural freedom plays a central role in economic growth, the paper argues: “Censoring ideas, whether controversial or unproven, produces stagnation.” They cite Paul Romer, a 2018 Nobel economics laureate, who argues that the search for new ideas is at the core of economic progress. So what does academia’s repressive atmosphere portend?

“When certain ideas are unworthy of debate or discussion,” Warsh says, “there’s no longer a premium on the pursuit of truth, or on the battle of ideas. It’s antithetical to the idea of a university that certain things be inarguable, or beyond the pale.” Future prosperity “requires people to think differently.”

In the same vein, the authors contend that the “Fed’s continued backstopping of financial markets” has retarded the generation of new ideas in the economy. “When the Fed has signaled to

for all reasons.” As the nation recovered from the Covid-induced recession, the U.S. economy boomed in 2021, with real growth of 5.7 percent. “Yet the Fed still decided to buy more than half of the debt

by noting that he has “concerns about even the Republican Party at this point.” He says the GOP has begun to “stray from these first principles” as many in the party call for “industrial policy, labor-market protections, tax credits that are merely handouts, and protectionist tariff policy.”

But he also suggests that free-market ideas are connected to the cultural concerns of social conservatives: “Under foundational principles that we outline, the individual and the family are paramount while government is limited. This hierarchy allows individuals to freely choose their path in life and to raise their children according to their values, not those of a government agency. This self-determination is what ultimately permits humans to flourish.”

“It’s antithetical to the idea of a university that certain things be inarguable, or beyond the pale.” Future prosperity “requires people to think differently.”

markets that they don’t want to let markets fall too much,” says Warsh, “that undermines the creative destruction that we think is essential to long-term prosperity.” Such a policy is “pro-incumbent, pro the largest firms in every vertical. It makes it harder for the motivated individual to bring a new idea, a new product or service, to market and disrupt an industry incumbent.”

### ■ **What Could Go Wrong?**

Related to this is what the authors call “epistemic humility.” “The best institutions know what they know, and they know what they don’t know,” Warsh says. “They should have a high degree of modesty about what they know of the future. And the best institutions know that bad things can happen.” In the period of prosperity that preceded the pandemic, he says, the Fed should have asked itself what could go wrong, “not what’s likely to go right.”

Instead, it continued its policy of quantitative easing – buying Treasury securities to increase the money supply and encourage investment and lending. The central bank adopted QE in 2008 as “an extraordinary emergency measure,” he says. “But the Fed has chosen to use it as a conventional tool – in all seasons,

issued by the Treasury. Accountability is blurred and institutional responsibilities are conflated” in ways that will “erode America’s long-term prosperity.”

### ■ **The Covid Response**

Cogan, who has spent many years writing about healthcare, cites the response of public-health authorities to the pandemic as another example of arrogance. “The damage from this immodesty was enormous for our society, in terms of the economy, harm to children, and poorer health outcomes beyond Covid, such as cancers not diagnosed, and treatments not made. It’s a very good example of how immodest institutions can have very grave consequences for society.” Without the lockdowns, he adds, the two enormous – and inflationary – fiscal packages that Congress passed would have been unnecessary.

Although their paper comes out as a midterm election campaign gets under way and expressly aims to influence the next presidential race, the authors avoid the partisan fray. Asked if Democrats or Republicans would be more receptive to their ideas, Cogan demurs: “We certainly hope that both parties would.” Then he alludes to the obvious answer

### ■ **The Optimist**

A self-professed optimist, Cogan hopes that “the experiences that we’ve been through as a country over the last two years might be an awakening of the American public to the dangers of straying from fundamental principles.” Warsh adds that there’s a danger in understating American power and resilience.

“Over the last 30 years,” he says, “we’ve become less and less confident that our system is the right system. It does seem to me that more emphasis has been placed on the weaknesses of America than upon its strengths.” Yet both men see the country as hungry for a return to its “natural liberty.” The U.S., they write, can again become a “beacon to the world” if its leaders “choose to empower the individual, encourage the development ... of new ideas, and ensure the fidelity of institutions to their mission.”

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TUNKU VARADARAJAN, a *Wall Street Journal* contributor, is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and at New York University Law School’s Classical Liberal Institute. This article is reprinted by permission.



# The Making of Three Great Americans

reviews by SHOSHANA BRYEN

**K**enneth Timmerman, Jason Greenblatt, and Manning Rubin have probably never met. But they share characteristics that make them quintessential Americans. They are willing to challenge conventional wisdom – Timmerman by the American left and America’s European allies, Greenblatt by America’s Middle East “peace processing community,” and Rubin by his upbringing as a small town American Jew – and create something better. They find themselves changed by their experiences. They are willing to tackle what they perceive as their own shortcomings – again to create something better. They epitomize the ability of Americans to change, grow, and write their own narratives.

Timmerman and Greenblatt make contributions to our understanding of the mess that is the Middle East and how America can work toward regional security. Both understand the malign impact of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the sometimes-malign impact of Western governments. Rubin reminds us that we can think we stand outside history, we can plan to stand outside history, but in the end, we are history.

Three great Americans. Three great books.

## ***And the Rest is History: Tales of Hostages, Arms Dealers, Dirty Tricks and Spies***

by Kenneth R. Timmerman

Author and journalist Ken Timmerman was a lot of things as the book opens: left wing, Francophile and

living in France, pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel, secular, and not particularly interested in the United States. It was a lot to overcome.

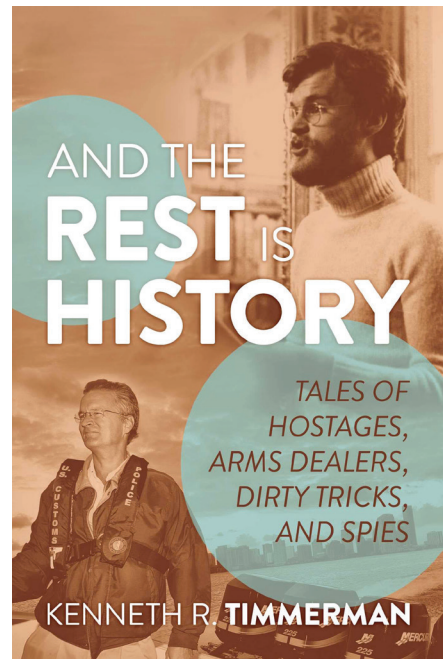
This is a crucial book for Americans, encompassing the 1982 Lebanon War, the Iran-Iraq War, and the First Gulf War. It was not that long ago, but what people, countries, groups, and governments did in those days appears largely swept into our collective mind as “past, and therefore irrelevant.” No, it isn’t. It still has an impact on our world and everyone – particularly Americans – should be reminded. Buy it.

Second, because “who did what to whom” will knock your socks off.

Timmerman is a great storyteller.

He starts in Lebanon, where he had gone from France as a journalist to cover the Israeli-Palestinian war of 1982. Fully believing Palestinian and French propaganda, he was fully sympathetic to the Palestinians, and so was shocked to discover Lebanese citizens cheering Israel’s bombardment of Yasser Arafat’s bases in the southern part of their country. It was his first lesson in the complexities of that sad place. Captured by the PLO in Beirut and accused of being Jewish (by virtue of his name and the fact that he was born in New York) and thus a spy for Israel, he was held in a miserable prison for several weeks.

Under emotionally and physically trying circumstances, Timmerman said, “I would lose most of my illusions and learn hard lessons,” about bearing physical pain and hopelessness, about forgiveness, about God, and about what he was willing to do to survive. And



that he wanted to survive. “When I was a spoiled teenager, I thought it was romantic to pretend I wouldn’t live past thirty. Now I desperately wanted to see my grandchildren grow up.” His children were toddlers at the time.

In a revelatory moment, he discovers that while the French Air Force was bombing Islamic Amal in Baalbek, ostensibly in retaliation for the bombing of the US Marine Barracks that killed nearly 300 American and French soldiers, a mole in the French foreign ministry tipped off the Iranians so they could evacuate their people. [Note: the French pop up all through the book and at no time do they look good.]

Timmerman leaves Lebanon.

Back in France, he continues as a stringer for various publications, writing about defense policy, weapons developments, and arms sales – entering territory different from but no less dangerous than what he had left.

The murky world of arms sales – and the technology involved in the sales – is a bit much for a lot of people. Don’t get bogged down. Just remember that our friends the French were selling everything they had – and a lot of things that weren’t theirs to sell – to everybody from Africans to Saddam Hussein to the mullahs of Iran. And the Germans, less than half a century after gassing the Jews of Europe, was selling poison gas to Saddam and he was gassing the Kurds. (By the way, the Americans were not entirely clean.)

As his career advanced and his work detailing arms deals under and over the table advanced, Timmerman relates an odd experience about French journalists who were briefed by French intelligence officials before going to certain countries and given a list of “sensitive” topics that, perhaps, they would learn about as they went – they were called “patriotic missions” and the journalists never expected nor received remuneration. Timmerman had his own “patriotic missions” a bit later as his view of the United States changed. [Disclosure: my husband was

a DoD official in charge of technology security in the Reagan administration. Timmerman met him a long time ago.]

The cross-arming of Iran and Iraq by Western governments during the 1980s is the crux of the middle third of the book. Saddam was closer to a nuclear weapon than most Americans think today. An American government official confirmed that US intelligence had Saddam at about “five years from the bomb. Now we know he had five weapons programs and was just one year from the bomb.” [Revelation: the Israelis kept the extent of the damage from Saddam’s SCUD attacks in 1990 quiet; more than 2,000 buildings were destroyed, but heavy pressure from Washington kept Israel from retaliating. “The language Baker used was pretty ugly... His anti-Semitism was showing.”]

During those years, Timmerman had French government “associates.” Some supplied him with useful information and cautions as they did with French journalists; others were spying on him. In 1992, one of his “handlers” “apologetically” told him that the government had decided he was a spy, and it would be wise to leave the country. Now.

He left France.

A stint on Capitol Hill working for Rep. Tom Lantos, and a series of discoveries about the Clinton administration’s dealings with China, made him as unpopular with Democrats in Washington as he had been with the PLO, the Iraqis and the French.

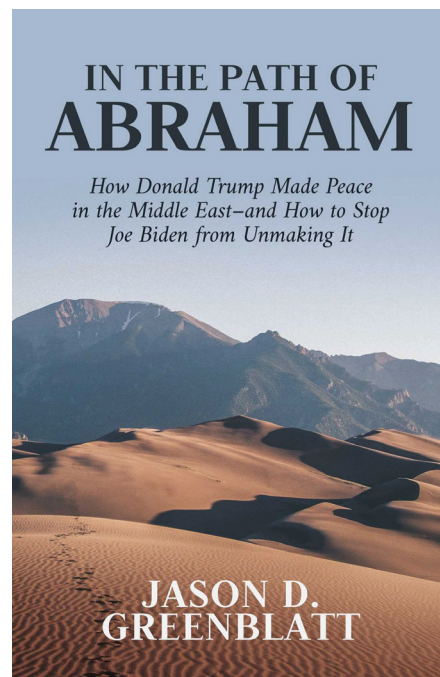
He left.

You should, by now, understand that all governments, including our own, contain people who can be venal, money-driven, and two-faced. They also contain people who will go to the wall for what’s right and to protect those who seek the truth. Both are all over this important book.

[End Note: By 1994, Timmerman was living in Maryland, a Christian with a wife and five children (yes, he got the grandchildren), pro-Israel, and conservative. There was only one thing left. He changed his registration to Republican.]

## ***In the Path of Abraham: How Donald Trump Made Peace in the Middle East - and how to Stop Joe Biden from Unmaking It***

*by Jason Greenblatt*



Jason Greenblatt was executive vice president and chief legal officer to Donald Trump and the Trump Organization. In January 2017, he was appointed by President Trump as an Assistant to the President and Special Representative for International Negotiations. He was one of the chief architects of the optimistic but short-lived Peace to Prosperity Plan, offering Palestinians a legitimate shot at something good for their people. He was a key player in the development of the much more successful Abraham Accords.

You know what the Abraham Accords are but take a great and deep dive into how the Accords transformed the Middle East and Persian Gulf.

Greenblatt’s job, as he described it, was to “find a new way around old obstacles.” Acknowledging that he had no specific experience as a diplomat, he did have experience as a negotiator – the *sine qua non* of which is the ability to bring parties to agreement.

There were two only two problems:

first, thirty years of “peace processing” had worn a groove in the floor without producing a Palestinian state. The “two-state solution” was widely bandied about but no one seemed to consider why it hadn’t happened. In Greenblatt’s view, they failed because they ignored both the corruption of the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas-Fatah civil war in Gaza. And second, the Palestinians did not want to have a serious negotiation because a “two state solution” was not their goal; destruction of Israel was. He didn’t have to worry about it for long. The PA cut off talks with the administration after the U.S. Embassy moved to Jerusalem.

Beginning with his belief that the “two state solution” had never been viable, Greenblatt was watching the quiet (sometimes secret) relations between the Gulf Arab States and Israel ramping up. They were pulled by the promise of economic and technological cooperation and pushed by the threat of Iran. They were willing to make a paradigm shift because they believed that President Trump would be a loyal ally – to Israel as well as to them.

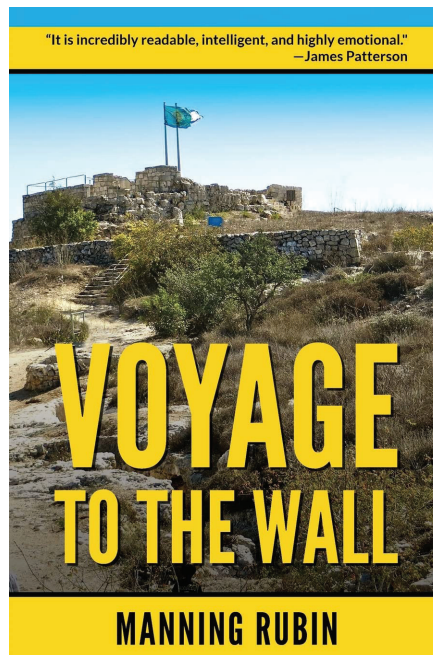
That shift – and the American shift from focus on the Palestinians to the Arab world – is the story. Greenblatt’s own growth as a diplomat is the subtext. Quiet and serious, he made his case clearly and without apology, and seems always to have had a kind thought for others, even those with whom he vigorously disagreed (see Said Erekat). Devoutly religious and devoutly patriotic, he figured out where the stream was going, and he helped guide the American ship.

He ends where friends of Israel have to end – with the threat posed by Iran and the possibility that countries who believe the US won’t protect them, and Israel can’t do it alone, will have to try to make their own accommodation with the Islamic Republic.

Thoughtful and well-written, this is both a paean to forward thinkers in many countries, and a warning that progress can be thwarted. An important read.

## *Voyage to the Wall*

by Manning Rubin



In the 21st Century, it has become frighteningly possible to believe that the Holocaust is just another bit of history

American shift from focus on the Palestinians to the Arab world – is the story. Greenblatt’s own growth as a diplomat is the subtext.

and “Holocaust” is just another word. “Holocaust literature” has become so pervasive that it is hard to open another cover. But the Holocaust is not comprehensible to those of us who weren’t there – and that’s now about 99 percent of us – and more books about the destruction of European Jewry don’t generally help.

But in *Voyage to the Wall*, Manning Rubin takes a different path.

Semi-autobiographical (he calls himself Joey Goldman), this is a single-eye view of someone who believes he is unaffected by the lives and deaths of the Jews of Europe, and how he becomes aware that he IS affected. He doesn’t ask you to experience what you cannot. He doesn’t ask you to put yourself in the shoes of someone you can never be and never want to be and hope your children won’t be. You are an initially disinterested observer as Joey was – and, as observers often are, you are drawn into the object of your study. But outside, where you belong. Until you aren’t.

Manning Rubin’s debut novel is based in part on his experiences as a naïve, young Jewish soldier in Germany in WWII who discovers the Holocaust and death camps. He uses his Army position after the war to help the undergrown Jewish Brigade collect military supplies for Palestine and help desperate Jewish refugees get to the only place that wants them. Palestine.

You feel the impact of his learning and the attachment of one man to all of Jewish history – the worst parts and the best. This is not “Holocaust literature,” it is modern Jewish literature and a great read.

SHOSHANA BRYEN is Editor of *inFOCUS* Quarterly and Senior Director of the Jewish Policy Center.



PO Box 77316  
Washington, DC 20013

### ■ *A Final Thought ...*

## Trump Gave Biden A Recipe For American Energy Security. Biden Tossed it Out.

In life, the same people can be friends, then enemies, then friends again. The same is true of countries. In the case of energy policy, that argues for American self-sufficiency as much as possible to minimize the bad times.

Former President Donald Trump took care of that, filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve with oil that was basically without cost in the middle of a Saudi-Russia production dispute. Gasoline, which had averaged \$2.60/gal in 2019, dropped to \$2.17 in 2020. The choices of the Biden administration, however, have led to increased reliance on countries with which our relations are changeable at best.

President Joe Biden's first executive order in 2021 was to close the Keystone XL pipeline, designed to bring more than 800,000 bbl/day of Canadian shale to the U.S., and to limit fracking.

While stifling our environmentally conscious ally Canada, data from the U.S. government data shows that American oil imports from dirty Russia rose 28

percent in the first 11 months of 2021.

Russia? Yes. The U.S. imports oil from Russia to the West Coast because American regulations make it difficult to get oil from the Gulf of Mexico to California and shipping it from Russia is simpler. While amounting to only about 8 percent of total U.S. oil imports in 2021, it was double the amount of the previous year and in March of 2022, totaled about 500,000 bbl/day.

In 2019, oil averaged \$67/bbl, stifling the Russian economy, and American production met 97 percent of domestic energy needs. In the past 12 months, oil has been as high as \$130/bbl and in September was about \$85/bbl; the Russians are making more money selling less; The EU is looking for a deal that will keep Russian natural gas flowing during the coming winter; and the U.S. is begging the Saudis to pump more while Biden empties the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

The choice for the Biden administration is clear — stop.