

VOLUME 19 ISSUE 2 | SPRING 2025

*in*FOCUS

QUARTERLY

Rethinking the State



Mark Meirowitz on Constitutional Powers | Diana Furchtgott-Roth on Domestic Energy Production | Bjorn Lomborg on Climate Policy | Elijah Gullett on Opportunities for Infrastructure Reform | Gil Kapen on UN Politics | Ilya Shapiro on Free Speech and Demonstrations | Bradley Bowman and Mark Montgomery on Defense Budgeting | Mark Pfeifle on Waste at the Pentagon | Todd Bensman on Trump's Border Policies | Joel Himelfarb on Sanctuary Cities | Tal Fortgang on Ending DEI Programs | Shoshana Bryen reviews *The Power and the Money*

An Interview with Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA)

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Buckle up. The election of President Donald Trump may presage the largest change in public policy since the 1937 Brownlow Commission told FDR he needed six aides to help him run The New Deal. The aides would, the commission said, “remain in the background, issue no orders, make no decisions (and) emit no public statements.” They would be “possessed of high competence” and a “passion for anonymity.”

Not quite. The Civil Service expanded from 699,000 people in 1940 to 1.8 million in 1960 to 2.079 million in 2024. And they have been making public statements and spending public money in ways we are just beginning to understand.

There is reform in our future – size, shape, revenues and expenditures, and foreign and domestic policies – that will determine what America looks like going forward.

Our authors have ideas.

Start with money. Read JPC Senior Director Shoshana Bryen’s interview with Iowa Senator Joni Ernst – Chairman of the DOGE caucus and guardian of taxpayer dollars. And Mark Meirowitz reminds us that governance is about America’s roots as well as its money.



Energy policy is the purview of Diana Furchtgott-Roth and Bjorn Lundborg. Elijah Gullet takes on infrastructure reform. Bradley Bowman assembles a group to consider the structure and financing of defense, and Mark Piefle offers examples. Tal Fortgang wants to end DEI. Todd Bensman considers the rules for a US visa, and Joel Himelfarb shows how illegal immigration takes a city off the rails. Ilya Shapiro makes the legal case for unmasking demonstrators, while Gil Kapen makes a moral case for defunding UN committees that undermine basic American foreign policy goals.

And don’t miss Shoshana’s review of Tevi Troy’s new book, *The Power and the Money: The Epic Clashes Between Commanders in Chief and Titans of Industry*.

If you appreciate what you’ve read, I encourage you to make a contribution to the JPC. You can use our secure site: www.jewishpolicycenter.org/donate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Brooks".

Matthew Brooks
Publisher

inFOCUS

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Our Resilient Constitution

by MARK MEIROWITZ

Next time on a visit to Washington, DC, go to the National Archives and take a look at the US Constitution – which has held our nation in good stead since the time of the Founding. The Founding Fathers were worried that this document would be a mere “parchment barrier(s) against the encroaching spirit of power.” (Madison, *Federalist*

Said Judge Don Willett of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, “[t]he Framers were not tinkers. They upended things. The Constitution inaugurated a revolutionary design. Madisonian architecture infused with Newtonian genius: three separate, coequal branches locked in synchronous orbit by competing interests. Ambition counteracting ambition.” (echoing Madison in *Federalist Papers* No. 51)

“Madisonian architecture infused with Newtonian genius: three separate, coequal branches locked in synchronous orbit by competing interests. Ambition counteracting ambition”

Papers No. 48) Instead, this majestic Constitution of ours has been resilient, seeing our nation, from its inception through some of our greatest crises, often righting the ship of state when we as a nation were faced with what appeared to be insurmountable challenges.

The Framers created a practical document. Unlike some law codes with hundreds of pages of small details, the Constitution gives us a framework for the structure of government, with much left to interpretation. Whether one is a textualist like US Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia or an adherent of the idea of a living Constitution, like Justice Stephen Breyer, the fact is that our Constitution has been flexible enough to move along with changing times and address the most pressing crises.

■ The Test of Power

The Founders were also realists. They realized that they were putting together a Constitution for people, not for angels (angels would not need a government since angels are perfect). Indeed,

The Founders also wanted to create a system that would survive the test of time. They were keenly concerned about how posterity would view their efforts.

said Madison, “[i]n 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)

They understood the great enigma and paradox of government – that government needs power to govern, but the natural tendency of government is to seek to aggrandize power. (“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” – Lord Acton) How to deal with this involves creating a system wherein government is set up so its branches will be competitive and no one branch will ever become so ascendant as to overwhelm the others. This is what the Founding Fathers achieved with the US Constitution.

■ The Test of Time

The Founders also wanted to create a system that would survive the test of time. They were keenly concerned about how posterity would view their efforts. In the Declaration of Independence, for example, Jefferson made clear that “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the sepa-

ration” (the American colonists needed to explain themselves). So too the Constitution would have to be fashioned

to last through generations to follow.

Indeed, Benjamin Franklin's response to Mrs. Elizabeth Powel that what he and other delegates at the Constitutional Convention were doing was fashioning "a Republic if you can keep it" was prescient and has been the hallmark of our American system throughout our history. Franklin real-

■ Rule of Law

As for respect for the rule of law, said Chief Justice John Marshall in **Marbury v. Madison**, a foundational case which established the principle of judicial review, "[i]t is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is." The Framers weren't so sure that the Judiciary was up to the

"We The People" do elect the members of Congress and select the President through the electoral college, under our Constitution, the people don't have a direct say in the appointment of federal judges (who we even trust to serve for life – as the Constitution puts it, our federal judges "shall hold their Offices during good Behaviour"). While it is true that the President nominates federal judges and the Senate approves their appointments, there is a formidable leap of faith built into our system that our federal judges will follow the Constitution and the rule of law.

Andrew Jackson might have said (it is probably apocryphal) that "Justice [John] Marshall [chief justice of the Supreme Court at the time] has made his decision, now let him enforce it" relating to **Worcester v. Georgia**. He referred to Marshall's order that the Native Americans could not be removed, but Jackson thought the Supreme Court decision was "stillborn." This led to the forced relocation of Native American tribes and ultimately to the Trail of Tears. But for the most part during our history, there has been respect for the decisions of the US Supreme Court and the rule of law. This is the glue that keeps our republic together.

Our longevity as a republic stems in large part from two basic principles: one is that government derives its power from the people ("We the People"), and the other is fealty to the rule of law.

ized that keeping our system of government in place needed enormous effort and dedication.

Our longevity as a republic stems in large part from two basic principles: one is that government derives its power from the people ("We the People"), and the other is fealty to the rule of law.

■ Power from the People; Power to the People

The Founders, who for the most part were drawn from the elite in social class and wealth, were also candid about the difficulty of creating a democracy. Said George Mason, "[n]otwithstanding the oppression and injustice experienced among us from democracy, the genius of the people is in favor of it, and the genius of the people must be consulted." Justice Louis Brandeis was on target when he said that "[t]he only title in our democracy superior to that of president is the title of citizen." Simply stated by Richard Hofstadter, "...the Fathers commonly accepted, for if government did not proceed from the people, from what other source could it come?" The fact is that Americans have always believed in the people.

job. Alexander Hamilton was of the view that the Judiciary was not very powerful (indeed, said it was "the least dangerous" branch) because it "has no influence over either the sword [the Executive] or the purse [the Legislature] ... It may truly be said that to have neither FORCE nor WILL, but merely judgment; and must ultimately depend on the aid of the executive arm even for the efficacy

Our Constitution has been flexible enough to move along with changing times and address the most pressing crises.

of it judgments." (Hamilton, *Federalist Papers* No. 78)

Over our history, however, the Judiciary, and in particular, the Supreme Court, have dealt with the most pressing issues facing American society.

Also, it is worth noting that while

The arguments we have heard recently that Judges with whom political leaders disagree should be impeached, that "Judges aren't allowed to control the executive's legitimate power" or that government agencies should be fed to the wood chopper - will cause our



The US Constitution starting with “We the People.”

political system to veer off its track and should be actively discouraged. Happily, these ideas and developments will likely prove to be outliers in our history.

■ The Bill of Rights

Our Bill of Rights is the envy of many – and perhaps deeply despised by authoritarian and despotic states. These dictatorships call themselves “People’s Republics” – but that is a sham. They even try to argue that their systems are democratic in some form.

Wang Yi, the Foreign Minister of the People’s Republic of China, was of the view that “democracy is not Coca-Cola, which with the syrup produced in the United States, tastes the same across the world...China’s socialist democracy is a whole-process, most representative democracy. It embodies the will of the people, fits our country’s realities, and is endorsed by the people. To label China as authoritarian or a dictatorship simply

because China’s democracy takes a different form than that of the United States is in itself undemocratic.” (Council on Foreign Relations, April 23, 2021)

I would say that the American syrup will always taste the best since it has the flavor of real freedom.

So, when you have the chance, visit the National Archives and take a look at the US Constitution, our marvelous and resilient founding document which has carried us through times of war and peace, and helped to preserve our precious democracy. I think we would wholeheartedly agree with former President Calvin Coolidge who said that “[t]o live under the American Constitution is the greatest political privilege that was ever accorded to the human race.”

■ The Future

We have heard recently that America is in a “constitutional crisis.” I would beg

to differ. What we are seeing is a democracy full of energy, in which our institutions of government are striving to do what is best for the nation (not an easy task). The process of coming to agreement will often require compromise (just as it did when the Founders formulated the original US Constitution), and with the institutions and branches of government functioning effectively as the Founders had envisioned. This will also require enormous fortitude.

Our resilient Constitution remains the cement that keeps our society together. So, as long as we persevere in our respect for the people and the rule of law, America, as President Ronald Reagan said, will truly be a “city on a hill” where “all eyes are on us” as a moral example to the world.

MARK MEIROWITZ, Ph.D., is a Professor at the State University of New York Maritime College.

America's Secure Energy Policy — At Home and Abroad

by DIANA FURCHTGOTT-ROTH

President Donald J. Trump has taken off the shackles of energy production by ending the Democrats' war on fossil fuels. He is promoting oil and gas production, canceling the ban on new exports of natural gas, ending requirements for sales of electric vehicles and other electric appliances, and withdrawing from the Paris Agreement and other commitments of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The ease with which Trump has reversed his predecessors' energy agenda has stunned not only Democrats but also the global environmental establishment. Out with NetZero, incentives for wind and solar, and offshore wind on Federal lands. In with oil and natural gas production, domestic manufacturing, and the choice of old cars or Teslas, as well as gas or electric stoves.

Domestically, this means lower electricity and transportation costs. With increased output, the North American energy platform, with its heavy crude from Canada and Mexico and its light crude and refineries in the United States, will be able to set prices.

Globally, countries will no longer have to depend on corrupt governments as sources of oil and gas. The president's goal is energy dominance, which means producing enough oil and natural gas to replace OPEC countries as the global price setter, cutting into Russia's oil revenues and weakening its economy.

America will no longer have to rely on China for critical minerals, renewables, and electric vehicles. China produces a large share of the renewables

mandated by President Joe Biden, and about 80 percent of electric batteries.

Europe and the United Kingdom will be pressured into softening their strict NetZero laws and following suit. Staying on the same path will sow social

million barrels per day, potentially driving prices below \$50 a barrel.

Trump's actions are welcome news. America faces a national energy emergency because the Biden administration has created a serious and dangerous en-

The president's goal is energy dominance, which means producing enough oil and natural gas to replace OPEC countries as the global price setter, cutting into Russia's oil revenues and weakening its economy.

unrest as European GDP growth slows, unemployment rises, and differences in standards of living between America and Europe grow.

In emerging economies, more support for fossil fueled power plants will lower energy prices, as US and international banks start lending for fossil fuel projects. This 180-degree turn will give America leverage among energy-starved regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and South Asia, all areas that are affected by energy poverty.

■ *Secure Energy at Home*

The United States has approximately 1.7 trillion barrels of technically recoverable oil and over 4 quadrillion cubic feet of technically recoverable natural gas resources, enough to use at home and export to Europe and Asia. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent proposed increasing US production by 3

energy situation so damaging to ordinary people and our country that it requires immediate action.

Biden's energy agenda caused prices of electricity and transportation to rise, raising inflation, disproportionately hurting poor people, small businesses and farmers.

These poorly considered climate regulations impoverished Americans and made China rich without lowering global emissions or temperatures. Four more years of Democrat green energy policies would have indebted the nation through subsidies and high energy costs while only reducing global temperatures by two tenths of one degree by 2100, according to government models.

Trump's executive orders will reverse Biden's damage. He has paused final Environmental Protection Agency regulations that require 70 percent of new cars sold in 2032 to be battery-powered

electric or plug-in hybrid, up from eight percent today, or face fines and mandatory purchases of credits. This is wise because these cars are more expensive than gasoline-powered vehicles. The popular Chevy Silverado is \$96,000 for an electric, \$42,300 for a gasoline-powered pickup truck.

Auto companies also have had to deal with California auto regulations, and California's Advanced Clean Car II Rules require all new vehicles sold in the Golden State to be plug-in hybrid or pure battery powered by 2035. Trump wants to rescind President Biden's waiver for California that allowed it to set auto regulations. Without the waiver, California cannot set its own vehicle emission standards.

The average US residential electricity price is 17 cents per kilowatt-hour, and rates range from 11 cents per kilowatt-hour in Utah and Louisiana to 33 cents in California. (Hawaii, in the Pacific, has a higher rate.) Of the 10 states with the highest electricity prices, all but one has required use of renewables. Of the 10 states with the lowest electricity prices, all but one have no requirements for renewables.

The residential cost of electricity has risen by 32 percent since January 2021. With 50 states, each with its own way of producing electricity, it's clear that the required use of renewables leads to higher prices. This is because intermittent energy is more complicated to produce than continuous energy. The wind blows for free, and the sun shines for free, but integrating their energy into the electricity grid is more complicated and costly than running a natural gas generator continuously.

Trump wants to roll back incentives for wind and solar, which reduce production of electricity from natural gas, coal and nuclear power, and send electricity bills higher. He has ended the ban on new natural gas exports, which has hurt our allies, and is speeding up permitting for pipeline construction to get the natural gas to export terminals.

American states are still free to



Pump jack at oil well in a milo maize field near Mission, Texas. (Photo: Witold Skrypczak / Alamy)

impose their own restrictions on energy production, and many will continue to do so. But states that want to produce energy can now, in Trump's inimitable words, "drill, baby, drill," and access "the liquid gold under our feet." The direct consequences will be to lower the costs of American electricity and

make it easier to attract energy intensive manufacturing.

■ **Emasculating OPEC and China**

Energy dominance will allow America to produce enough oil and natural gas to replace OPEC countries as the

global price setter. As noted above, with increased output, the North American energy platform will be able to set prices.

Sales of US oil and natural gas can give countries an alternative to Russian products and cut into Russian sales. Russian oil and natural gas revenues in 2024, the vast majority from oil, amounted to \$120 billion, about 30 percent of its total revenues, substantially lower than levels of 50 percent between 2011 and 2014.

This will be even more important when fighting in Ukraine ends, with possible removal of sanctions on Russia. Trump would be able to pressure countries to use American oil rather than Russian oil, potentially using tariffs to encourage buyers.

Trump's planned increase in domestic production of critical minerals would cut into China's current dominance. China now controls 38 percent of the reserves of global rare earth elements; 60 percent of rare earth mining; 85 percent of rare earth processing, and 90 percent of rare earth permanent magnet manufacturing. This enables the

Supporting China's green dominance is especially egregious because the Chinese Communist Party is a totalitarian regime with a poor environmental and human rights record. Beijing is committing genocide against the minority Uyghur people of Xinjiang and has imposed draconian restrictions on political freedoms in Hong Kong. The CCP has reduced or eliminated religious liberties for Christians and Buddhist worshippers of the Dalai Lama throughout Tibet and is now censoring churches in mainland China.

■ ***Pressuring Europe to Abandon NetZero***

The international consequences of Trump's energy revolution go beyond dominating export markets and reshaping foreign policy. By walking away from the NetZero fiasco that has taken over the West, Trump is quietly pressuring other countries to do the same. Uncuffing ourselves from NetZero will cause American growth to accelerate and lead other countries to take a clear-eyed look at their electricity prices to stop the giant sucking

Right-of-center European parties are making gains due to impatience with NetZero policies that raise the costs of electricity and car ownership. Farmers are protesting in countries including France and the Netherlands due to required changes in agricultural practices.

Similarly, when President Ronald Reagan and Congress reduced America's top tax rate from 50 percent to 28 percent in the Tax Reform Act of 1986, many other countries followed suit to remain competitive. The top rate in Britain declined to 40 percent from 60 percent; Canada's top rate went from 34 percent to 29 percent; Japan lowered its rate from 70 percent to 50 percent; and New Zealand reduced its top rate from 66 percent to 33 percent.

With American energy dominance, companies that have factories in Europe and America could choose to expand their American operations. And decoupling from China, another of Trump's goals, will be far easier with lower energy prices and tax rates.

Cheaper energy caused by additional US production and loans for fossil-fuel power plants would benefit people without reliable electricity and cheap fuel in emerging economies. Lower oil prices empower countries with poor electricity distribution, lowering costs of diesel generators used by businesses and households.

■ ***Prosperity and Reduced Migration***

Trump has come under fire for closing down the US Agency for International Development and ending billions in foreign aid. But to help emerging economies and to stem migration pressures, Trump could, at no cost, roll back the ban on loans to poor countries for fossil fuel power projects.

Currently international development organizations and private banks are pressured to lend only for green energy. That means no loans for power plants, transmission lines for fossil fuel electricity, or distribution lines and

Rolling back requirements for wind and solar energy, as well as electric vehicles and appliances, will reduce America's dependence on China

production of 80 percent of solar components, global battery production, and cobalt refining capacity.

Rolling back requirements for wind and solar energy, as well as electric vehicles and appliances, will reduce America's dependence on China and improve American energy, economic, and national security. China is trying to corner the market for green energy infrastructure formerly mandated by American politicians and still mandated by Europe.

sound of manufacturing following the lowest energy prices.

By abandoning electrification mandates, Trump will not only reduce Chinese exports to America but may encourage Europeans to follow in order to remain competitive. It would be unsustainable for Europe to stand back and watch manufacturing relocate to America due to lower electricity and transport costs. American tax reductions will add further pressure.

meters to people's homes. This ban gives China more leverage to lend to African and Latin American countries and take their ports as collateral.

agricultural yields, and higher household consumption, which reduces the drudgery of subsistence farming. With energy, farmers either have access to in-

means to quickly recover. Access to affordable energy is vital to rectify these inequalities.

For example, Lesotho, Djibouti, and Zimbabwe each consumed less than 4,000 kWh of energy on a per capita basis in 2018. That year, they each had an average of about \$4,450 in per capita income and consumed approximately \$3,400 (in 2018 dollars). On the other hand, Norway, the United States, and Iceland each consumed more than 80,000 kWh of energy (per capita) and each had almost \$45,000 in per capita GDP and more than \$22,000 in consumption.

When low-energy-use countries are prevented from accessing reliable energy, their residents search abroad for other opportunities. Illegal immigration is imposing substantial economic costs on the United States and Western Europe. Allowing real economic progress in Latin America and Africa would relieve some of the pressure to move.

President Trump is making US energy dominance a key component of American foreign policy while ensuring that domestic and international goals are aligned. His new path will allow the United States not only to secure affordable energy for its citizens, markets for

The relationship between economic development and energy use is so strong that not a single nation has high per capita income and low per capita energy usage.

Refusing to lend for fossil fuel power projects has more harmful economic effects than ending some of USAID's \$40 billion in funding, because this ban keeps emerging economies poor. Lack of fossil fuel energy is impoverishing many African and Latin American countries and placing pressure on residents to migrate to fossil fuel rich areas, particularly Europe and North America, in search of higher standards of living.

Consider that in 2020, 11 million people from Africa were living in Europe; 5 million in Asia; and 3 million in North America. The same year, about 25 million people from Latin America were living in North America.

Although some have left, 140 private banks from 44 countries, including Barclays, JP Morgan Chase, and Sumitomo, joined the United Nations' NetZero Banking Alliance and have pledged to reduce lending for fossil fuel projects. The World Bank discourages lending for fossil fuels and nuclear power and prioritizes renewables.

The relationship between economic development and energy use is so strong that not a single nation has high per capita income and low per capita energy usage. Conversely, no country has high energy use per capita and low per capita income.

Higher energy use allows for better lives from higher productivity, increased

novative farming technologies, or gain economic mobility to learn other skills to make a livelihood.

Countries that only use around 500 kilowatt hours of energy per person annually often have subsistence-level production and incomes of around \$1,000 per year, making migration an attractive prospect. When energy consumption is above 10,000 kWh per person, poverty declines drastically, with a virtual eradication at around 100,000 kWh per person.

High-energy-use nations have ac-

Uncuffing ourselves from NetZero will cause American growth to accelerate and lead other countries to take a clear-eyed look at their electricity prices to stop the giant sucking sound of manufacturing following the lowest energy prices.

cess to more doctors and safer drinking water, which result in lower maternal and child mortality, as well as investments in pollution-mitigation measures.

The West romanticizes nature, but natural disasters disproportionately inflict greater humanitarian damage on poor and developing countries than on wealthy ones, due to disparities in warning systems, resilient shelter, and the

its energy exports, and access to new energy natural resources—but to make dramatic changes around the globe.

DIANA FURCHTGOTT-ROTH, is Director of the Center for Energy, Climate and Environment at The Heritage Foundation and served in the administrations of Presidents Reagan, Bush '41, Bush '43, and Trump '45.

Killing off Expensive Climate Policy

by BJORN LOMBORG

The latest climate summit has been as hypocritical and dysfunctional as every one before, with most world leaders not even bothering to turn up. Still, 50,000 people flew in from across the world, while essentially telling the rest of us to stop flying. Poor-country politicians performatively staged a “walk-out,” and rich nations ended up promising a climate slush fund of \$300 billion a year.

This extravagant payoff is unlikely to happen, just like previous fanciful pledges made over three decades of climate summits. While virtually every summit has promised to cut emissions, they’ve increased almost every year, and 2024 reached a new high. In 2021, the world promised to phase-down coal. Since then, global coal consumption has only gone up.

We need a different game plan — and the decisive election of Donald Trump may upend these sanctimonious summits. Therein lies an opportunity for the world.

■ *Pretending on Both Sides*

Carbon emissions continue to grow because cheap, reliable power, mostly from fossil fuels, drives economic growth. Wealthy countries like the United States and European Union members have started to cut emissions, but the rest of the world remains focused on eradicating poverty.

The rich world has tried to bribe the poor to agree to emission cuts, mainly by rebranding existing development aid. Unsurprisingly, rich countries paying lip service to the payoffs has led to poor

countries paying lip service to the climate pageantry, while actually driving economic growth with ever-more fossil fuels. Promising hundreds of billions of dollars extra, which the rich world can ill afford, just means more pretending from both sides.

■ *The Reality of Green Energy*

Green campaigners insist that the global transition away from fossil fuels is unstoppable, yet over the past decade and even just last year, fossil-fuel energy has increased twice as much as green energy. Even the US Energy Information Administration expects fossil fuels to increase all the way to 2050.

Green politicians insist solar and wind are cheaper than fossil fuels, but this is only true when the sun is shin-

ing and the wind is blowing. In reality, such renewables need massive subsidies and redistributive taxes, which have driven up electricity costs in the EU by 50 percent since 2000, now costing each

person over \$300 extra annually. The reality is that most countries in the world don’t want to emulate virtue-signaling nations like Germany, which has hiked energy prices, sacrificed industry and given up on economic growth for the sake of green energy. Despite economic hardships like its first two-year recession, on current trends it will take Germany half a millennium to entirely stop using fossil fuels.

Recent years have seen politicians promising feverishly to cut even more carbon. But the election of Donald Trump, who campaigned on pulling out of the Paris Agreement and scrapping renewable energy projects, means this bubble is bursting.

And these troubles began even before Trump’s election. Despite an exuberant

... investment in green energy R&D is the most efficient approach. For just a tiny fraction of current, inefficient green spending, we could quintuple global green innovation...

stock market in recent years, clean energy shares have lost half their value. After the US election, they immediately tumbled further, based on the expectation that subsidy spigots will be turned off in the US.



Activists demonstrate in New York, NY against fracking for natural gas. (Photo: Adam Welz / Alamy)

The “net zero” green agenda, based on massive subsidies and expensive legislation, will likely cost \$27 trillion per year across the century, making it utterly unattractive to most nations. Trump will dump these policies. Without huge transfers of wealth, China, India and many other growing, developing countries will in effect disavow these policies, too. This leaves a rag-tag group, mostly from the EU, which can scarcely afford their own policies but have no ability to pay off everyone else.

■ Green Energy R&D

Fortunately, there is a much better and cheaper way to tackle climate change. Climate economists have long shown that investment in green energy R&D is the most efficient approach. For just a tiny fraction of current, inefficient green spending, we could quintuple

global green innovation to drive down the price of new technologies like better batteries and fourth-generation nuclear.

Innovation that brings the price of green energy below fossil fuels is the only way to get everyone to switch. This approach can even help convince policy-makers who are skeptical about climate change because they see the vast potential in cheaper energy.

A dose of realism could also end the elite’s singular preoccupation with climate. The rich world faces many challenges: rapid aging, an urgent need for pension reform, growing health-care costs, flatlining education results, and more military threats. The trillions wasted on current climate policies could be much better spent.

For the world’s poorer half, problems of poverty, hunger, easily curable infectious diseases, and corruption

need more attention, and they have incredibly cheap and effective solutions. Instead of the immense, and – for the most part poorly spent – climate bribes, this money could boost development across the global south.

Climate campaigners can spend the next four years doubling down on policies that have failed for the past three decades and protesting the Trump Administration for its policy shift. Or they can use the opportunity to refocus on a smarter and much cheaper green innovation policy—and address all the other urgent problems facing the world.

BJORN LOMBORG is President of the Copenhagen Consensus, Visiting Fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, and author of “False Alarm” and “Best Things First.” This article is reprinted by permission.

Opportunities for Infrastructure Reform

by ELIJAH GULLETT

The upcoming years in the Trump administration mark a pivotal moment for infrastructure policy in the United States. The Biden administration's key piece of legislation – the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) of 2022 – was an attempt to transform America's infrastructure for the 21st century. It focused on addressing aging infrastructure—transportation, energy, communications, water and power supply, roads and bridges, even health and education systems—a society requires.

The BIL promoted electric vehicle charging networks and expanding broadband to rural communities. The Biden administration touted its progress on infrastructure reform, believing it to be an important method for outreach to rural, working-class communities who most needed improved infrastructure. However, progressives hijacked its priorities, leading to bureaucratic delays in funding disbursement, prioritizing unions over the public and serious security gaps for America's critical infrastructure. These failures present opportunities now to modernize America's infrastructure.

■ *America's Infrastructure Challenges*

America's infrastructure is aging and in desperate need of upgrades and replacements.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, in 2021, America's infrastructure received a C- grade. Roads received a D grade, with 40 percent of roads across the country in poor

or mediocre condition. Drinking water infrastructure, now faced with intense, unfunded federal mandates, has had an ongoing deferred maintenance crisis, and the average water pipe in the US is nearly 50 years old. America's bridges face steep challenges as well. Forty-two percent of America's bridges are at least 50 years old, and many lack modern features to accommodate larger cargo ships and increased port activity, leading to incidents like the 2024 Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse in Maryland. Additionally, as America continues to electrify, there is a serious lack of electrical grid building to accommodate in-

and an additional \$170 billion at the federal level, creating a total repair budget of just over \$1 trillion. Much of this will fall on state and local budgets with much lower funds, which will then in turn expect federal funding to assist them. These funding challenges all exist on the backdrop of a \$840 billion federal deficit and increased interest in cutting government spending under the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). This desire to cut government waste, as seen through personnel changes and executive orders, could impact funding programs for infrastructure projects unless money is explicitly authorized by

In the process of cutting government spending, infrastructure excellence should not be sacrificed.

In fact, there are ways to invest and support infrastructure in the United States that can save money in the long run...

creased demand from electric vehicles and data centers for artificial intelligence, leading to increases in blackouts and "brownouts."

These challenges affect nearly all forms of infrastructure in the United States – from transportation to public buildings, and basic amenities like water. They amount to what the Volcker Alliance has called "America's Trillion Dollar Repair Bill." The report estimates \$873 billion for repairs at the state level,

Congress in the following years.

In the process of cutting government spending, infrastructure excellence should not be sacrificed. In fact, there are ways to invest and support infrastructure in the United States that can save money in the long run, while making us richer and safer. The core tenets of a conservative infrastructure policy should focus on returning authority to states and localities, reducing permitting requirements, reducing the influence of

burdensome unions, and ensuring infrastructure assets are protected from foreign cybersecurity threats.

■ *Let States Decide*

One of the key ways President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans can improve infrastructure policy in the US is shifting authority from federal government bureaucrats to

Programs (STIPs). Without consistent funding, it is difficult for state DOTs to plan and predict future projects.

Another aspect of reform is generally shifting funding responsibility from the federal government to states and localities. Infrastructure still largely relies on federal funding, even for state- and locally-owned assets. In 2022, the federal government spent \$52 billion on roads,

Shifting infrastructure policy from the federal government to states also prevents states from being forced into cultural or more politically-controversial programs. Under the BIL, funding was tied to certain demographic makeups with the goal of achieving racial and wealth “equity” through the Justice40 requirements within the law. Additionally, the BIL tied funding to achieving certain climate and environmentally related goals. Shifting power back to states and localities will allow them to prioritize the issues their residents care most about, rather than forcing a one-size-fits-all partisan vision for infrastructure on the entire country. This approach would allow California to spend and prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts and climate initiatives in its goals, while Alabama could focus on attracting businesses, job growth and other issues that matter more to its residents.

Policymakers will have the opportunity to implement many of these changes in the transportation reauthorization bill, which is scheduled for 2026. The next two years can be a great opportunity to create an infrastructure policy driven by those working most closely on the issues at the local and state levels.

Under the BIL, funding was tied to certain demographic makeups with the goal of achieving racial and wealth “equity” through the Justice40 requirements...

states and localities wherever possible. Under the BIL, more discretionary grant programs were implemented, such as the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Discretionary Grant Program. In order to receive federal funding, which is currently necessary for America’s transportation system, states had to shift their priorities to meet the policy preferences of the federal government. This not only distracts state officials from the projects they were originally focused on, but it makes financial planning for states difficult and introduces volatility.

Such uncertainty is uniquely risky for infrastructure projects. They can be easily derailed by changes in policy priorities as they often take many years to complete. In the Trump administration, future infrastructure funding should be shifted to an increased percentage of money coming from formula funding, which better allows states to allocate resources based on their own needs and plans. For example, state departments of transportation (DOTs) must produce five-year transportation plans called Statewide Transportation Improvement

mostly funded through the Highway Trust Fund. This fund, however, will be exhausted by 2028, and simply raising the federal gas tax is unlikely to sustainably fill the gaps as cars are increasingly fuel-efficient, hybrid, and electric. Similar funding challenges exist across the infrastructure sector as assets age, populations

Shifting power back to states and localities will allow them to prioritize the issues their residents care most about, rather than forcing a one-size-fits-all partisan vision for infrastructure on the entire country.

grow in general but decline in infrastructure-dense cities, and consumer preferences continue to shift to electric and fuel-efficient vehicles. As such, it is imperative that states and localities are empowered to find their own sources of revenue to create both more stability in financing of infrastructure, as well as ensuring funding reflects state and local priorities.

■ *Advancing Energy*

The failures of the Biden administration present an opportunity for the current administration to create an infrastructure policy that builds something new. Trump and congressional Republicans can build on Biden’s progress by promoting permitting reform. Permitting reform has become

a bipartisan hot topic for the past few years, with congressional members on both the left and right proposing it. The most significant reform that can be achieved with bipartisan support is specifically exempting clean energy and energy projects significant to national security from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA requires environmental reviews for any federal infrastructure or energy project managed or funded by a federal agency. These permitting requirements significantly delay project delivery, often taking up to 4.5 years to complete. These time delays increase project costs and uncertainty around project delivery.

President Trump has already signed an executive order demanding agency heads review permitting processes and use emergency permitting to complete projects. However, to ensure these reforms are strengthened and established for years to come, the administration should be working closely with Congress to pass bipartisan reform. This can be built on 2024 legislation that proposed policies to streamline a broad range of energy projects, including natural gas, electrical transmission, geothermal, and renewable.

These reforms will be necessary, not just to meet Trump's "Build, baby, build" campaign goals, but also for the Republican Party to claim itself part of the environmental conversation. Through this "all-of-the-above" permitting reform legislation, Republicans can ensure America maintains its energy independence and increases energy exports, while simultaneously streamlining clean energy projects and protecting the electrical grid.

■ ***Infrastructure for the Public, not Unions***

The core goal of infrastructure policy should be to produce high-quality infrastructure projects that serve the public writ large. In America, much of infrastructure policy, especially transportation and transit policy, is focused more

on appeasing union labor pressures. Unions often block efficiency enhancements to transportation, like automated vehicle (AV) technology or improved service schedules. Additionally, due to federal regulations, projects that receive federal transit grants are generally required to protect existing transit unions at recipient agencies. The costs of union labor account for two-thirds of transit operating budgets, inflate project cost overruns, and prevent transit agencies from becoming more cost-effective.

The unions prevent transit and transportation from modernizing to

Unions prevent transit and transportation from modernizing to meet current riders' needs due to hybrid work schedules, while continuing to increase the costs to maintain and operate transportation.

meet current riders' needs due to hybrid work schedules, while continuing to increase the costs to maintain and operate transportation. Under President Biden, projects over \$35 million had project-labor agreements (PLAs) explicitly requiring projects to use union labor. Still, many state and localities will require PLAs for specific projects, raising costs and cutting much of the private-sector labor force out of infrastructure projects.

The Department of Defense (DoD) has already blocked PLAs on future projects as of January 2025, but more can be done to prevent unions from capturing the value of infrastructure investment in the United States. Davis-Bacon requirements that federal construction workers be paid union wages can be repealed. Additionally, the federal government can follow on the heels of the 25 states that have already banned PLAs by banning them nationwide.

■ ***Protecting Infrastructure from Foreign Threats***

The Trump administration possesses a window of opportunity to bolster critical infrastructure security across the nation. Given the growing complexity of the threat landscape, federal leadership can help unify private and public entities under a more robust and proactive security framework. By emphasizing stronger coordination among federal agencies including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), and the Environmental Protection Agency

(EPA), the administration can lay the groundwork for better protection of vital assets in the energy and water sectors. This coordinated effort is essential for ensuring resilience and sustainability in critical services that millions of Americans rely on every day.

Over the past few years, the United States has witnessed an increase in cybersecurity attacks, particularly targeting energy and water utilities, with a 70 percent surge in 2024. Smaller, local water utilities are especially vulnerable due to limited resources, outdated technologies, and insufficient training. The American Water Works Association reports that many small utilities lack robust cybersecurity protocols, leaving them unprepared to combat advanced threats. These vulnerabilities not only risk service disruptions but also compromise the safety of public water supplies and energy systems. As malicious actors become more sophisticated, the



Crane barges lift wreckage of the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge from the MV Dali container ship in the Fort McHenry channel in Maryland. (Photo: MC2 Theodore Lee / US Navy)

potential for widespread damage grows, underscoring the urgent need for federal investment and guidance.

To address these challenges, the administration should prioritize funding that enhances both technological capabilities and workforce readiness within utilities. This includes replacing antiquated systems with modern, more secure hardware and software, as well as investing in cybersecurity training for utility staff. Furthermore, it is critical to ensure that the national security apparatus remains focused on identifying, mitigating, and deterring cyberattacks at all levels of government and within the private sector. This should be based on a holistic approach that uses public-private partnerships, utilities, and cybersecurity specialists to develop national standards for different critical infrastructure assets. By doing so, the Trump administration can strengthen

the nation's critical infrastructure and safeguard essential services for communities across the country.

■ Conclusion

America is at a pivotal moment for infrastructure policy. The BIL was the biggest investment in American infrastructure since the Interstate Highway System was established in the 1950s. However, due to delays in funding disbursement and burdensome permitting requirements, many infrastructure projects have yet to break ground. Additionally, America faces new threats and challenges, such as cybersecurity attacks on critical infrastructure, as well as ever increasing strains on the electrical grid. All of this on top of aging transportation and water systems developed in the mid-20th century, leaving essential infrastructure assets that Americans use daily at risk of failure.

While President Trump may have appeared uninterested in infrastructure reform in his first term, his administration has already signaled a shift in the second term. Executive orders on permitting reform and removing DEI requirements from infrastructure funding have already indicated a major step forward. This creates an opportunity for the administration to work with Congress to pass infrastructure policy that protects America's necessary hard and soft assets from both foreign threats and degradation. Additionally, through infrastructure policy, there is an opportunity to establish a bipartisan consensus that allows states and localities to drive infrastructure policy in the future, while maintaining fiscal sustainability.

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Time for US Pushback at the United Nations

by GIL KAPEN

The 50th anniversary of the infamous “Zionism is Racism” of 1975 makes an important starting place for understanding the calumny of the United Nations, ground zero for anti-Israel propaganda and delusional support for maximalist Palestinian demands.

The United States, as the largest funder of UN activities and agencies, must use its considerable leverage and take the lead.

President Ronald Reagan said of the resolution, “Few events have so offended the American people as the ‘Zionism is Racism’ resolution of November 10, 1975.” Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then-US Permanent Representative at the UN, expressed the moral outrage of the American people, declaring, “The United States... will never acquiesce in this infamous act.”

Today, the UN continues to act in its dealings with Israel as if “Zionism is Racism” remains an operating principle.

They gave voice to the shared bedrock values of the United States and Israel.

Sixteen years after its adoption by the UN General Assembly, under Reagan’s successor, President George H. W. Bush, the resolution was repealed. That required a strong diplomatic effort

coordinated by then Assistant Secretary for International Organizations, John Bolton.

But the damage was done.

■ *The Soviet Origins*

The infamous resolution was part of a worldwide effort, hatched in the Soviet Union, to defame and delegitimize the State of Israel and to embarrass its number one ally, the United States. Despite its 1991 repeal, 50 years after its original passage, the animus and slanderous accusations continue to animate hatred of Israel at the UN and beyond.

The USSR is now well ensconced in the dustbin of history. But the mischief it wrought against the Jewish people at the UN is alive and well – possibly the only lasting and successful enterprise of Soviet communism.

Today, the UN continues to act in

World Trade Center and Pentagon in Washington, DC. Israel has routinely and falsely been branded as “racist,” “colonialist,” “fascist,” “Nazi,” and “apartheid.” And tragically, the pillorying and condemnation has only gained force and momentum since Hamas’ October 7, 2023 massacres in Israel. Added to the usual insults and slanderous charges is a new, poisonous one: that Israel is committing “genocide” and “war crimes” against the Palestinian Arabs

■ *October 7*

This is a bold-faced and shameful lie. Israel was viciously attacked on October 7 by Hamas, the elected governing party in the Gaza Strip, a territory from which Israel withdrew completely in 2005. Every Israeli civilian that was brutally murdered, injured, or kidnapped on October 7 was living across the border in Israel proper, not in any supposedly “disputed” or “occupied” territory. Israel was forced to respond vigorously in defense of its border and people.

Although these are indisputable facts, the libelous charge of “genocide” has been hurled freely at Israel, oblivious to any situational or historical context. John Spencer, Chair of the Urban Warfare Institute at West Point, who has visited Israel and Gaza several times since October 7, notes that during the Battle of Manila during World War II, the Japanese hid in sewers, in underground tunnels, and among the Filipino population in the city. US, British, and Allied troops were forced to fight in those conditions, and more than 100,000 Filipino civilians were killed in only one month of fighting, many by Japanese

its dealings with Israel as if “Zionism is Racism” remains an operating principle. This includes, among many other attacks, the shameful Durban Conference in 2001 – an antisemitic festival held a mere few days before the September 11 terrorist attacks against New York City’s



President Donald J. Trump holds a meeting with victims of the October 7th terrorist attack and their families on March 5, 2025. (Photo: White House / Molly Riley)

occupying Manila.

There were no Allied “war crimes” in either case, he writes. And while Palestinian civilian deaths are tragic, they occurred in large measure because Hamas purposely embedded itself among and under civilian institutions including schools, hospitals, and mosques.

But at the UN a parallel universe exists, and none of that matters. It is absolutely clear that Israel’s enemies oppose, not particular Israeli actions or policies, but Israel’s very existence. Neither Hamas, the Palestinian Authority (led by Fatah), nor any Palestinian political group with any following unequivocally call for or advocate permanent and peaceful coexistence with Israel as a Jewish state. Nor do any clearly and unequivocally renounce and condemn terrorism and violence. Palestinian media, educational institutions, religious

figures and organizations continue to harbor (and advocate) the evil dream of destroying Israel and replacing it with a Palestinian Islamist supremacist state and continue to preach and spew hatred and promote violence against Israelis.

■ **The Responsibility of the UN**

The UN bears great responsibility for this. For decades, tolerance of those dedicated to negating Israel’s existence and perpetuating the false narrative of Palestinian dispossession and helplessness has encouraged Palestinian rejectionism. And tragically, it contributed to October 7. Worse, following the horror of that day, some countries chose to reward Hamas terrorism by recognizing the “State of Palestine.”

Furthermore, the UN General Assembly voted to enhance “Palestine’s” status at the UN to one close to full membership, sending the message that

terrorism pays. Palestinian leaders were offered a state with generous terms at Camp David in 2000 at the end of Bill Clinton’s presidency, and again by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert’s government in 2008. Both times they rejected it and turned back to murderous violence because they were not ready for any settlement that included acceptance of the permanence of Israel. Former President Clinton has stated this explicitly and repeatedly.

It is past time for the international community to speak harsh truth to and about the Palestinian Arabs. No doubt Elise Stefanik, US Ambassador to the UN (ambassador-designate at press time), is disposed to do so. Her leadership in calling out campus anti-semitism and university presidents who tolerated it, proves that she understands the consequences of poisonous rhetoric and lies.

■ *The Role of the US*

The United States has historically taken a strong rhetorical stand against the double standard wielded against Israel at the UN. It is time to go further. The US should take harsh and active measures against offending UN institutions AND countries that support them.

The USSR is now well ensconced in the dustbin of history. But the mischief it wrought against the Jewish people at the UN is alive and well – possibly the only lasting and successful enterprise of Soviet communism.

President Donald Trump has already taken decisive action against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the anti-Israel UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC), and the International Criminal Court, which repeatedly takes extra-legal action against the Jewish state. This is a good start.

What animates the attitude toward Israel of all of these offending UN institutions is unquestioning acceptance and endorsement of the Palestinian narrative, which negates the very legitimacy of Israel's existence. For that reason, it is appropriate to hit back hard.

During President Trump's first term, when the US moved its embassy to Jerusalem, Israel's capital city, the UN voted 128-9 (with 35 abstentions) to criticize Washington for doing so. At that time, President Trump said, "Let them vote against us. We'll save a lot. We don't care ... this isn't like it used to be where they could vote against you and then you pay them hundreds of millions of dollars...we're not going to be taken advantage of any longer."

This is exactly the right attitude. There is no doubt that members of

Congress, not to mention their constituents, would strongly agree. President Trump already signed an executive order which states, "It is the policy of the United States that no further United States foreign assistance shall be disbursed in a manner that is not fully aligned with the foreign policy of the

President of the United States."

A strong Israel and stability in the Middle East are clearly crucial goals of US policy. The UN and many of its member states have undermined fundamental American interests by maintaining an aggressive, one-sided, anti-Israel agenda for more than 50 years. It is time active measures against these harmful and wasteful activities.

institution, literally created in concert with the "Zionism is Racism" resolution. It is in many ways the operational arm of that defunct resolution, enshrining Palestinian "inalienable rights" which specifically include the imaginary "right of return" for more than five million Palestinians to settle in Israel, something that accrues to no other refugee population in the world.

This UN body, among other things, sponsors the commemoration of "Nakba Day"—using the Arabic word favored by Palestinian Arabs to characterize the creation of Israel as a "catastrophe"—and widely disseminates, in the name of the international community, incendiary propaganda targeting Israel. No other people or country in the world has a similar UN committee dedicated to its cause. The Palestinian Committee has 46 members and observers, including the "State of Palestine." By their very membership, these countries are giving sanction and support to the undermining and sabotage of US policy. Congress should mandate that any country that is a member or observer of the Palestinian Committee will be ineligible to receive any foreign assistance from the United States.

Next, the "Division for Palestinian Rights" (DPR), which essentially serves as the secretariat of the Committee,

President Trump said, "Let them vote against us. We'll save a lot. We don't care ... this isn't like it used to be where they could vote against you and then you pay them hundreds of millions of dollars..."

■ *Where to Start*

A logical place to start is the so-called "Palestinian Committee" (formally the "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People"). This is a unique UN

needs to be abolished. There is no parallel in the entire UN system for these entities, specifically and clearly targeting one UN member. This, along with the equally scurrilous "Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Human Rights

Practices” (SCIIHRP), implement the defunct but still influential “Zionism is Racism” resolution.

The US should go to the Fifth Committee (the UN budget committee) and demand an end at long last to the existence of these organizations, which operate contrary to the wishes and interests of the American people and which are a gross waste of US taxpayers money.

■ **UNRWA is Special**

Despite its well-documented corrosive behavior over the decades—hate education, fraud and abuse, financial irregularities, collaboration with terrorists, and—on October 7—apparent actual participation in murder by staff members, UNRWA’s original sin is its very existence. As a refugee agency dedicated to the Palestinian Arabs only, it was purposely created to perpetuate the conflict and to keep Palestinians immiserated as human propaganda weapons against Israel. The damage is incalculable, and it needs to be eliminated. Real refugee needs can be handled by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

■ **OCHA-oPt**

Another worthy target for the complete cut-off of US funding is “OCHA-oPt” (The UN Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs-Occupied Palestinian Territories). The US is a major donor to OCHA-oPt, although, like UNRWA, this office uses the disguise of humanitarian concern and assistance to wage political warfare against Israel. It provides grist for the anti-Israel propaganda mill by agitating against Israel and accusing it of various violations of human rights. UN watchdog NGO-Monitor reports, “OCHA oversees and facilitates government funding to highly biased and politicized NGO’s, including a number that are highly active in promoting BDS [anti-Israel boycott, divest and sanction] and lawfare campaigns, and some even engage in blatantly anti-semitic activities.”

■ **Moving Forward**

Elliot Abrams, then-Assistant Secretary of State, said in congressional testimony, “...we need to make this a piece of our bilateral relationship with these countries, and we most often don’t do it...we view it as not a very big deal instead of saying ‘this will affect whether your Prime Minister or Foreign Minister is invited to Washington... (and will)

On the 50th anniversary of the passage of “Zionism is Racism,” zero tolerance for anti-Israel agitation at the UN should be the guiding rule.

visibly affect your foreign aid.’ This matters to us.”

According to the most recent State Department report mandated by Congress, a mere 57 countries (out of 193 at the UNGA), voted with the United States even 50 percent of the time.

■ **November 29**

Ironically, every November 29, the date of the 1947 UN Partition Resolution that gave sanction to the birth to the State of Israel, the UN General Assembly observes the “International Day of Solidarity With the Palestinian People.” A rash of anti-Israel resolutions are passed on that date, and UN Ambassadors of Third World countries line up to bash Israel. Former House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen aptly labeled it “Hate Israel Day.”

But that same day in that same resolution there was sanction for the birth of an Arab state as well. All Arab states and the Palestinian Arab leadership rejected it and waged war. Had they not, there could have been a second Palestinian Arab majority state (after Jordan) long

ago. The fact that Israel’s enemies use that very date to continue to spew hatred and propaganda against the Jewish state is telling.

■ **UNSCR 242**

Similarly, the Palestinians have yet to demonstrate acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 242 (unlike UNGA resolutions, Security Council

Resolutions are binding). Passed in 1967 after the Six-Day War, the resolution guaranteed Israel’s “legitimacy and permanence” and its right to “secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of war.”

UNSCR 242 created the basis for the 1978 Camp David Peace Accords between Israel and Egypt and, similarly, peace in 1994 between Israel and Jordan. Until the Palestinians show a genuine, sincere, and concrete acceptance of that resolution and what it represents, which they have never done, their self-inflicted and self-perpetuated grievances deserve dismissal.

On the 50th anniversary of the passage of “Zionism is Racism,” zero tolerance for anti-Israel agitation at the UN should be the guiding rule. It would certainly be good for Israel and salutary for the United Nations. And it would serve essential US interests, benefitting the cause of peace and stability, and ultimately Palestinian Arabs themselves.

GIL KAPEN is Executive Director of the American Jewish International Relations Institute (AJIRI), a partner of B’nai B’rith International.

Ban Masking Now

by ILYA SHAPIRO

Early in the afternoon on New Year's Eve, a man was violently thrown in front of an oncoming subway train in Manhattan. According to Ritchie Torres, a Democratic congressman from the Bronx with his eyes on higher office, the alleged perpetrator was—unsurprisingly—wearing a mask.

“Wearing a mask for the purpose of committing crimes against innocent New Yorkers or for the purpose of intimidating and harassing Jewish students on college campuses should be strictly prohibited by state law,” Torres posted on X.

As it happens, New York State had the oldest anti-masking law in the nation but repealed it during the pandemic. Torres is correct in calling for its reinstatement. He's also right to connect the state legislature's failure to do so to the abuse of Jewish college students by pro-Hamas fanatics. The State Assembly considered two bills to bring the ban back last year, but didn't act amid push-back from left-wing groups.

Despite the state's dithering, it has become obvious that the repeal of anti-masking laws has had disastrous consequences for cities like New York. Last month, health insurance executive Brian Thompson was brutally executed by a masked man who quickly fled the city. That murder took place in the city's busiest neighborhood—Midtown Manhattan—in front of witnesses on a Wednesday morning. But had the suspect in the shooting not lowered his mask to briefly flirt with a hostel clerk, he might still be on the lam.

Not so long ago, the shooter wouldn't have been able to cover his face in a coffee shop and on the streets of New York without arousing suspicion. Covid-19, however, made it commonplace to conceal our identities in

public. The pandemic may be long over, but the acceptance of public masking lingers. And whether by making it easier for murderers to navigate a city anonymously, petty criminals to shoplift with impunity, or disorderly protesters to intimidate those around them, our tolerance for face coverings has made us less safe.

We've seen this problem repeatedly play out on our streets, on mass transit, and in our schools, such as when a mob of anti-Israel protesters seized a Columbia University building last April. They took two maintenance workers hostage in the process before finally being ousted by police the next day. Dozens were arrested but, in June, the Manhattan district attorney's office dropped the charges against nearly 70 percent of them. Why? Because it would have been “extremely difficult” to win

Louisiana, North Carolina, and Virginia have had anti-masking legislation on their books for decades. They often originated at a time when the Ku Klux Klan was intimidating and attacking blacks, Catholics, and other minorities.

The intent of these anti-masking laws was clear: to dismantle the ability of Klan members to operate unseen and unpunished. They boosted the ability of law enforcement to identify and prosecute suspects in hate crimes and public-disorder infractions, and they helped reduce the Klan's influence.

And just as Klan members used white hoods to hide their identities and terrorize their targets, today's home-grown militants are using keffiyehs, Guy Fawkes masks, bandanas, and other intimidating face covers. The activists staging the pro-Hamas protests that have proliferated on college campuses

Despite the state's dithering, it has become obvious that the repeal of anti-masking laws has had disastrous consequences for cities like New York.

convictions, one prosecutor explained, partly because some of the agitators wore surgical masks, hoods, and keffiyehs, making it hard to identify which individuals took which actions.

This was an easily avoidable problem. Anti-masking laws have a long history in America; states as culturally and politically varied as Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Michigan,

and city streets conceal their faces to make it impossible to determine who is engaged in violence, intimidation, and property destruction.

New York City alone experienced 2,000 anti-Israel protests in the first six months after Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel; some involved more than 10,000 people illegally blocking bridges and other major infrastructure.

These marches and demonstrations often lead to attacks on synagogues, community centers, and Jewish-owned businesses, and cities across the country are struggling to limit this surge in

shoplifting that have become harder to solve since masking became accepted—and often mandated—during the pandemic. For example, Philadelphia police called masking “the number one obstacle”

legal challenge in 2004. Indeed, far from infringing on First Amendment freedoms, anti-masking laws are essential to preserving the rights to assemble, to petition for redress of grievances, and otherwise to express ourselves while preventing intimidation and harassment.

Critics also argue that the laws discriminate against disabled people, and two anonymous plaintiffs suffering from various diseases filed a federal lawsuit against Nassau County’s law in August. Unsurprisingly, that lawsuit was quickly dismissed; judges often must assess the sincerity of claims relating to health and safety gear or religious garb, so they’re well-equipped to make similar determinations in mask-ban cases. And there’s plenty of room for tailoring the laws to local conditions, such as allowing masks for Halloween or masquerade balls. Louisiana’s anti-masking law even makes an exception for Mardi Gras.

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antisemitism. There were more than 10,000 antisemitic incidents in the US in a year’s time after the October 7 attack, and as with the KKK a century ago, the perpetrators often wore masks.

And just as mask bans were effective against Klan members, denying them the ability to hide their identities and thus escape justice, they would likewise work against today’s violent bigots and criminals. It’s not just thieves, gangsters, Antifa, and supporters of Islamist groups who have taken advantage of America’s newfound leniency toward masking in public; members of far-right organizations like the Patriot Front also use masks to conceal their identities.

Stripped of anonymity and the menacing power of the keffiyeh or a balaclava, militants of all stripes are less likely to engage in criminal behavior. Yet many jurisdictions let them mask up with impunity. Just look at the thousands of chanting protesters who flooded Washington, DC, last June, defacing statues and trashing Lafayette Square, across from the White House. US Park Police officers and Secret Service agents tried to apprehend the vandals, but demonstrators wearing face covers who couldn’t be identified fended them off and no arrests were made.

Hannah Meyers, my colleague at the Manhattan Institute, testified to the Texas legislature that mask bans can also work against crimes such as carjacking and

to dealing with a surge of murders in 2020.

Some jurisdictions are taking note. The District of Columbia implemented an omnibus crime bill that included an anti-masking provision aimed at combating carjacking and other street crimes. And New York’s Nassau County made public masking a misdemeanor.

Courts uniformly affirm that the public’s right to safety and the state’s ability to enforce criminal laws can supersede individual rights to anonymity.

Soon after, Nassau police arrested a person wearing a ski mask in the summer heat who, it turned out, was carrying a 14-inch knife. They’ve also used the ban to arrest someone wearing a keffiyeh who was part of a mob in front of a synagogue.

As a free-speech advocate, I must acknowledge the reasonable concerns that anti-mask laws could infringe on free expression. But these are not novel issues, and the constitutionality of masking bans has been repeatedly upheld. Courts uniformly affirm that the public’s right to safety and the state’s ability to enforce criminal laws can supersede individual rights to anonymity. New York’s anti-masking law itself survived a

It doesn’t take a degree in criminology to recognize that besides a tiny minority who cover their mouths for bona fide reasons, people who mask in public are up to no good. Properly conceived, these laws can help thwart criminals who cloak their identities not to express themselves, but as a means to terrorize and silence others. And they can help maintain a society where individuals are accountable for their conduct.

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It is NOT Government Money; it is Taxpayer Money

An *in*FOCUS interview with Senator JONI ERNST (R-IA)

Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA) is Chairman of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) Caucus in the Senate. She serves on the Armed Services; Agriculture; Nutrition and Forestry; and Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committees. A graduate of Iowa State University where she was a member of the university's ROTC program, she joined the US Army Reserves, serving in Kuwait and Iraq. She retired as a Lieutenant Colonel after 23 years of military service. As a state senator, Sen. Ernst worked to balance the state budget and helped turn Iowa's \$900 million budget deficit into a \$1 billion surplus. In November 2014, she was elected as the first woman to serve in federal elected office from the State of Iowa and also became the first female combat veteran elected to serve in the United States Senate. *in*FOCUS Quarterly Editor Shoshana Bryen spoke with her recently about DOGE and fiscal accountability.

*in*FOCUS QUARTERLY: GOOD MORNING, SENATOR. YOU WERE KEYED INTO SOME OF THE FEDERAL SPENDING PROBLEMS BEFORE DOGE CAME TO TOWN. YOU SECURED A REQUIREMENT TO HAVE THE GSA SELL THE WILBUR J. COHEN FEDERAL BUILDING, THE SOCIAL SECURITY BUILDING, THAT HAD A 2 PERCENT OCCUPANCY IN DC. THAT MUST HAVE FELT GOOD.

Sen. Joni Ernst: It did, Shoshana. Thank you so much. And yes, I have worked on a number of what are now called DOGE projects, but for me, these were my "Squeal Efforts" – making Washington, DC squeal and saving taxpayer dollars. So much of this started 10 years ago, but now that we see DOGE in place, we actually have an outlet for a lot of our ideas and legislation.

Selling vacant or rarely used office space is very important. Getting employees back to work is also important. There are so many areas that we have focused on through the years, and those are just a couple examples.

iF: I WANT TO FOCUS FIRST ON SPENDING THAT LEAVES OUR COUNTRY,

MONEY THAT GOES OUT THROUGH USAID. YOU SENT A LETTER TO SECRETARY OF STATE MARCO RUBIO, AND SAID THE AGENCY HAD OBSTRUCTED YOUR OVERSIGHT EFFORTS IN THE PAST, AND YOU WANT TO HAVE A FULL AND INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS OF RECIPIENTS OF USAID MONEY. ISN'T IT A REQUIREMENT? AREN'T WE TAXPAYERS SUPPOSED TO KNOW WHERE ALL THAT MONEY GOES?

Sen. Ernst: You would think that was true, but there are so many loopholes in the system. What I ran into in my own investigation, when my team and I were trying to get information from USAID, was that they stonewalled us at every opportunity, and they hid behind what is known as the Economic Espionage Act.

They said, "If we release information on these contracts to you and somehow that information gets into the wrong hands, you could be charged with economic espionage." It was just stonewalling.

We emphasized to them that I was exercising congressional oversight. We got a little bit farther down the road. What we were scrutinizing the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate

Agreements (NICRAs). And we found out that so many of these organizations, the NGOs that are working with USAID, have extreme overhead rates, anywhere from 50 to 60 percent, sometimes as much as 70 percent. What do you think taxpayers would say if they knew only \$3 out of every \$10 was actually going to humanitarian aid?

We started uncovering a lot of really ill-conceived spending within USAID – things that didn't necessarily further our American values or American interest. So yes, we have been on this for years. I compiled all of that information and sent it on to Secretary Rubio, so he would have a basis as well to go into the Agency and scrutinize what they were doing.

iF: I HOPE THEY'RE GOING TO SCRUTINIZE MONEY TO RUSSIA AND CHINA, BECAUSE ON YOUR WEBSITE, IT SAYS THAT 1.3 BILLION US TAX DOLLARS WENT TO THOSE TWO COUNTRIES SINCE 2017.

Sen. Ernst: This is something that most folks don't realize either – that their hard-earned dollars, which are paid as taxes to the federal government, have ended up going to China and Russia. It

can be, for example, through USAID, which, especially when it comes to the Ukraine-Russia War, was not able to process the contracts necessary, so they just handed the brunt of the money over to the UN. And we know that dollars from the UN really cannot be tracked the way we would track them through an organization directly under our federal government.

We also found examples through NIH where dollars were going to a sub-contractor and then another subcontractor eventually ending up in the hands of EcoHealth Alliance at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, doing coronavirus studies. Our American taxpayer dollars actually could have fueled the fire behind COVID-19. We see example after example. But even in the Department of Defense, we have seen dollars that will funnel off to China or to Russia, and this should never ever happen.

In order to scrutinize those dollars going into foreign entities, I have once again put up my TRACKS Act, which would require us to follow dollars, and then of course we would be able to see if those dollars are going to foreign entities, and in particular, our adversaries. It is very important that the federal government knows where the money goes and how to respond to pull those dollars back if necessary.

iF: WHAT'S THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE TRACKS ACT?

Sen. Ernst: We have introduced it, but it will have to go through the committee process. Then, I hope it will get a floor vote or go through another moving piece of legislation. We will need to have a companion in the House as well. It is common sense legislation, and I'm hoping that many of my colleagues will see that as well, and that we will get a hearing on it and quick passage.

iF: THIS LEADS US TO THE OTHER GREAT THING THAT YOU HAVE THERE, WHICH IS CALLED THE



Senator Joni Ernst

BIPARTISAN STOP SECRET SPENDING ACT, WHICH MAKES ME WANT TO PULL MY HAIR OUT, FRANKLY, BECAUSE THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY SECRET SPENDING.

THE STOP SECRET SPENDING ACT MEANS EVERYTHING WOULD HAVE TO BE ON THE USASPENDING.GOV WEBSITE, SO THAT THESE THINGS CAN'T BE HIDDEN FROM US.

Sen. Ernst: It is another common sense bill. The great thing with DOGE being a quasi-department within the federal government is that we do have a platform, and we're getting much more notice. Whether it is the TRACKS Act or the Stop Secret Spending Act, the public is watching this and are more excited about the work that I have been doing. They can see these bills and they can call their members of Congress and really

push for them to get over the finish line.

For far too long, a number of our agencies have been able to get away with transaction agreements in which they don't have to spell out the details. They just list it as an OTA, and they don't have to itemize or show where those dollars are going and what activities they are supporting. It is another loophole they exploit within the system, and we want to expose those dollars.

We all need more transparency. If there's more transparency, people will actually say, "Okay, maybe this spending is not so great, maybe we shouldn't do it."

iF: DOGE GIVES YOU A LITTLE BIT OF PUSH IN THE PUBLIC EYE AND PEOPLE CAN SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING. DO YOU FIND THAT MEMBERS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE AISLE

ARE LOOKING AT THIS AND SAYING, “YOU KNOW WHAT, MAYBE WE NEED TO GET ON THIS”?

Sen. Ernst: DOGE has really raised awareness, and I’m thankful for that. We do have members across the aisle that are interested in DOGE. The odd dynamic is that many of them will not want to actually put their name as a caucus member, but they want to participate and be part of some of these efforts. I think it is good.

I chair the Senate DOGE caucus; I’m the founder and chairperson. It is an extraordinary group of senators that really want to do better for our taxpayers and create efficiencies within the federal government. We have Democratic members who want to be involved. I am willing to work with whoever really wants to make a difference for our taxpayers, and make sure that our federal government is focusing on what the federal government should do and should not do.

iF: WHEN IT COMES TO FOREIGN SPENDING, WHAT KEEPS YOU AWAKE AT NIGHT? UKRAINE? WUHAN? HOW ABOUT MONEY TO THE TALIBAN AFTER WE WITHDREW? AND IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WE’VE PUT A LOT OF MONEY INTO THINGS THAT REALLY DON’T SEEM TO SERVE AMERICAN INTERESTS, LIKE THE LEBANESE ARMED FORCES, OR MONEY THAT WENT TO HAMAS FOR A CEMENT FACTORY, OR THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND TO PAY FOR TERROR AGAINST ISRAEL.

Sen. Ernst: When we do talk about money going abroad, our goal is to further American interests. I do believe that we need to be engaged globally. And I do think there are many great projects and efforts that we can engage in.

But there are many activities that we should not be sending our dollars to. And where those dollars have the ability to be siphoned away for nefarious activities, especially if it comes to terrorist

proxies working on behalf of Iran, those activities that will destabilize a region. We should be pulling those dollars back.

American citizens work far too hard to have their dollars going to en-

American citizens work far too hard to have their dollars going to entities that will threaten American lives and livelihoods or our friends and allies abroad. We do have to scrutinize those dollars.

tities that will threaten American lives and livelihoods or our friends and allies abroad. We do have to scrutinize those dollars. That’s why so many of these efforts are really, really important. But it does disturb me so much that in the past number of years, and this has been going on for decades, we have had dollars flowing into the wrong hands because they have been intercepted and siphoned away. That’s absolutely inappropriate spending.

iF: WHAT REMAINS OF USAID IS NOW UNDER THE STATE DEPARTMENT UNDER SECRETARY RUBIO. THERE IS A LOT OF GOOD WORK THAT GOES ON. DO YOU HAVE A GOOD FEELING ABOUT WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH USAID BACK IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT?

Sen. Ernst: I have a very good feeling about this. But I’ve told everybody, buckle up because it is going to be a bumpy ride. There are so many different contracts and programs out there, and we do have to go through and scrutinize all of them.

I know they’re actively engaging in that every single day at the State Department as they work through USAID. And I do think that they will

have a good accounting of those dollars by the end of the next month or so. Then, we will start that rebuilding process: What are those programs where we really got a lot of bang for our buck

and really did promote our interests as Americans abroad? While it may be a rough ride here initially, in the end, we will have brought it back to the center, the core of what our mission should be as we spend dollars abroad.

And again, furthering American interest, supporting our friends and allies.

■ Domestic Spending

iF: IN SOME WAYS, DOMESTIC SPENDING CONTROL MAY BE A LITTLE BIT EASIER. FIRST, TELL US ABOUT THE SQUEAL AWARDS. I READ THROUGH YOUR WEBSITE. SOME OF THEM ARE FUNNY; YOU HAVE TO LAUGH AT THEM. BUT REALLY, THEY’RE NOT FUNNY. NONE OF THEM ARE FUNNY. THAT’S MY MONEY. THAT’S YOUR MONEY.

Sen. Ernst: Exactly. Thank you. Only a small fraction of the work is actually posted up on our website under my Squeal Awards, but going back a decade we’ve sent out these monthly “awards” for waste, fraud, and abuse within the federal government. We have found so many egregious examples. I compiled a 40-plus-page out-of-office report four years after the end of COVID-19, and it was astounding because we still pay a lot of federal government workers to work

from their homes. I could spend an entire day lecturing on this, but I'll just give you a few small examples.

We had a federal worker who claimed to be on their own time; they had actually started their very own small business. So, they were working full time in their small business activity while they were teleworking and just doing federal government work on the side whenever they had a moment.

A VA employee was actually doing a Zoom call from his bathtub, in a bubble bath, and he posted an Instagram picture of him actually taking a bath during work hours on a Zoom call. He got

40-plus-page report. There are many, many other examples of funding that have gone through other agencies – the National Institutes of Health and other agencies that have funded outrageous projects that really had no tangible value for American citizens. There is a lot of waste out there, which is why I think DOGE is so important today.

■ *How the Process Works*

iF: I THINK COVID SPENDING WAS KIND OF A KICK IN THE PANTS FOR PEOPLE. BUT YOU'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR MUCH LONGER THAN THAT. IS THIS A FLAW IN THE LEGIS-

Many federal workers who moved away from Washington, DC still are claiming DC for the locality pay, which is higher than if they lived somewhere else. They're actually committing fraud against the federal government.

turned in by another employee at that organization. But these were the workers that were supposed to be answering VA suicide hotline calls.

We had another employee that was serving jail time, and still was collecting pay, full pay and benefits. Her supervisor didn't even know that she was serving time in jail. It is out of control.

I highlight a number of those examples through my Squeal Awards. Many federal workers who moved away from Washington DC still are claiming DC for the locality pay, which is higher than if they lived somewhere else. They're actually committing fraud against the federal government.

And on and on and on. And it's just a little bit of the waste. The way some, not all, federal government workers have taken advantage in this situation is outrageous. This in itself was just one

LATIVE PROCESS? WHEN THERE IS A CONTINUING RESOLUTION, SPENDING THAT WAS PREVIOUSLY IN THE BILL DOESN'T GET CUT OUT.

ARE WE JUST PILING ALL OF THIS UP? DO WE NEED TO GO BACK TO INDIVIDUAL SPENDING BILLS?

Sen. Ernst: Yes. I will always agree, night and day, that regular order is the best order, and that would be when we move individual appropriations bills through the Appropriations Committee process, then process each individual bill on the floor, whether it's the Senate or the House. That allows us the time to scrutinize what our taxpayer dollars are funding.

But what happens, whether it's a continuing resolution or whether it's a giant omnibus bill at the end of the year, so much can get piled into it that there is

not nearly enough time to scrutinize all of the spending.

Another way the system is really damaged is that we have such a bloated bureaucracy, and such an overwhelmingly bloated federal budget. It is hard, very hard to do a deep dive, a timely deep dive, where you can go in and force programs to be accountable.

Through probably the last 50 years or so, we've seen this enormous growth in the federal budgeting process, federal appropriations, growth in our agencies. Now is the appropriate time to scale back on these agencies. Let's focus on what the federal government should do, and maybe what the federal government *shouldn't* do, and push those things down to state and local government.

iF: WHAT ABOUT EARMARKS?

Sen. Ernst: I don't believe in earmarks. I think that we should have a competitive process and make sure that if our states do have good projects, that they are willing to stand up and fight for those projects, have certain metrics that must be met for those projects. Certainly, we have seen dollars that will go to economic development, but what is the value for the greater population? We have to be able to explain that. And in many cases, with earmarks, you're not able to do that. They're just certain pet projects for a senator or a House member and probably not a great expenditure of our taxpayer dollars.

iF: ANY POSSIBILITY THAT THERE WILL BE A BAN ON EARMARKS?

Sen. Ernst: I don't see it happening.

I would love to see earmarks go away, but there are too many members that participate in the earmark process, and hey, you're bringing the bacon home for your taxpayers in your districts. I get that. I would love to see it go away.

Again, metrics, standards, competitive process, more transparency, I think that's all very, very good.

iF: IS IT MORE LIKELY THAT WE COULD SEE INDIVIDUAL SPENDING BILLS?

Sen. Ernst: There is a strong possibility on individual spending bills. Susan Collins of Maine is the chair of the

efficiencies and cost savings in the long run. And by updating our systems, making sure that there is crosstalk between various agencies, making sure that we can query different expenditures, make sure that we can track those dollars. All of that is the right way to do things.

I think about our VA system, which

We really do have to modernize, move forward, and make sure that all of our systems are integrated and creating efficiencies that will benefit us in the long term.

Appropriations Committee. She has worked very hard on this for a number of years to really get individual appropriations bills done. She and Patty Murray – now the ranking member, but the Democratic chair last year – actually did a really admirable job. They moved every single one of those bills out of the Appropriations Committee only to languish off and not be brought to the floor of the Senate.

We've got some incredible leaders that really do want to do the right thing. Unfortunately, you have to have other leaders that are willing to support those efforts. I would love to see it, if we can do it. I know that Susan will be the one to do it.

■ Information Management

iF: YOU'VE SAID THAT IMPLEMENTING BASIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, UPDATED COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND DATA SYSTEMS, COULD SAVE TAXPAYERS \$688 BILLION OFF OF OUR \$6.75 TRILLION GOVERNMENT SPENDING. DO YOU SEE THOSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS MOVING INTO THE 21ST CENTURY?

Sen. Ernst: When people think about DOGE, they just think of the cost-cutting. But sometimes you do have to spend some money to see greater

is really important to me. There's a lot of information that's housed in veterans' records – their health records, and benefits records and so forth – but it is very siloed, and you can't cross-query any of that. It's very difficult to share that information with other entities.

When people think about DOGE, they just think of the cost-cutting. But sometimes you do have to spend some money to see greater efficiencies and cost savings in the long run

If we were able to modernize our systems so they could communicate, we might be able to find better ways of serving veterans and offer them different program opportunities. But because that information is so locked away in an antiquated system, some of it still exists only in paper documents, it's very hard to do.

We really do have to modernize, move forward, and make sure that all of our systems are integrated and creating efficiencies that will benefit us in the long term.

iF: I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO CLOSE ON A HIGH NOTE IF YOU CAN. YOU WANT TO BE HONEST WITH US, THE

PEOPLE. "WE THE PEOPLE" WANT YOU TO BE HONEST WITH US. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT OUR CHANCES? COULD THIS BE THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING INTERESTING FOR US?

Sen. Ernst: I am extremely optimistic on this point, and while a number of us have had our different efforts through the years, whether it's my Squeal Awards (a dear friend, Senator James Lankford, has Federal Fumbles), we all have our own following. But right now, at this particular juncture in time, we see that the American public is really having a moment where they are very concerned about federal government spending, so they want more transparency.

And what our constituents are asking for, we want to deliver. I do think taxpayers will hold us accountable. This is a great opportunity for those of us that have put so much of our time and our careers into being the watchdogs for the American people. We're finally

– maybe – seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. Even when DOGE has come and gone from the administration, our intention is to continue with the DOGE work and make sure transparency is still there long after this administration, long after the next administration, well into the future.

iF: THAT'S A GREAT ANSWER. I WANT TO SAY ON BEHALF OF THE READERS OF inFOCUS QUARTERLY MAGAZINE AND THE MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH POLICY CENTER, WE LOOK FORWARD TO LOTS MORE OF THIS. THANK YOU VERY MUCH, SENATOR JONI ERNST.

Planning and Paying for Defense

by **BRADLEY BOWMAN, RYAN BROBST, and CAMERON MCMILLAN**

Editor's Note: Defense priorities underlie everything the United States does and plans to do. "Planning and Paying for Defense" highlights immediate security moves by the Trump administration. "Trump Can – and Should – Fully Fund Our Military" is a broader look at defense priorities. In "Look No Further than Congress to find Pentagon Waste" Mark Pfeifle shows us the process.

President Donald Trump, who ran on a platform of “peace through strength,” surprised some in Washington when he suggested that he might support cutting the US defense budget by as much as 50 percent, presumably in concert with commensurate nuclear arms and budget reductions by Russia and China. *The Washington Post* then reported that Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth ordered the Pentagon to prepare for budget cuts of 8 percent per year for each of the next five years. However, subsequent reporting and comments by Hegseth suggested the Pentagon was pursuing a reprioritization of spending rather than a reduction in overall defense spending.

These mixed signals come at a moment when the United States needs much greater strength to preserve the peace. Aggressive dictatorships, including China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea, are cooperating more closely than ever to undermine American leadership. Meanwhile, US defense spending has fallen, in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), to near its lowest point in the 80 years since World War II.

■ **Mixed Signals**

The proposed cuts, according to *The Post*, make exceptions for the Trump administration’s priorities, including “operations at the southern US border,

modernization of nuclear weapons and missile defense, and acquisition of submarines, one-way attack drones and other munitions.” However, according to *Breaking Defense*, Hegseth ordered the Pentagon to review “Biden-legacy programs” with the goal of shifting 8 percent of the defense budget toward Trump administration priorities, such as border security and “Iron Dome for America.” Hegseth attempted to clarify in a video statement on February 20 that the department is planning an 8 percent budget shift this year, which is quite different from an 8 percent cut to the Pentagon’s top line budget.

Some other priorities that could be spared include key shipbuilding initiatives and Indo-Pacific combatant command. Notably, US Central Command, which is responsible for the Middle East, and US European Command are not on the list of exceptions. Despite these calls for cuts, Trump endorsed the House of Representatives’ proposed budget on February 19, which includes a \$100 billion increase in defense over the next decade, and the Republican-led Senate passed its own budget proposal with a \$150 billion increase in defense spending on February 21. Additionally, Hegseth said that the administration was committed to spending more than the Biden administration, which he said, “historically underinvested in the capabilities of our military.”

■ **Current US Defense Spending and Strategic Threats**

The bipartisan, congressionally mandated Commission on the National Defense Strategy assessed in its July 2024 report that “the threats the United States faces are the most serious and most challenging the nation has encountered since

1945 and include the potential for near-term major war.” US adversaries Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea are increasingly cooperating to undermine US national security as part of an “Axis of Aggressors,” including through arms transfers, weapons development, military exercises, intelligence sharing, military exchanges, and sanctions evasion. Despite this dangerous geostrategic environment, the United States is underfunding defense.

■ **The Path Forward**

The president has emphasized that his administration will prioritize “peace through strength,” but that will be difficult without increasing defense spending by 3 to 5 percent above inflation each year and ensuring that any such increase amounts to at least a 0.1 percent increase in defense spending as a percentage of GDP each year. Additionally, while the United States is right to prioritize the Indo-Pacific, neglecting American interests in Europe and the Middle East will embolden adversaries and could result in a cascade of negative consequences in those regions and globally.

If the Trump administration does not request increased funding for DoD, Congress should embrace its Article I constitutional authorities and responsibilities to ensure the military has the necessary resources. A failure to sufficiently fund defense will be measured in wars that could have been prevented and service members who do not return home to their families.

BRADLEY BOWMAN is a Senior Director, RYAN BROBST is a Senior Research Analyst, and CAMERON MCMILLAN is a Research Analyst at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD). This article is reprinted with permission.

Trump Can — and Should — Fully Fund Our Military

by **BRADLEY BOWMAN** and **MARK MONTGOMERY**

“For almost twenty years we had all of the time and almost none of the money; today we have all of the money and no time.” That was then—Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall’s warning on July 22, 1940, a little more than a year before the Pearl Harbor attack and America’s entry into World War II.

Today, Americans find themselves in a similarly precarious geostrategic position and at risk of making the same mistake again — waiting until the last moments before a war to invest the necessary resources in defense. That undermines deterrence, invites aggression, and increases the chances that American war-fighters will not have what they need in the early months of a preventable war.

Each year, the Obama and Biden administrations failed to request from Congress sufficient resources for defense. Trump should not make the same mistake.

The bipartisan, congressionally mandated Commission on the National Defense Strategy assessed in its July 2024 report that the “threats the United States faces are the most serious and most challenging the nation has encountered since 1945 and include the potential for near-term major war.”

■ *Consider the Actions of America’s Adversaries*

In preparation for potential aggression against Taiwan and a war with the United States, China is undertaking a breathtaking military modernization and expansion campaign. In March,

the former top US commander in the Pacific called Beijing’s military buildup “the most extensive and rapid” seen anywhere since World War II.

Russia, for its part, is waging a war of conquest against Ukraine that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives. If Putin’s might-makes-right aggression succeeds, the consequences will reverberate far beyond Europe for years to come.

Iran, meanwhile, is progressing toward a nuclear weapon even as its terror proxies wage a multifront war against Israel, conduct the most significant assault on maritime shipping in decades in the Red Sea, and have launched more than 180 attacks on US troops in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan since October 17, 2023.

And nuclear-armed North Korea is expanding its missile arsenal, honing the ability to strike the US homeland

adversaries, which are part of a new axis of aggressors, are cooperating in unprecedented ways — making each of them more capable, resilient, and effective in their respective areas of ongoing or potential aggression. The results of their diplomatic, intelligence, military, cyber, and economic cooperation are greater than the sum of its parts, presenting genuine challenges and dilemmas for the United States and its allies.

Indeed, there is a significant risk that the United States could confront simultaneous great-power wars in Europe and Asia in the coming years, and the National Defense Strategy Commission concluded that the United States is “not prepared.”

Changing that reality will require many actions by the new administration, but the first and fundamental step

The bipartisan, congressionally mandated Commission on the National Defense Strategy assessed in its July 2024 report that the “threats the United States faces are the most serious and most challenging the nation has encountered since 1945...”

with intercontinental ballistic missiles, sending combat forces to fight Ukraine, and behaving even more aggressively on and near the Korean Peninsula.

To make matters worse, these four

is addressing America’s insufficient defense budget.

Many Americans who have spent too much time listening to Senator Bernie Sanders might be surprised by such an



*An areal view of The Pentagon, Headquarters of the US Department of Defense.
(Photo: Touch Of Light/Wikicommons)*

assertion and believe that the United States is on the verge of going bankrupt due to excessive defense spending.

The truth is quite different.

■ **GDP and Defense Spending**

The United States spent three percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on the Department of Defense for 2024. Other than the years just before the 9/11 terror attacks on our country, that approximate level of spending in recent years is the lowest percentage any time since 1940 — the year before the US entry into World War II.

For comparison, measured as a percent of GDP, the United States spent about 11.4 percent on the Department of Defense in 1953 (Korean War), 8.6 percent in 1968 (Vietnam War), 5.9 percent in 1986 (Reagan buildup), and 4.5 percent in 2010 (wars in Iraq and Afghanistan).

If the threats the United States is confronting are the “most serious” seen since 1945, why is Washington spending so little on defense?

This is just the kind of Beltway nonsense that the administration and

its allies in Congress should correct — and fast. That’s because it can take a long time for increased defense spending to yield fielded combat capabilities, and war could come sooner than many expect.

After all, it is fielded combat capabilities — not defense spending — that deters and wins wars.

At a minimum, President Trump should seek to increase defense spending by 3 to 5 percent above inflation each year and ensure that any such increase amounts to at least a 0.1 percent GDP increase each year, including the FY 2025 budget still under review in Congress. That would boost defense spending back to 3.5 percent of GDP by the end of Trump’s term. That may be the maximum rate of increase that the services and the US defense industry could effectively absorb under current conditions.

Regardless, any such increase should be decoupled from any increases in non-defense spending, especially given the Biden administration’s inflationary domestic-spending binge in recent years.

Some might point to Pentagon waste

as an excuse not to increase defense spending. To be sure, the Department of Defense should serve as a responsible steward of tax dollars, and every dollar wasted is a dollar not available to help secure our country.

But the National Defense Strategy Commission was correct when it assessed that “no feasible combination of institutional adaptation, process improvement, or waste reduction will generate defense savings of sufficient size, and with sufficient speed, to finance” all the necessary steps.

“Bigger budgets are therefore essential,” the commission concluded. Suggesting we must either cut waste or increase the defense budget is a false choice. We must do both simultaneously given the urgency of the threats we confront.

Indeed, in this geostrategic moment, prioritizing efficiency over speed would be a costly and short-sighted mistake. History reminds us that the worst waste of resources — both financial and human — are wars that could have been prevented with earlier and more concerted action to bolster deterrence.

If deterrence fails in the Taiwan Strait as it did in Ukraine, the costs for Americans will be even higher. The Trump administration plans to pursue a “peace through strength” foreign policy. If that laudable approach is to succeed, it must be based on unmatched US military power. Such power is possible only if Washington invests sufficient resources in defense as Ronald Reagan did. Otherwise, such phrases will elicit little more than a shrug in adversary capitals, and Americans will confront wars of aggression sooner or later that could have been prevented.

BRADLEY BOWMAN is senior director of the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD). MARK MONTGOMERY is a senior fellow at FDD. Reprinted with permission from National Review.

Congress & Pentagon Waste

by MARK PFEIFLE

We've all heard stories about how Uncle Sam pays \$436 for a claw hammer, but if President Trump and Elon Musk are looking for Pentagon waste, they should begin their search on Capitol Hill. Congress directs unnecessary spending to benefit well-heeled and influential donors, friends and constituents.

Congress has supposedly banned “earmarks,” the provisions in appropriations bills directing money toward favored projects in members’ home districts and states.

Members of the House Appropriations Committee didn’t get the memo.

Case in point: Congress last year decreed that \$21 billion should be spent for 1,072 separate program increases in the Pentagon’s procurement and research, development, test and evaluation accounts — most of which the Pentagon didn’t even ask for.

It gets worse.

In the yet-to-be-finalized fiscal year 2025 budget, lawmakers have proposed an additional 1,500 increases in the research and development accounts at more than \$39 billion.

More than 72 percent of this spending is for projects the Pentagon didn’t request.

If the defense budget is approved, these are “backdoor earmarks,” and their collective cost will be \$60 billion over two years.

Case in point: Buried deep in the 1,700 pages of the fiscal year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act was a clause directing the Defense Department to “assess risks to the Department’s pharmaceutical supply chain.”

Somehow — perhaps thanks to the Congress members who initiated it or perhaps a nameless team of lobbyists — the assignment was blown out of proportion. Instead of assessing the drug supply chain, the Pentagon undertook a much bigger task: retesting the generic medicines sold

to the Pentagon, medicines that have already been tested and approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

To conduct the testing, the Pentagon signed a “Cooperative Research and Development Agreement” with a New Haven, Connecticut, company calling itself “Valisure.” With just 20 employees and in business for less than 10 years, Valisure was given the job of retesting the generic medicines used by our troops.

The entire exercise is unnecessary; worse, Valisure’s choice was a serious blunder.

The driving force behind this redundant nonsense is Rep. Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, the former chair and current ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee. Don’t be surprised; Ms. DeLauro is Valisure’s hometown representative in Congress.

With an annual budget of about \$7.2 billion, the FDA is the world’s “gold standard” for determining the safety and effectiveness of brand-name drugs and generics. To give the job of retesting the Pentagon’s generic medicines to the 20 employees at Valisure is almost laughable.

Valisure first made headlines in 2020 when it reported that the heartburn medicine Zantac contained the carcinogen NDMA. The finding led to Zantac’s recall in Europe and the United States and set off more than 75,000 lawsuits against the manufacturers.

The FDA subsequently found Valisure’s findings unreliable, partially because it failed to apply accepted testing methods.

Small wonder.

A federal court hearing one of the class-action lawsuits against Zantac, determined that Valisure’s erroneous findings were discovered only after heating the medication to 266 degrees Fahrenheit. The FDA separately found that Valisure’s

testing equipment had created the carcinogen NDMA.

When Valisure tested the product at temperatures closer to what a human would ingest, no NDMA was detected.

The Valisure case is not unusual, and Congress members like Ms. DeLauro can be counted on to return millions of dollars to favored constituents, donors and friends.

Ultimately, though, these costly backdoor earmarks are the work of an army of defense industry lobbyists.

According to OpenSecrets.org, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that tracks money in politics, the defense industry spent more than \$139 million on lobbying in 2023, employing 904 lobbyists, three-quarters having worked in government, often as members of Congress or congressional staffers.

Over the past 10 years, the industry spent nearly \$1.3 billion on lobbying to support its business interests.

This is in addition to \$53.6 million in political contributions during the 2020 presidential election cycle and \$34.8 million for the 2022 midterms.

These defense industry lobbying expenses are a big cause of why Pentagon spending has undergone a nearly 50 percent increase, adjusted for inflation, since 2000.

While the vast majority of the defense budget is legitimately focused on protecting the homeland, costly baubles like the Valisure contract have nothing to do with our national security. They are purely the product of the Washington swamp, and draining it will be a complex and politically perilous endeavor.

Good luck and Godspeed, Mr. Musk.

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Decoding Trump's Border Counterterrorism Order

by TODD BENSMAN

Not so long ago, political opponents of 45th President Donald Trump deliberately misnamed one of his signature immigration policies the “Muslim Ban” and cast it as the poster child for all that that was racist, intolerant, and immoral about that presidency.

So terrible did Democrats regard the travel restrictions list — which sharply curtailed issuance of visas to anyone who hailed from 13 highly dysfunctional countries — that Joe Biden’s 2019-2020 presidential campaign reserved center stage real estate for it and proudly cancelled it on Inauguration Day 2021 in his “Proclamation on Ending Discriminatory Bans on Entry to The United States,” one of 17 executive orders.

But on his inauguration day as 47th president, Trump 2.0 signed the short but action-packed Executive Order “Protecting the United States From Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats,” which sets the stage for the travel ban’s return as a bigger and more expansive iteration of its controversial ancestor. Surprisingly, given its tumultuous political past, this lightning rod of an immigration-related national security policy has escaped almost any media attention and analysis.

Its return should not surprise anyone, as Trump on the campaign trail often promised he would reinstate his “famous travel ban.”

“I will ban refugee resettlement from terror infested areas like the Gaza Strip, and we will seal our border and bring back the travel ban,” Trump promised, for instance, at a September 2024 speech.

“Remember the famous travel ban? We didn’t take people from certain areas of the world? We’re not taking them from infested countries.”

But now we have the follow-through and details of that promise, found in this executive order.

■ *Immigration as National Security*

For starters, this highly consequential executive order is all about re-emphasizing national security screening and “vetting” to weed out Islamist terrorists and other forms of undesired public safety threats from among the millions of foreign nationals who annually apply for immigrant and non-immigrant visas of all kinds, from refugees to tourists, while they are still abroad. (See The Center for Immigration Studies Report (CIS) “Decoding Trump’s Border Counterterrorism Order, Part 2”). But unusually and almost certainly controversially, it also puts the world on notice that the United States intends to backdate the vetting check to deport many already let into the country, such as pro-Hamas demonstrators at college campuses, as CIS “Decoding Trump’s Border Counterterrorism Order, Part 1” explains.

The order sets the table for the new travel ban by generally declaring the United States will “vet and screen to the maximum degree possible all aliens who intend to be admitted, enter, or are already inside the United States, particularly those aliens *coming from regions or nations with identified security risks*.” (Emphasis added.)

The main clue that the travel ban is

authorized here to return in a bigger and more expansive way comes soon after in Section 2(b). It directs the secretary of state, attorney general, secretary of Homeland Security, and the director of national intelligence to identify “countries throughout the world for which vetting and screening information is so deficient as to warrant a partial or full suspension on the admission of nationals from those countries.”

And this part is new: “The United States national security enterprise, the order commands, will endeavor to locate foreign nationals from that list who were already admitted into the country in recent years, and deport them.”

The order commands that, once those countries are identified, they are submitted to an “Assistant to the President for Homeland Security” (the nation’s top national security leadership) to “take immediate steps to exclude or remove that alien” when information supports “exclusion or removal.” Unless removal gets in the way of an active investigation, of course.

■ *A Vastly Misunderstood but Sensible Security Policy*

Trump’s political opponents so often misconstrued the real purpose of his “famous travel ban” that most Americans probably still have no idea what it did and why his administration deems it so necessary.

The travel ban addresses a real national security problem, which is to significantly reduce the issuance of visas to people from countries of terrorism concern or other public safety concerns that don’t, won’t, or can’t cooperate with

American security-vetting processes that are at the heart of Trump's border counterterrorism directive.

Consider for a moment how American security vetting officials would check the backgrounds of foreign nationals from the original 13 countries that were on that list: Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, North Korea, Myanmar, Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, Venezuela, and Tanzania. In Libya, there is no government to ask for security information. For 30 years, Somalia has had no government at all to issue birth certificates, driver's licenses, or to arrest criminals and terrorists.

How would American screeners ever be able to phone North Korea's infamously adversarial dictator for help on anyone asking to enter the United States from that benighted nation? How about Syria, whose last government was listed as a state sponsor of terrorism and, in alignment with Iran and Hezbollah, officially hated the United States and probably would have loved to see it attacked. Now, an al-Qaeda aligned terrorist group has taken over Syria. And Yemen is run by an America-hating, Iran-backed designated terrorist group called the Houthis that the US Navy and Air Force have repeatedly attacked in recent months.

Some countries are simply on the list because they have gone entirely ungoverned for years and therefore have no useful information to share with Americans asking for intelligence information or criminal history.

Take Sudan. Whether South Sudan or regular Sudan to its north, since the country's fuzzy political partition into two countries some years ago, the whole region is pre-modern, an almost ungoverned morass of tribal hatreds and conflicts where toilets, let alone computer databases, are in short supply and police and intelligence services are uninterested in anything beyond keeping this or that patron leader in power.

None of this should be hard to understand as a rationale for sharply limiting the entries of people from these



President Donald Trump displays a signed Executive Order at the Department of Homeland Security in Washington, D.C., on January 25, 2017. (Photo: White House / Shealah Craighead)

countries who can't be reliably vetted for past involvements with local anti-American, atrocity-committing militias and designated terrorist groups that operate in those countries.

■ **Expanding the List**

Indeed, because times have changed since the first version of the travel ban was in effect, the incoming administration will almost certainly expand the original list of problematic countries beyond the 13 that were last on it. And it will vastly expand the workload on US investigators who will be tasked with back-vetting aliens from those countries already let into the United States – Trump has already named Gaza, of course, and there's the West Bank, too.

But there are many other worthwhile candidates. Since the travel ban was last in effect, for instance, Afghanistan has changed hands from a US-backed friendly government to the hostile US-designated terrorist group known as the Taliban, which would not likely be willing to help suss out possible terrorists applying for US visas.

There's the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a premodern state wracked by civil war, infested with a significant

ISIS franchise and atrocity-committing militias, and probably having useless record-keeping systems on anyone, let alone criminals.

Tajikistanis have conducted horrific terror attacks in Russia and Europe and were the target of a major FBI counterterrorism sting investigation inside the United States last year that resulted in the arrest and deportation of eight Tajiks let in over the southern border. The US let in at least one over the southern border as part of the CBP One humanitarian parole application process, which Biden administration officials swore provided robust security vetting.

In October 2024, one of some 20,000 Mauritanian illegal border-crossers who have entered in recent years staged a wild terror attack on an Orthodox Jewish neighborhood in Chicago, wounding one Jewish man before police shot and wounded him. (See "First Blood" series, parts 1-3, CIS, January 2025.)

Perhaps most interestingly, some new countries will likely join the list for reasons having nothing to do with international Islamic terrorism. We can expect this because the executive order commands that DHS consider countries if their citizens can't be screened for certain

unspecified “public safety threats.”

No one can yet say how that part of the order ends up expanding the list, but one might imagine, for instance, that US-adversarial Venezuela would remain on the list for a new reason, because thousands of vicious “Tren de Aragua” gangsters from that country made their way over the southern border into 17 US states in recent years.

El Salvador might wind up on the list, given the prevalence of MS-13 gang members who have crossed, too.

And most potentially interesting would be China, whose spies have been caught and prosecuted posing as students and researchers so they could exfiltrate cutting edge defense-related US technology and research. And whose citizens have crossed the southern border in recent years by the tens of thousands. (See “Bensman congressional testimony before the House Homeland Security Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations and Accountability,” May 16, 2024)

■ *Ample Cases Where Travel Ban Could Have Prevented Entry*

The new administration has given itself a lot of work with this ambitious executive order, particularly the directive that adjudicators back-vet foreign nationals who are already present.

But many past cases of terrorists caught from countries on the original list and good candidates for the new one suggest the program will prove to be effective.

Take, for example, the 2018 terrorism case in which federal prosecutors charged a Somali refugee couple resettled in Tucson with 11 counts of repeatedly lying about everything, including even their names, on their initial 2013 refugee applications in ungoverned Mogadishu and later on their permanent legal residency applications in Tucson.

Most notably, though, Mohamed Abdirahman Osman and his wife Zeinab Abdirahman Mohamad never let on that he was an al-Shabaab terrorist fighter,

as were his brother and entire extended family. Nor that he provided aid and \$32,000 in support to the brother after the brother coordinated a May 24, 2014, suicide bombing of a Djibouti restaurant and became an international fugitive.

US taxpayers would have been spared the danger and prosecution expense had Trump’s travel ban been in place then.

The new administration has given itself a lot of work with this ambitious executive order, particularly the directive that adjudicators back-vet foreign nationals who are already present.

Consider the case of Gaafar Muhammed Ebrahim Al-Wazer, 25, a Yemeni who made legal entry into the United States in 2014: He swore on his visa applications while in front of an American officer in the US embassy that he had no affiliations with the Houthi rebels.

Not long after he settled in Altoona, PA, the FBI learned via a tip that Al-Wazer had fought with the rebels and was posting all about it on social media. He allegedly unburdened himself of increasingly fervent hatreds on his Facebook page, where he wished “death to all Americans, especially Jews,” and vowed he would stay on the path of violent jihad.

The Bureau found online photos showing a heavily armed Al-Wazer and his brother with the Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Consider the more recent case of Afghan national Nasir Ahmad Tawhedi, a former CIA office guard in Afghanistan who came in among 100,000 Afghan evacuees on special immigrant visas during the Biden administration and now stands charged with plotting a violent election day attack on behalf of ISIS. Government investigative reports say that many of those Afghans, later were discovered to

be unacceptable terrorism security risks. Biden administration officials said they’d thoroughly vetted Tawhedi three different times but later admitted he’d never been vetted by anyone.

Then there was the terrorism case against 21-year-old Sudanese citizen

Mahmoud Amin Mohamed Elhassan, entered the United States

with his siblings on legal permanent resident visas. At the time, Sudan was a US-designated state sponsor of terrorism and would not have been willing — or, frankly, even able — to provide American adjudicators with any intelligence or background history about Elhassan for a thorough security vetting.

Within a year of his arrival, Elhassan was on social media espousing violent, anti-American jihad under a pseudonym, according to court records from his later terrorism prosecution. The FBI got on to him in late 2015 and by 2016, just before Trump was elected and shuttered almost all visas for Sudan under his travel ban, Elhassan pleaded guilty to plotting with a co-conspirator to “chop heads” with ISIS in Syria. Shortly before Trump implemented the travel ban, a Virginia judge sentenced him to 11 years in prison on terrorism charges.

These few cases are among many others that, had a travel ban like Trump’s been in place, may never have happened.

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Chicago's Illegal Immigration Nightmare

by JOEL HIMELFARB

More than 700,000 Venezuelans have migrated to the United States since 2020. But US law enforcement has no idea how many of them have criminal records in Venezuela, because President Nicholas Maduro's Marxist regime is hostile to the United States and does not share information with American law enforcement. In July, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yvan Gil dismissed the violent gang Tren de Aragua (TDA), which has wreaked havoc in communities across the United States, as "a fiction created by the international media."

As a result of the Maduro regime's non-cooperation, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to determine a suspect's criminal history. "They could be wanted for murder in Venezuela," New York Police Department Chief of Detectives Joseph Kenny told the *Wall Street Journal*. "We wouldn't know that."

That is only one part of the problem.

More than 50,000 of undocumented migrants have settled in Chicago since August 2022, at a cost to taxpayers close to \$600 million. That generosity has included money for rent, food stamps and even cars – a total welfare benefits package that is far more generous than longtime Chicagoans who are American citizens can lawfully obtain. Many African American residents say that landlords have avoided renting to them because they can get more money if they rent to migrants being subsidized by the taxpayers.

A growing number of city residents appear to have reached their limit, and the backlash has begun.

Chicagoans are furious with uber-progressive Mayor Brandon Johnson and his efforts to resettle unvetted illegal immigrants in the Windy City. And they are furious with Johnson and Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, who have aggressively

The alleged crimes included one migrant shooting another outside a city shelter, a stabbing at a police station serving as a shelter, and almost 90 arrests for shoplifting from Macy's and Nordstrom Rack.

More than 50,000 of undocumented migrants have settled in Chicago since August 2022, at a cost to taxpayers close to \$600 million.

defended bringing the illegals to Illinois and have tried to portray critics of this policy as "anti-immigrant" bigots. Johnson has blamed what he calls "an unclean spirit" that has "captured the right-wing extremists" for opposition to city policies.

■ *Crime in the City*

With that influx came a massive increase in criminal activity. In all of 2021, for example, a total of six Venezuelan-born persons were arrested in the city. From January 1 through November 12, 2023, according to the Chicago Police Department, the number of Venezuelans arrested soared to 686 – an increase of 114 times in only 10 months. (Hat Tip: CWBChicago.com and the Federation for American Immigration Reform.)

In and around Chicago migrant shelters, authorities have been deluged with complaints about teenagers brandishing guns, as well as prostitution, human trafficking, drug-dealing, and open consumption of cocaine and heroin.

Critics say the hostility toward immigration enforcement, embodied by politicians including Mayor Johnson and Governor Pritzker, has had horrific consequences for innocent people.

■ *Case Studies*

George Levin, 63, was found tied up and beaten to death in the basement of his family's home in the Norwood Park section of Chicago. Levin, his older sister and their mother had dinner in their house. At around 8:00 PM, Levin excused himself and went down to his



Demonstrators against the deportation of illegal immigrants march through the Loop in Downtown Chicago, Il. (Photo: Matthew Kaplan / Alamy)

basement apartment. It would be the last time his family would see him alive.

Two illegal migrants have been arrested and charged with his murder. One from Ecuador and the other from Venezuela, entered through Texas. The pair reportedly made contact with Levin on Grindr, a dating app. According to court documents, one had been wearing a Department of Homeland Security ankle monitor at the time, having been arrested earlier in January and charged with a misdemeanor count of assault for attempting to lure a 12-year-old girl into his car, the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported.

Then there is a member of TDA who entered the US in September 2023. He was arrested in Chicago on May 5, 2024, and charged with unlawful use of a weapon

after he was caught trying to stash a stolen gun, CWBC Chicago.com reported.

After the arrest, ICE lodged a detainer in an attempt to take him into custody, but Cook County Judge David Kelly ordered his release and the suspect, unsurprisingly skipped town. He resurfaced in Denver – 1,000 miles away – on June 25, when he and 7 other men allegedly carried out a jewelry-store robbery in which two female store employees were pistol-whipped and threatened with death, the *New York Post* reported. The crime was captured on store video.

■ *The Political Fallout*

All of this has made Johnson very unpopular. A poll taken in February 2025 showed Johnson winning the

approval of just 6.6 percent of voters, with 79.9 percent disapproving – a net favorability rating of negative 73.3, according to the pollster, M3 Strategies.

His credibility was not helped by a January 25 incident in which city school officials falsely accused US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of showing up at an elementary school, while boasting that they turned immigration officials away. They later had to admit that ICE hadn't come to the school; the visitors were actually Secret Service agents.

Johnson and others “have continuously stoked fear and anxiety in neighborhoods, spreading false information that the Trump administration and ICE were coming to round people up out of

churches,” Alderman Raymond Lopez told “News Nation” TV in February.

Lopez (like Mayor Johnson, a Democrat) added that when he met with border czar Tom Homan in December,

angry denunciations of Johnson and his allies who they say are more interested in importing poor people from all over the world than in providing services to American citizens.

...the hostility toward immigration enforcement, embodied by politicians including Mayor Brandon Johnson and Governor JB Pritzker, has had horrific consequences for innocent people.

they agreed that detaining criminals who had entered the United States illegally was their major concern. The federal government wants “to focus on those dangerous, undocumented criminals that are here in their communities,” Lopez said.

Lopez added that many Democratic leaders oppose any working relationship with the Trump administration, and “that’s only going to hurt the people that they pretend to care about,”

In fact, Homan and ICE officials have made copious amounts of information available showing that they are arresting murderers, rapists, drug traffickers and violent gang-members in Chicago and across the United States. That hasn’t stopped Pritzker from attacking the administration for targeting “law-abiding” illegal aliens “who are doing the right thing.” The governor vows to “stand in the way” of Homan’s efforts to remove violent migrants from his state.

■ **The Community Speaks**

Many working-class Chicagoans say the illegal influx of migrants has been a disaster for the city. Over the past year, many Black residents have gone public with their concerns, and city council meetings have been dominated by their

“We don’t want illegals in our community,” local activist O’Cyrus King told Mayor Johnson and city council members at a raucous December hearing. King said that even as violent migrants were “terrorizing” other Chicagoans, city officials were demanding more money for them “when you have Black people already struggling” who are in dire need of assistance.

New York Post, Muhammad slammed the federal government for allowing criminals and gang members to infiltrate the United States and warned that Chicago could go up in flames if tensions between local gangs and TDA escalate.

A *Post* reporter travelling through the city last year could see TDA members flashing gang signs outside a migrant shelter in downtown, where two city police officers told the *Post* that TDA members were attempting to challenge a local gang’s territory near a 7-11.

Employees of the shelter denied the presence of TDA and said there had been no crime in the shelter. But Terry Newsome, a local activist, teamed with Muhammad to make dozens of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, yielding hundreds of police incident reports from the shelter and three other city migrant shelters in downtown Chicago. The crimes included sex trafficking, child pornography, illegal weapons, narcotics and spousal violence.

■ **Looking for Change**

One of the first Chicagoans to speak out against the city’s welcoming ap-

Homan and ICE officials have made copious amounts of information available showing that they are arresting murderers, rapists, drug traffickers and violent gang-members...

Tyrone Muhammad, 53, is a former enforcer for a Black city gang, the Gangster Disciples. After spending 20 years in prison for murder, he now runs a street patrol and violence prevention group called Ex-Cons for Community and Social Change on the South Side. In a September 2024 interview with the

proach was Cata Truss, a government worker and a longtime Democrat who went on national television in January 2024 to urge the city to end the sanctuary policy because it was diverting resources from American residents. City officials refused to meet with her and Truss eventually filed a suit against Chicago

to force it to end the policy. Interviewed one year later, Truss said she was heartened by the new federal administration's tougher stand on illegal immigration.

In early 2025, she told Fox News Channel, "We're excited to see that something is about to happen, that there's about to be a change. We cannot continue to hemorrhage money in this city the way we have been." Truss said she was concerned, however, about reports that the city government has been holding classes to teach illegal migrants how to evade ICE. Truss, who switched her party affiliation to the GOP, added that she is "excited" about the appointment of Tom Homan as border czar.

"In spite of what you might hear our mayor and Gov. Pritzker say about how Chicagoans feel... we are not happy about what is happening here," Truss said, adding that city residents want to ensure that "criminals, who came here to set up their criminal operations again are sent home."

■ **The Justice Department**

Sanctuary city opponents like Truss also gained a powerful new ally in US Attorney General Pam Bondi, who announced in February that the Justice Department has filed a suit against the city of Chicago and the state of Illinois accusing them of obstructing federal immigration law.

Officials there have had a practice of providing "minimal" cooperation with immigration enforcement efforts and "and oftentimes affirmatively thwarting" enforcement of "federal immigration laws over a period of years," the DOJ alleges in the suit. These practices have "resulted in countless criminals being released into Chicago who should have been held for immigration removal from the United States," the lawsuit added.

Bondi criticized state and local officials for "choosing illegal aliens over the safety and security of their own citizens and the men and women of law enforcement who are out there trying to protect their citizens."

Pritzker dismissed the lawsuit as "garbage" and warned the Trump administration to tread carefully in enforcing federal immigration law in his state.

Johnson called immigration raids targeting illegal aliens with criminal records "unconscionable and abhorrent" and vowed that Chicago will remain "a city that opens its arms to people from around the globe."

■ **Rejecting Compromise**

In 2025, Chicago marks its 40th year of openly flouting US immigration law. In 1985, Mayor Harold Washington declared Chicago a "Welcoming City" by executive order, which barred police and other employees from asking city

solely because of a request from ICE. The state's last Republican governor, Bruce Rauner, signed the measure into law.

In 2021, Pritzker signed a bill making it more difficult for officials to inquire about the immigration status or citizenship of someone in custody and barring local governments from signing contracts with the federal government to detain illegals.

In 2021 under then-Mayor Lori Lightfoot, Chicago enacted an expanded Welcoming City ordinance.

The stated reason for sanctuary policies is that they are necessary to protect law-abiding working immigrant families, not violent criminal aliens. But, in January, when Lopez

Many working-class Chicagoans say the illegal influx of migrants has been a disaster for the city. Over the past year, many Black residents have gone public with their concerns...

residents about their immigration status. In 2006, the policy was enacted into law by the Chicago City Council.

After he was elected president in 2016, Donald Trump warned that sanctuary cities could lose federal financial support, but no real effort was made to act on Trump's warning, and Democrats in the Illinois legislature took that as a green light to move forward with new efforts to violate federal immigration law. In 2017, lawmakers passed a bill called the Trust Act, which limited state and local law enforcement's participation in federal immigration enforcement. Among other provisions, the law bars police from keeping someone in custody

and another Democrat, Alderwoman Silvana Tabares, proposed amending the Welcoming City ordinance to allow police to cooperate with ICE in cases involving serious criminal activity, the council voted 39-11 to kill the measure – even though it would have barred cooperation in cases where the only crime was being illegally in the United States.

Johnson is "absolutely not concerned about the people who will bear the brunt of his actions," Lopez said. Chicago's immigration future remains unclear.

JOEL HIMELFARB is a communications consultant for the Jewish Policy Center.

Ending, Not Mending, DEI

by TAL FORTGANG

In a sign of the times, the Trump administration has initiated measures to dismantle Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs within educational institutions across the United States. The Department of Education has issued directives mandating, among other things, that universities eliminate DEI initiatives, warning that non-compliance could result in severe consequences. Universities, ever reluctant to backtrack on their progressive initiatives, have responded in several ways. One popular move has been to rename DEI offices, as if they could evade scrutiny simply by rebranding. Other institutions have admitted, explicitly or implicitly, that DEI had gone too far by teaching certain divisive concepts or hiring race-baiting consultants. They will attempt to “eliminate” DEI by maintaining its core concepts while cutting out the more obviously controversial elements.

Doing so will not address what is wrong with DEI. To understand why that is, it is helpful to examine a case study.

■ *University of Michigan*

The University of Michigan, one of the most prestigious public universities in the country, had been suffering a crisis of governance. In a still-unfolding saga, which, like that of many peer schools, involved heated demonstrations, uneven enforcement of campus rules, and accusations of bigotry and unfairness flying in every direction, the school’s Faculty Senate censured its regents for shutting down anti-Israel encampments, and establishing an institutional-neutrality policy. Shortly after, the student government voted to impeach its avidly anti-Israel leadership for inciting violence against “Zionist members” of the

student government.

An anti-Israel student group was suspended for two years and lost its funding after demonstrating in front of a Jewish Regent’s house. In February 2025, the ACLU filed a lawsuit in federal court against the university for allegedly infringing on the free speech rights of students who had been banned from campus for participating in demonstrations that violated campus rules. “The university says it appreciates this history of activism,” said one student plaintiff in a telling interview, “but it will arrest students, ban students, surveil students and repress them through legal or school disciplinary means.”

These developments, featuring faculty backlash against institutional leaders, student backlash against ideologues in student-leadership positions, and lawsuits left and right, highlight once again

The New York Times published a long article by Nicholas Confessore on the crisis created (or exacerbated) by diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at Michigan. If administrators and advocates across the country are willing to take seriously Confessore’s article and the broader problems DEI ideology, echoed in the censure motion, creates in the academy and beyond, they will have to admit that by any metric, something has gone terribly wrong.

Confessore’s thoughtful and candid reporting reveals a host of surface-level problems that at least warrant serious reconsideration of DEI’s direction. Among these are the bloated bureaucracy that DEI efforts have spawned, questionable hiring practices, and the rising tensions between identity groups on campus. Taxpayers have funded an inefficient boondoggle for mediocre bureaucrats

Within the DEI framework, bluntly, there is no basis for administrators to tell students that they are fine and should stop complaining.

the conflict between governance and ideology on American campuses. That is the conflict DEI, at its best, is meant to address – but fails to.

■ *Issues on the Surface*

It is hardly a new story. In fact, just a few weeks before the censure motion,

who do not know exactly what they have been hired to do and whose day-to-day work has nothing to do with making student life healthier or a Michigan education more valuable. Faculty worry that an atmosphere of ideological conformity suppresses open inquiry and encourages disaffected students to become

ideological enforcers against professors. All of this, as the article notes, contributes to a general atmosphere of distrust and suspicion among students, faculty, and staff alike – with no increase in actual diversity, equity, or inclusion to show for it.

It might have been tempting to mend, not end, DEI, by trimming administrative fat and yet again redoubling efforts to make all identity groups feel catered to. Surely some critics of DEI as it has manifested would have commended that as a step in the right direction. But administrative bloat, unclear directives, intergroup competition, and decrease of social cohesion are simply fruit of a poisoned tree.

■ *The Insidious Nature of DEI*

The real problem with DEI initiatives has always been inherent and more insidious: As the article demonstrates repeatedly by example, DEI empowers favored identity groups to make unfalsifiable and often unrepresentative claims about what they feel and need. It codifies the position that those claims are valid and require deferential official responses. This is a bad recipe for making all community members feel like equal citizens, rather than factions competing for power over one another. The foundational principle of DEI—that different identity groups have unique experiences that demand specialized policies and protections—is thus not merely contentious. It is untenable in theory, unworkable in practice, and inimical to the functioning of a university or any other institution with diverse membership.

By privileging subjectivity and rejecting the possibility of true cross-identity understanding, DEI makes it impossible to establish any kind of objective standard about what expectations, behaviors, and accommodations are reasonable or even desirable in a diverse and pluralistic community. Within the DEI framework, bluntly, there is no basis for administrators to tell students that they are fine and should stop complaining.



A view of North Campus buildings at the University of Michigan. (Photo: Natecation)

With no external measure of what constitutes legitimate discomfort or exclusion, any grievance, no matter how small or subjective, is treated as worthy of university action if it comes couched in terms of identity. This dynamic not only elevates emotional states into irrefutable truths—an epistemic error—it creates an ever-heavier load of complaints while disavowing the very concepts needed to mediate them. Worse still, DEI initiatives assume that the claimed feelings of “marginalized” groups automatically takes precedence over competing claims from non-marginalized groups or those not framed in terms of identity—leaving no room for debate, negotiation, or compromise, and incentivizing more identity-inflected power struggles.

Within this framework, there is no clear way to arbitrate between competing claims of exclusion. What happens, for example, when the demands of one identity group directly conflict with the desires or rights of another? That is precisely what campuses are dealing with as Jewish and Arab students clash over garb, slogans, and other symbols that seem menacing to one group and harmless, even integral, to the identity of another.

■ *Identity Groups as Sovereign*

In a telling example from Confessore’s article, “Jews, Palestinians, and their supporters all laid claim to Michigan’s promise of inclusion” as anti-Israel groups failed to pass an explicitly DEI-inflected vote to condemn “apartheid regimes.” Michigan’s DEI “leaders gave the school’s Martin Luther King Jr. Spirit Award to a pro-Palestine student group” that “had issued a statement on Oct. 7 justifying the murder of Israeli citizens.” The award was later rescinded after the group’s leader posted calls for “death and worse” to “every single individual who supports the Zionist state,” which doubtless includes thousands of her Michigan classmates.

The same dynamic played out on campuses and in boardrooms across the country. Every identity group considered itself the campus sovereign, by virtue of being an identity group. They did so on the explicit encouragement of DEI’s worldview, which promised the allocation of resources based not on objective reality but subjective perspectives.

But when push comes to shove, DEI is a set of platitudes, not principles. It lacks the capacity to bear the very load

it creates. Promises that all students should feel safe and included are simply too thin to resolve the very conflicts DEI stokes. DEI sees no moral difference between the failure to condemn (imaginary) “apartheid” overseas and students

Michigan Regent put it. Its entire premise is based on an unstable foundation. A system that prioritizes subjective experience above all else, while intentionally courting diverse members and insisting that each one cannot truly understand

– they should be ignored. So long as college students vie for university resources and recognition of supposed traumas as a means of imposing themselves on their fellow students, universities should get out of the business of making students “feel” anything. That requires establishing clear standards of what education is, as far as the university is concerned, and what interference looks like. Those standards should be narrow on both counts. If possible, they should only serve to bar civil rights violations, like deprivation of access to parts of campus and genuine discriminatory harassment.

Reorienting the university and other institutions that have embraced DEI will take a major pivot in philosophy and practice. But that is clearly on the government’s agenda. It might be tempting to read the Michigan case study as a kind of constructive criticism, but the candid acknowledgment of these issues suggests that DEI is just one more in a long line of ideological systems that are not up to the challenges presented by actual human behavior.

No amount of tinkering with policies or budgets will salvage it, just as no gifted central planner can solve the problems of Communism. The

Universities are for education. With that sense of institutional purpose in mind, administrations should aim to resolve conflicts by asking what they have to do with education.

justifying murder. It might even find ways to celebrate the latter. That’s because it’s only metric is whether one advances the interests of identity groups as defined by activist groups, not whether those interests are good or worthwhile. Indeed, it provides no basis on which to say whether that is the case.

It’s a kindergarten solution to an adult problem.

Symptoms of dysfunction quickly result. Over and over a group claiming to represent a particular minority demands a change that another minority finds objectionable, and universities ratchet up the resources devoted to solving each one’s discomfort yet systematically avoiding solving the conflict between the two groups. Rather than fostering a sense of shared purpose by redirecting student energy to the distinct features of university life, like scholarship and genuine inquiry, DEI initiatives have created a zero-sum game where identity groups vie for resources, status, and power, sowing division rather than unity, creating the need for yet more administrators and more money to throw at inflamed tensions.

Ultimately, the problems highlighted in the *NY Times* article reflect a deeper truth: DEI is not “absolutely well intentioned, extremely thoughtful in its conception and design” yet “so virtuous that it’s escaped accountability,” as one

the other cannot create a cohesive, harmonious community. It creates discord and dysfunction.

■ **Universities are for Education**

DEI’s inadequacy does not make diversity, with the friction it inevitably generates, a challenge too great to bear or impossible to address. It simply means that universities will have to approach the challenge of diversity from a perspective – that is, the university’s own view of what its students are there

Universities should get out of the business of making students “feel” anything.

for – rather than from a posture of deference to any and all groups’ stated perspectives.

Ambiguous as the term may be, however, universities are for education. With that sense of institutional purpose in mind, administrations should aim to resolve conflicts by asking what they have to do with education. If they are not genuinely interfering with education – and plenty of student demonstrations have and should be punished accordingly

University of Michigan and its peers have no excuse, at this point, for not recognizing what DEI really is—a noble-sounding theory of social cohesion that is just the opposite. Real social cohesion requires sober institutional design that fosters maturity and forbearance, rather than cultivating entitlement and a tyranny of feelings.

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Government and Industry: Who has the Power?

The Power and the Money: The Epic Clashes Between Commanders in Chief and Titans of Industry (Regnery 2024)

by TEVI TROY, Ph.D.

review by SHOSHANA BRYEN

It was the best of times. It was the worst of times...

Oh, who are we kidding? The period beginning 10/7/2023 and continuing right through 2024 was simply among the worst of times.

The Hamas attacks of 10/7 and the ugly international reaction to Israel's defense of its borders and its people – “Globalize the Intifada” has come to include riots and attacks on Jews around the world – and attacks on the United States and Western civilization. It also includes verbal support for Israel from the Biden administration coupled with the delay of weapons, nagging and the sanctioning of individual Israelis; a rise in Iran's aggressive activity; a Democratic primary election season that produced an eventual presidential candidate who had won exactly no votes; a campaign season that saw three assassination attempts; and a post-election season that included massive transfers of money to international organizations by the outgoing administration to which the incoming one would never accede.

Remember when the idea of political mischief by an outgoing administration consisted of President Clinton's staff removing the Ws from computer keyboards before President George “W” Bush entered the White House? Now THAT was funny!

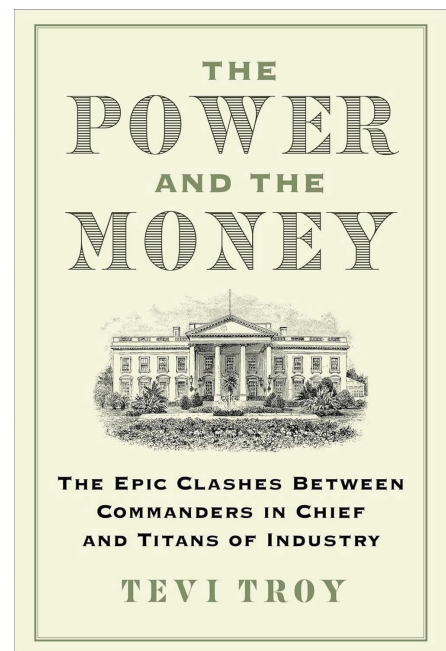
So, after a year of suffering hives over both domestic and foreign events,

it made sense to pick history. I picked *The Power and the Money* by presidential historian Tevi Troy. Subtitled *The Epic Clashes between Commanders in Chief and Titans of Industry*, the book details relations between industry and politics beginning with John D. Rockefeller and Theodore Roosevelt and works its way up to Mark Zuckerberg and President Joe Biden.

Troy, a Fellow of the Jewish Policy Center, is the creator and founder of “1600 Lessons: Leadership Lessons from our Nation's Chief Executives,” a leadership training course based on his extensive knowledge of the presidency. As well as being a bestselling author (see *Shall We Wake the President and Fight House: Rivalries in the White House* from Truman to Trump reviewed in previous issues of *inFOCUS Quarterly*), he has been a White House aid and deputy secretary of Health. He is well-qualified here.

There are ten chapters – nine of which are extraordinary. There are also three Appendices, including a CEO Joke File that is lots of fun. We'll get to Chapter 10 in a bit.

Chapter One is, obviously, “The Blank Slate.” There was a time that “industry” was unknown. Yes, there were banks, there were businesses – factories even—but “industry” as a moving force in American politics began with JP Morgan and John D. Rockefeller on



one side and Presidents Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, Chester A. Arthur, Benjamin Harrison, Grover Cleveland and William McKinley on the other.

His stories are amazing and the level of interpersonal relations among the two sides – and they were two sides – is fascinating.

That's a lot of presidents learning to work with, like, manipulate, despise and try to limit two big business bosses. The bosses won just about every time.

The backlash was Chapter Two, "The Progressives," Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson. More of the same regarding push and pull, use and scorn, admiration and derision, as personalities and a vision for the American future took shape in the 20th Century.

Troy makes them all human. His stories are amazing and the level of interpersonal relations among the two sides – and they were two sides – is fascinating. [So is his penchant for translating early century dollars into current figures: a payment from Rockefeller's Standard Oil to presidential-hopeful Joseph Foraker included "a staggering \$150,000," chump change today, but "\$5.4 million in today's dollars" makes it something else.]

■ **Henry Ford Diversion**

Henry Ford pops up in this chapter and more in the next. He is treated fairly. His early understanding of not only automobiles but also the people who needed to have the money to buy and drive them, is covered. His pacifism – particularly as it related to WWI – and his dislike of government – even as he knew seven presidents – is covered. Ford's own attempts to humanize himself are covered as well – and some of them are funny.

But then you get to the real Henry Ford and his antisemitism in Chapter Three: The Roaring Twenties, and onward. This is definitional Ford, and

it is fairly and extensively covered as well. He keeps popping up, and new to me was the fact that Ford is the only American mentioned in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. The Ford factory in Germany continued to operate all through World War II.

Although Ford apologized for his antisemitism and stopped running antisemitic articles in his *Dearborn Independent* in 1927, Hitler himself praised the automobile magnate as "the leader of the growing Fascist movement in America." In 1938, four months after

the *Anschluss*, Ford accepted a Grand Cross of the German Eagle award from the Nazi regime.

And yet, Troy reminds us, politics are politics:

When Ford died in 1947, a host of corporate and political leaders praised him, including Roosevelt's replacement, President Harry Truman. The praise came despite Ford's record of antisemitism, his hatred of Roosevelt and his opposition to the New Deal. Truman had met Ford in the early 1940s, when he was still a senator from Missouri, but he recounted the meeting in a press conference he gave as president in 1951. In his comments, Truman noted that he had asked Ford about his pacifism, and that Ford had been "very certain that things that would come out of the tremendous effort which ourselves and our allies had put forth would be of great benefit to civilization." Ford's assessment, Truman noted, "has been absolutely true."

■ **Back to the Timeline**

The '20's also saw the rise of Jewish Hollywood, starting with the Warner family, which would, first of all, create an industry that lives today – although they might not be too happy with some of it – but also as the '20s ended and the

The patriotism and desire of these Jewish show business icons to help America should be legendary, although it is often passed over. Troy helps set the record straight.

Depression began – used their skills and their love of country to raise people's spirits and offer solace: "God Bless America" and "White Christmas" (Irving Berlin), as well as "Yankee Doodle Dandy," "Give

my Regards to Broadway,” and “You’re a Grand Old Flag” (George M. Cohan) are icons. Samuel Goldwyn, Louis B. Mayer, Harry Cohn, The Marx Brothers and Mel Brooks. This was true through WWII as well. Hollywood agent Lou Wasserman started in the ‘40s and was influential until the 1970s. The patriotism and desire of these Jewish show business icons to help America should be legendary, although it is often passed over. Troy helps set the record straight.

All of this is pretty historic. And a great read.

Chapter Four: The Great Depression brings in Henry Luce and the rise of national media with the pervasive influence it has wielded since. Luce’s relationship with FDR is unpleasant on both sides. Luce used *Time* magazine to try to damage Roosevelt, and Roosevelt’s vindictiveness, which included denying a Silver Star medal to John Hersey for his bravery at the Battle of Guadalcanal. Hersey was a *Time* correspondent at the time.

This is where a theme begins that travels through the rest of the book – and, in some ways, it means readers don’t have to consider the chapters as much as they do the trends. Luce was the beginning of the rise of the importance of communications media and later the rise of social media. You will see 21st-century elections in the 1930s and 1940s. There’s also Katherine Graham and the burgeoning importance of *The Washington Post*. The relative decline of “legacy media,” including *The Post*, doesn’t get much attention, but the rise of computer-driven and social media stars – some of whom, including Jeff Bezos of Amazon and *The Post*, are also legacy media owners – is there.

Eventually, you will get to Chapter Ten, where you will find two major lapses – and, in an oddity for a book that is well and carefully footnoted, neither lapse has a source – that’s because neither story is true as written. The first is the canard that Donald Trump said there were “good people on both sides” of the white supremacist rally in

Charlottesville in 2017. He did not, and even *The Washington Post* had to offer a correction. The other is that Trump told people to drink bleach to kill COVID germs – he did not. ‘Nuff said.

But that isn’t the only problem. As you pass through the Biden administration and into the 2024 election season, the end of *The Power and the Presidency* becomes obsolete, because we’re in 2025.

There was a lot of rejiggering of political and social positions during the 2024 election and after Donald Trump’s victory. Elon Musk, one of the key players, had been on the political left, a Democrat who was rather outspo-

change its “fact-finding” algorithm and that he would no longer donate to “get out the vote” organizations (which had been shown to be almost entirely oriented to helping the left-of-center).

No doubt readers will not be surprised as they check their daily news sources and watch the relationships and individuals in those relationships change. On the business and media side, they may not change their own deeply held beliefs, but when their businesses are affected, you can bet that their public positions will shift. Bud Light had that experience after Dylan Mulvaney. (If necessary, you can look that up.)

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kenly anti-Trump. That changed, based largely on his belief in free speech, ending with him as the director of the new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

Jeff Bezos not only declined to have *The Washington Post* endorse any candidate, but he visited President-elect Trump at his home in Mar a Lago. Bezos was also present at the (indoor and therefore much smaller) inauguration ceremony and sponsored an inaugural event. META’s (Facebook parent) Mark Zuckerberg also visited Trump before the inauguration and announced that he was changing META to account for the fact that it had become clear that left-wing censorship was prolific. Zuckerberg also announced that META would

Oddly enough, these lapses do not ruin the book, and certainly don’t reflect on the author – although, it would be nice if he would announce an updated version.

The joke appendix is terrific. And *The Power and the Presidency* is a great way to remind yourself that our Republic has a long history and whatever we’re seeing today, even with the introduction of high-tech and high-tech moguls, the relationship between government and industry will shift as the players shift.

Buy the book and get ready for more shifting.

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■ *The Last Word ...*

Most Outrage is Hypocrisy

In the aftermath of the release of the mutilated bodies of the Bibas babies by Hamas, an amazing number of previously silent public voices suddenly found outrage.

The biggest fraud in this was UN Secretary-General António Guterres. “I condemn ... Under international law ... They must comply ... Respect for the dignity of ...” And so on and so on.

Who cares?

Deafening silence by Guterres about murdered, raped and mutilated Jewish men, women and children (babies!), coupled with his loud, ongoing condemnation of Israel’s defense and his support of Hamas will be his legacy. Along with the lunatic propaganda that came out of UN agencies over which he presides.

Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) was waiting “in agony.”

Amnesty International trumpeted the “urgent need to immediately release the civilian hostages and Palestinians arbitrarily detained.” The bodies of babies murdered by hand reminded Amnesty of the need to release Palestinians detained and tried for terror activities in the court of a democratic country.

Palestinian voices were interesting.

After moaning about (fake) genocide, (fake) famine and (fake) hideous brutality of Israel in Gaza, now (now!) they are

jumping over each other to say, “No, it wasn’t me, and yes, it was them, and yes, I’m so upset about the Bibas children.”

Not upset about the 1200 other people murdered on October 7; just the babies.

Um, no.

Israel announced large rewards and safe passage for Palestinians who gave information about the hostages to the IDF. Not one single person came forward.

For those who say, “Gaza ‘civilians’ were threatened by Hamas, so they were afraid to speak out,” note that in the hideous swamp of Holocaust Europe, brave and threatened civilians hid, fed, and sheltered Jews. The Garden of the Righteous Among Nations at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem tells their stories of decency. There will be no Palestinian counterpart.

There were other Arab voices and herein lies hope.

Even before the Abraham Accords were signed in 2020, there were voices in the Arab world calling sincerely for co-existence and friendship between Muslim Arabs and Israelis, including its Jewish and non-Jewish population. An amazing group of people stayed the course after Oct. 7.

They can have a garden.

– Shoshana Bryen
Editor, *inFOCUS Quarterly*