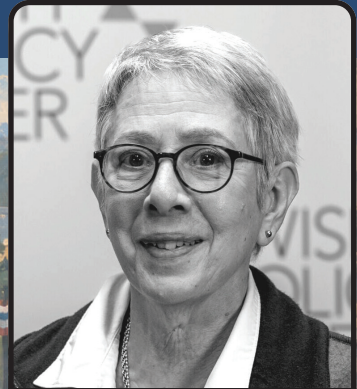


VOLUME 20 ISSUE 4 | FALL 2026

*in*FOCUS

QUARTERLY

A Changing America



Remembering
SHOSHANA BRYEN z"l

Eric Rozenman on the Changing Electorate | **Cato Institute** on What Americans Believe | **Eli Adler** on Populism's Technological Roots | **Phillip W. Magness** and **Caleb Petitt** on Capitalism's Critics | **Shoshana Bryen z"l** on Israel as a Security Asset | **Ari Bryen** on Remembering His Mother | **Sean Durns** on Shoshana Bryen's Legacy | **Lauri B. Regan** on a Friendship with Shoshana | **Elizabeth Thompson** reviews *The Point of It All*

An Interview with Sen. **NORM COLEMAN**

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Candidates change every two years. The electorate changes more slowly—and, lately, more profoundly. With the midterms weeks away, the Fall issue of *inFOCUS Quarterly* looks past the horse race to A Changing America: who the voters are becoming, and what they no longer take for granted.

Eric Rozenman opens with the long view: an electorate less religious, less sure of capitalism, less proud of its history, and less committed to free speech than the one the Founders imagined—and how each of those shifts leads back to attitudes toward Jews and Israel.

A Cato Institute survey finds that most Americans still believe the American Dream is within their reach, but far fewer think well of capitalism—and the youngest voters now think better of socialism. Phillip W. Magness and Caleb Petitt point to one place that shift in thinking is being taught: the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's* first entry on capitalism, written largely from the perspective of its critics. And Eli Adler argues that populism's rise owes less to the economy than to social media feeds.

Our interview is with former Sen. Norm Coleman, who remembers his



friend, the late Sen. Lindsey Graham, before turning to Iran, trade, and the fight against antisemitism—"a race without a finish line." Interim editor Elizabeth Thompson reviews Charles Krauthammer's posthumously published *The Point of It All*.

In one section, we strayed from our theme, deliberately. In July we lost Shoshana Bryen, who had edited this magazine since 2012 and made it what you hold in your hands. The back half of this issue is Shoshana's: her essay "Israel: A Security Asset for the United States," lightly updated; remembrances from her son, Ari, writer Sean Durns, and friend Lauri Regan; and a letter from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to her husband, Steve, who kindly allowed us to share it.

"Formidable" is the word nearly everyone reached for to describe Shoshana. It fits.

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,



Matthew Brooks
Publisher

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Our Changing Electorate Changes Elections

by ERIC ROZENMAN

“I know of no way of judging the future but by the past,” Patrick Henry asserted in advocating independence from a consistently oppressive Great Britain. But when it comes to elections, the more the present electorate diverges from past electorates, the less reliable past election results may be as a guide.

With that in mind, consider how today’s public differs from that of the not-too-distant past and from the intentions and expectations of America’s Founders. Start with attitudes about the connection between religion and good government, and end with attitudes toward Jews and Israel. The two are related.

■ Religion and Government

Recognizing the often-uncontrolled passions of human beings, President John Adams wrote in a 1798 letter to the Massachusetts Militia, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

Eleven years earlier, before the Constitution had been written, the Confederation Congress adopted the Northwest Ordinance. The legislation established the government and means of acquiring statehood for the territories that would become Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. The first sentence of Article Three, still etched into the campus gate of Ohio University, established in 1804 as the first institution of higher learning west of the Allegheny Mountains, reads:

“Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”

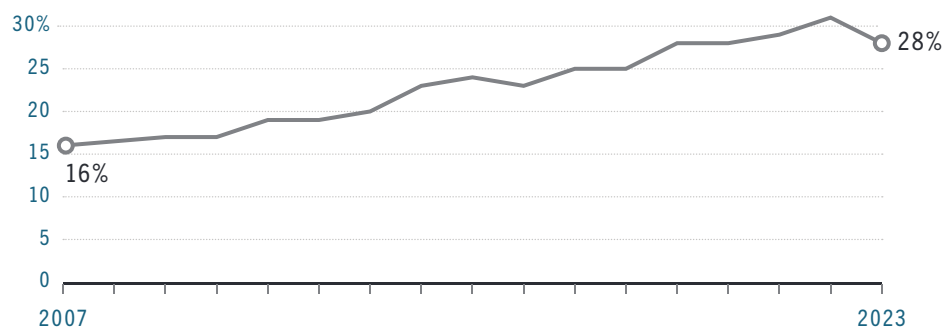
The Founders notwithstanding, Americans’ views on the importance of religion appear to be declining. A Pew Research exit poll after the presidential election of 2008, in which then-Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL) defeated Sen.

to vote less often, do less volunteer work in their communities and follow public affairs at lower rates than religiously affiliated people do.”

As for party affiliation, a 2024 Pew survey indicated that “religious ‘nones’ have become more Democratic over the past few decades as their size in the US population overall and in the electorate has grown significantly. While 70 percent of religiously unaffiliated voters

28% OF US ADULTS ARE NOW RELIGIOUSLY UNAFFILIATED

Percent of US adults who identify religiously as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular”



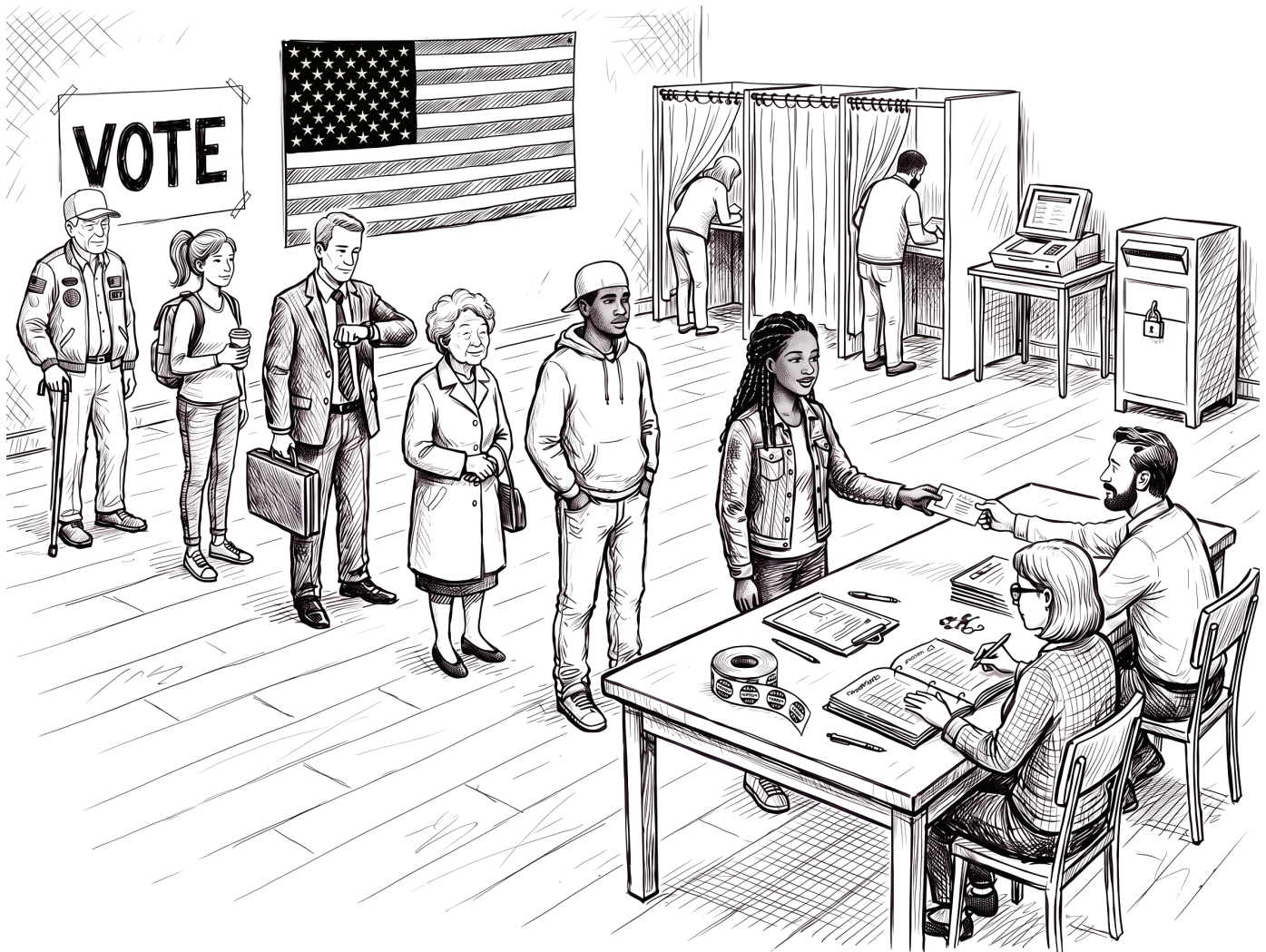
Source: Pew Research Center. Figures for 2020–23 come from its National Public Opinion Reference Surveys; earlier years come from telephone surveys, including the 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies. No survey was conducted in 2008.

John McCain (R-AZ), put religiously unaffiliated voters at 12 percent, up from 9 percent in 2000. In the 2024 contest between presidents Joe Biden and Donald Trump, Pew found that religiously unaffiliated voters made up 28 percent of the electorate.

This category, “nones” to pollsters, includes 17 percent atheists, 20 percent agnostics, and 63 percent who described their religious affiliation as “nothing in particular.” According to Pew, “nones [excepting atheists and agnostics] tend

align with the Democratic Party, just 27 percent identify as Republicans or lean Republican.”

Meanwhile, 85 percent of white evangelical voters identify with or lean toward the Republican Party; “just 14 percent align with the Democrats.” Pew estimates that there are roughly 78 million adults who identify as evangelical Protestants and/or “born-again Christians,” or 23 percent of the total. But “nones,” at 28 percent or 101 million adults, now appear to be the largest



“religious affiliation” category among Americans and the only one growing in percentage and absolute terms.

Of course, an agnostic, atheist, or religiously unaffiliated individual can live a life of moral rectitude and informed political activity. But can entire societies, in particular Western democratic-capitalist ones whose laws are rooted in Judeo-Christian ethics? And if so, for how many generations, given that Americans who today’s pollsters classify as “nones” acquired their moral-ethical beliefs in societies that taught those beliefs as religiously based?

■ **Cashing Out on Capitalism?**

Capitalism’s prophet, Adam Smith, recognized free markets as necessary for “natural liberty.” But a significant portion of today’s electorate appears

to doubt this cornerstone of history’s greatest engine of economic growth.

In September 2025, a Gallup poll found that support for capitalism had dropped from 60 percent in 2021 to 54 percent. Perhaps reflecting broader public polarization, Republicans held relatively steady, with roughly three-fourths of GOP supporters approving, while Democrats and independents each dropped eight percentage points from 2021 to a minority of 42 percent among Democrats and 51 percent among independents.

Tucked within that general snapshot was a detail of potential importance to conservatives as well as liberals. “Americans are overwhelmingly positive toward small business (95 percent) and free enterprise (81 percent), as they have consistently been. They are

far more negative toward big business, with 37 percent rating it positively and 62 percent negatively.” General public backing for socialism stands at 39 percent today, up four points in 10 years.

Hostility to certain large corporate activities appeared in a March 2026 Gallup public opinion poll. Seventy-one percent of respondents said they either strongly (48 percent) or somewhat strongly (23 percent) opposed the construction of nearby data centers, which can require large amounts of electricity, water and land to power artificial intelligence operations by firms including Google, Microsoft and Amazon. This compared to 53 percent opposed to building a nuclear power plant nearby.

Overall, a July 2026 *Wall Street Journal*-National Opinion Research Center (NORC) survey found “just

under half of Americans say capitalism is working very well or even somewhat well.” This marked a drop from 60 percent a decade earlier.

Among the youngest voters, hostility to the influence of large corporations may translate, paradoxically, into expectations for help on “affordability” issues from bigger government and sympathy for socialism. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* commentary, Emil Barr, the 23-year-old founder of one tech-related company and co-founder of a second, wrote that “53 percent of self-identified conservatives under

VIEWS OF CAPITALISM BY PARTY

PARTY	2021	2025	CHANGE
Republicans	72%	74%	+2 pts
Independents	59%	51%	–8 pts
Democrats	50%	42%	–8 pts

Source: Gallup, September 2025.

distinguish Adam Smith from early Jamestown’s Captain John Smith, but the causes for their economic grievances appear to extend beyond fear of AI-caused employment losses.

the affordability crisis, which is fueling the rise of the Democratic Socialists of America and giving those who scoff at “the American dream”—or redefine it as government-provided—a potent campaign issue.

■ American Dreaming

According to *The Journal-NORC* poll, “only 35 percent are even fairly sure that the nation offers people the ability to get good jobs and achieve the American dream.” In 2012, 53 percent believed “the American dream—if you work hard you’ll get ahead—still holds true.”

If so, then giving voice to the original meaning of “the American dream” might prove critical. James Truslow Adams, winner of the 1922 Pulitzer Prize for *The Founding of New England*, defined it as “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. ... It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each

Over-schooled but under-educated younger voters may not be able to distinguish Adam Smith from early Jamestown’s Captain John Smith, but the causes for their economic grievances appear to extend beyond fear of AI-caused employment losses.

40 support government-run grocery stores. Not Democrats, conservatives. Take that in.”

One of Barr’s companies tracks layoffs caused by artificial intelligence, “and every month I look at spreadsheets that show my generation losing entry-level jobs faster than anyone anticipated. So, when the polling says young Americans have soured on capitalism, I’m not surprised by the anger.”

The left directs that economic anger at billionaires and big business, Barr says. The right gets to the same antipathy by targeting “China, immigrants, Israel or whichever group is being blamed that month for why we can’t afford what our parents could at our age.”

Over-schooled but under-educated younger voters may not be able to

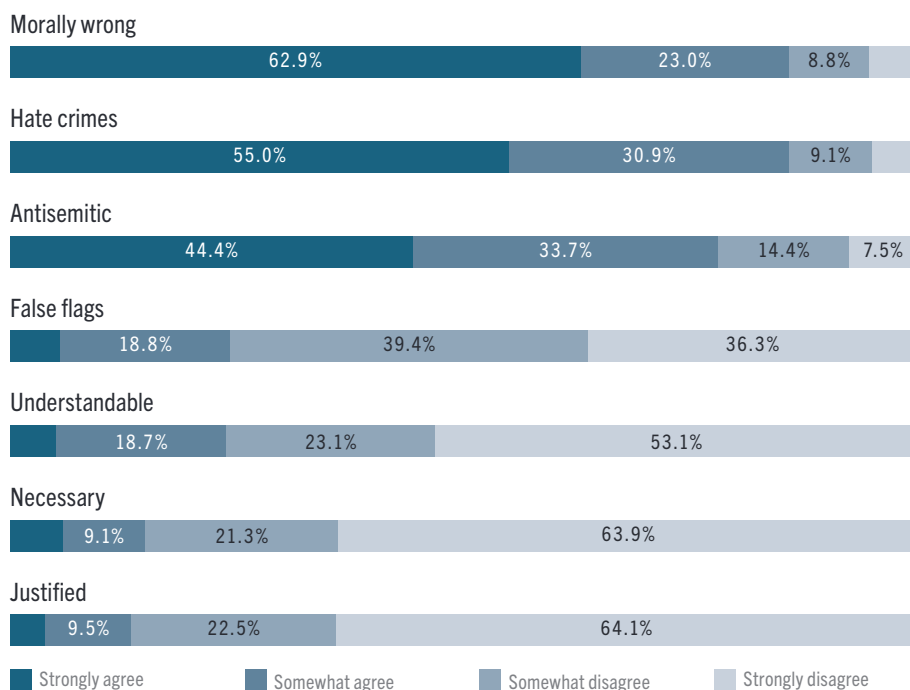
Add income stratification and, for the 80 percent of the public below the upper middle class, stagnant inflation-adjusted wages. Another *Wall Street Journal* columnist, Allysia Finley, says this means that since 2021 the typi-

But when it comes to elections, the more the present electorate diverges from past electorates, the less reliable past election results may be as a guide.

cal worker’s earnings “have been flat. His real take-home pay, after taxes and other deductions, has fallen.” Hence

man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized

Percentage of people who think the events were...



Source: Anti-Defamation League survey, 2025, on three antisemitic attacks—arson at Gov. Josh Shapiro’s residence, the shooting at the Capital Jewish Museum, and the assaults and murder at a rally for Israeli hostages.

by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstance of birth or position.”

That is, a social order of “free minds, free speech, free markets and free people” in which government exists to secure individual rights and a large, competitive private sector, not serve as chief administrator of economic activity. But according to pollsters, our changing electorate finds this social order a harder sell than it used to be.

In addition to feeling less religious and more dubious about capitalism than it used to, the US electorate reports feeling less patriotic, as well. *The Wall Street Journal*-NORC survey cited above found that less than 40 percent said it was proud of American history. “Two-thirds of Republicans said they were very proud of American history,” but this was “three times the share of Democrats who said so.”

As to the future of the United States, slightly more than “two-thirds of

Americans say the nation that invented the airplane and the Internet, and that led the Allies to victory in World War II, is now in decline. ... [M]ajorities of Republicans agreed with large shares of Democrats and independents.”

But two-thirds of Republicans still subscribe to American exceptionalism. This is the belief that history’s longest-running, most successful experiment in self-government, which annually attracts several million immigrants, legal and illegal, from around the world, stands above other nations. In contrast, only 13 percent of independents and eight percent of Democrats embraced American exceptionalism.

■ Free Speech Against Jews

The United States’ historic commitment to free speech helped undergird its exceptionalism. The First Amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1791 as part of the Bill of Rights, reads: “Congress shall make no

law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Nevertheless, public support for free speech long has been ambivalent. In the abstract, nearly everyone is for it. But when it comes to particulars, not so much, according to Vanderbilt University researchers.

In 1939, 86 percent of respondents told pollsters democracy without freedom of speech was impossible. In 2024, 90 percent said so. However, asked whether “anybody should be allowed to speak on any subject anytime they want to, or do you think there are times when free speech should be prohibited or certain subjects or speakers prohibited?” support for “prohibit some” was 47 percent in 1939, and 41 percent in 2024. Once categories of speech have been deemed “controversial,” the “prohibit some speech” crowd can dominate, as conservatives and Zionists have found on campus.

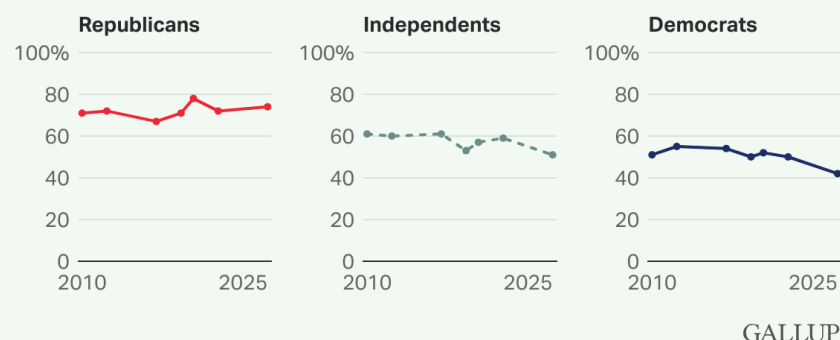
The younger the respondent, the less likely he or she is to support free speech that might offend members of minority groups. Last year, *The Future of Free Speech* found that “only 47 percent of those ages 18 to 34 said such speech should be allowed, compared with 70 percent of those over 55. Similarly, tolerance for religiously offensive speech was 57 percent among younger respondents, down from 71 in 2021.”

In 2024, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), citing a Pew report, said 70 percent of college students “supported disinviting speakers perceived as bigoted.” More than “a quarter said violence could be acceptable to stop campus speech in some cases.”

And it is here that attitudes toward free speech, and perhaps other traditional values including support for religious affiliation, capitalism and patriotism may intersect with resurgent Jew-hatred.

Trend in Opinions of Capitalism, by Political Party

Just off the top of your head, would you say you have a positive or negative image of each of the following? Capitalism
% Positive



Source: Gallup

If, in the lexicon of the anti-Zionist, antisemitic post-liberal left, American Jews are not members of an oppressed or oppressible minority group but “white adjacent,” speech based on and/or promoting hostility to Jews can be tolerated. Pro-Israel and pro-Jewish speakers, by definition members of the “oppressor” class in the neo-Marxist “oppressor/oppressed” binary, should then be disinvited, their speech canceled. If such speakers show up anyway, they can be silenced violently.

“pro-Palestinian”—actually anti-Israel, anti-Jewish—encampments and repeated harassment of Jewish students and pro-Israel speakers.

Last year, after the firebombing of the governor’s mansion on the first night of Passover while Gov. Josh Shapiro (D-PA) and his family slept inside, the murder of two Israeli embassy staffers in Washington, D.C. and attack against pro-Israel demonstrators in Colorado that killed one, the Anti-Defamation

Nevertheless, public support for free speech long has been ambivalent. In the abstract, nearly everyone is for it. But when it comes to particulars, not so much.

Such attitudes were already plain nearly a decade ago in the embrace of antisemites by leaders of the national Women’s March. They manifested themselves on college campuses after the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas-led massacres and kidnappings in Israel with numerous

League surveyed Americans’ attitudes toward Jews. It found “34 percent believe Jewish Americans are more loyal to Israel than to the United States; 30 percent say Jews have too much influence in politics and media” and “27 percent believe Jewish Americans should

answer for the actions of Israel.” The percentages increase as the age of respondents decreases.

Before his New York City mayoral campaign, Zohran Mamdani “used Zionist as a casual slur,” the *Wall Street Journal* has editorialized. His Democratic Socialists of America, founded in 1982 as a 6,000-member, pro-Israel socialist movement, grew in numbers and influence after adopting anti-Zionist antisemitism. It now reportedly has 150,000 members and in July called for defunding the Defense Department, abolishing police, eliminating the US Senate and subordinating the president and Supreme Court to the House of Representatives. That is, DSA seeks to overturn the Founders’ separation of powers designed to prevent authoritarian rule. Nevertheless, some Democratic Party leaders say the movement should be welcomed into their “big tent.”

Meanwhile, a February Gallup poll showed more Americans favor Palestinian Arabs than Israel. An April Pew survey indicated 60 percent viewed the Jewish state unfavorably, up 18 points in four years. Majorities of those under age 50 in both parties see Israel negatively.

German novelist Thomas Mann won the 1929 Nobel Prize for Literature. In exile in 1940, he told NBC News that “antisemitism is like a hand grenade tossed over the wall to work havoc and confusion in the camp of democracy. That is its real and main purpose.”

Asked in 1787 what kind of government the Constitutional Convention had constructed, Benjamin Franklin famously responded, “a republic, if you can keep it.” In each generation the keepers change, and with them the American republic’s odds of survival.

ERIC ROZENMAN is a former communications consultant for the Jewish Policy Center. He is author, most recently, of *The David Discovery, A Novel of the Near Future*.

Most Americans Still Believe in Land of Opportunity, Far Fewer Support Capitalism

Cato Institute Fourth of July / America 250 Survey

A national survey conducted by the Cato Institute in collaboration with Morning Consult ahead of July 4th and the national celebration of America's 250th anniversary found that a majority of Americans (74%) still believe the American Dream is available to them personally, but only about half (52%) have a favorable view of capitalism. Notably, views on socialism were evenly split (37% to 37%) between those who see it favorably and those who do not.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

74%

still believe the American Dream is available to them personally

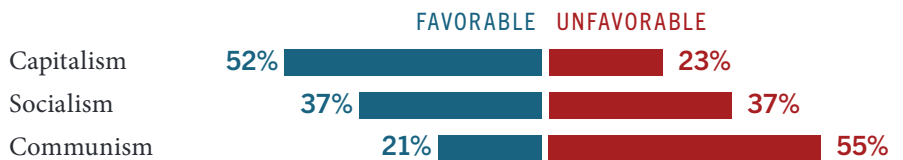
GRATEFUL

86%

grateful to be Americans

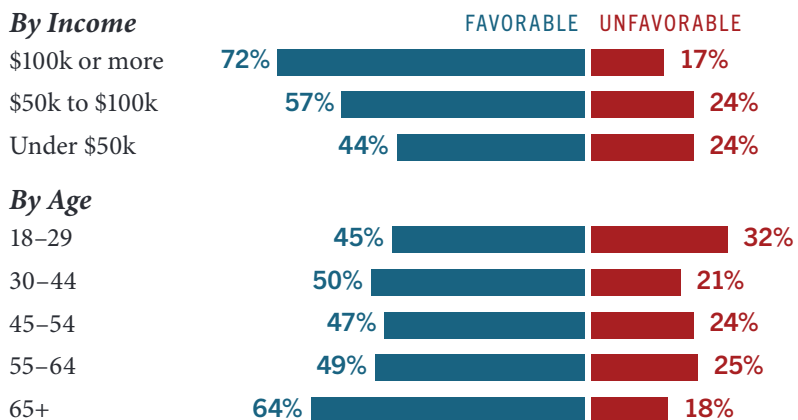
CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM, COMMUNISM

PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS — SCALE 0 TO 75 EACH SIDE



Editor's note: The remaining respondents (24–26% on each question) said they did not have enough information to say.

VIEW OF CAPITALISM



PROUD

79%

proud to be Americans

FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

57%

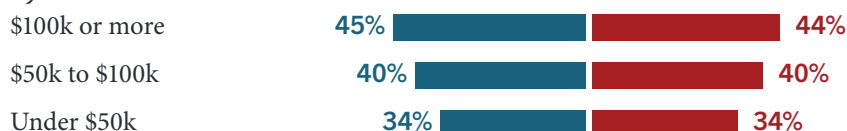
say the country has moved away from founding principles



Voters fill in their ballots at a polling station in New York City. (Photo: Imago)

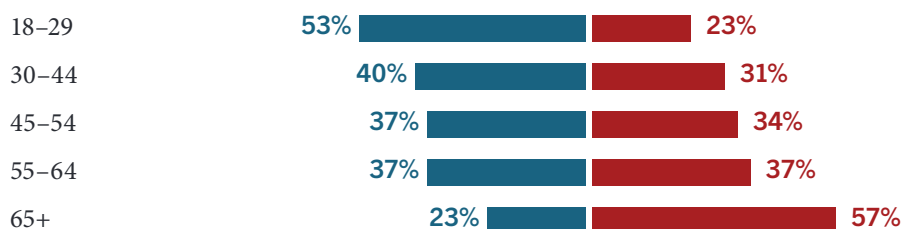
VIEW OF SOCIALISM

By Income



Editor's note: The remaining respondents for each question (11%, 20%, and 32%, respectively) said they did not have enough information to say.

By Age



Editor's note: Gen Z (ages 18-29) stands out with more who are supportive of socialism (53%) than capitalism (45%). Gen Z is also the only age group with a more favorable than unfavorable view of communism (38% favorable, 36% unfavorable).

The Cato survey found the Democratic Socialist label can both help and harm a candidate about equally, depending on the voter: 39% of Americans said they are more likely to vote for a presidential candidate described as a Democratic Socialist, 40% said they are less likely, and 22% said it would make no difference.

A majority of Democrats (61%) and roughly half of Gen Z respondents (51%) said they'd be more likely to vote for a candidate with the Democratic Socialist label. These numbers help illuminate recent wins by candidates using the Democratic Socialists of America label in Democratic primaries.

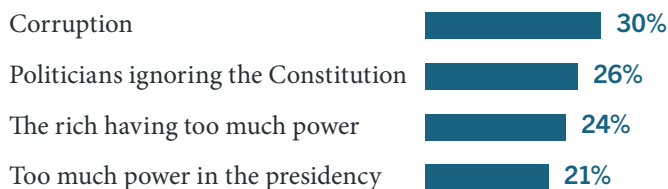
AMERICAN PATRIOTISM

Large majorities of the public say they are grateful (86%) and proud (79%) to be Americans, but nearly 6 in 10 say they believe the country has moved away from founding principles. Corruption, concentrations and abuse of power, and ignoring founding principles are the top three things Americans believe could lead to the country's demise.

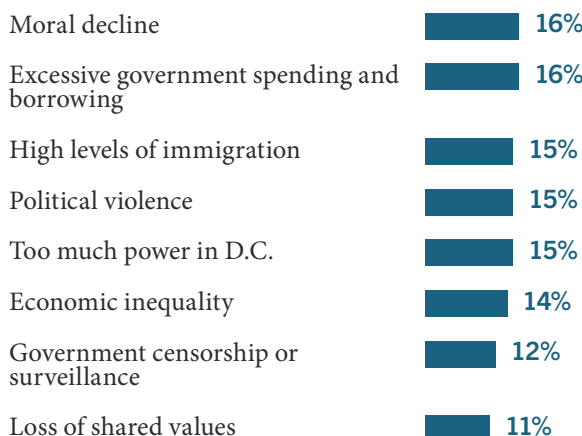
More than 8 in 10 Americans say the US Constitution is important for protecting personal rights and freedoms, and more than half (56%) worry the US could stop being a free country within the next 50 years. Most (56%) say no president or political party should be trusted with too much power. However, nearly 4 in 10 also say it's acceptable for a president they support to stretch the limits of the Constitution to achieve what they see as right.

THREATS TO THE REPUBLIC

Most Americans (82%) believe the Constitution was important for America becoming a prosperous country. Thinking ahead to the next 50 years, respondents say the greatest threats to America remaining a free republic are (select up to three):



Americans believe other potential threats include:



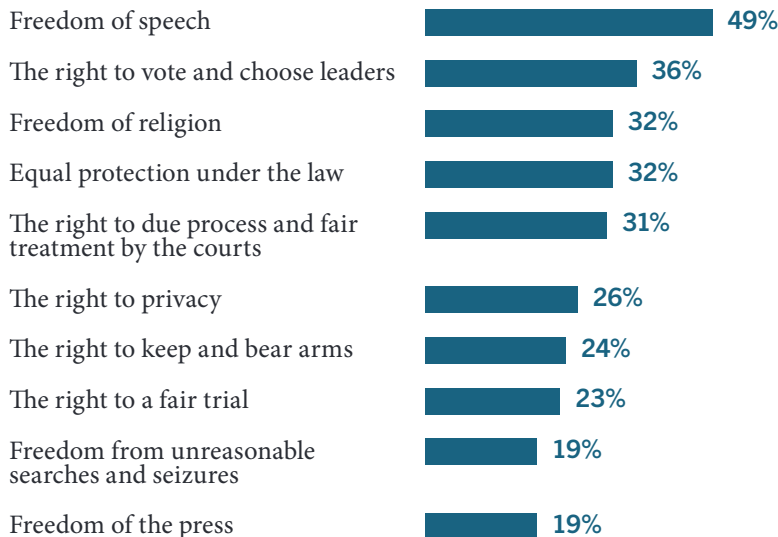
RIGHTS, FREEDOMS & THE CONSTITUTION

When it comes to the rights and freedoms that are most important to them personally, the American public holds the First Amendment most dear, followed by the right to vote, freedom of religion, and equal protection under the law. The top 10 slate of responses (respondents were asked to select up to 5 from a list of 18):

PROSPERITY

82%

believe the Constitution was important for America becoming a prosperous country



THE CONSTITUTION

53%

say the Constitution is still basically sound as it is.

PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT

43%

say protecting rights and solving problems matter equally.

BALANCED BUDGET

69%

support a constitutional amendment to require a balanced federal budget.

AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

More than half of Americans surveyed said they believe the Constitution is still basically sound as it is, while about one-third said they think it needs basic changes or amendments.



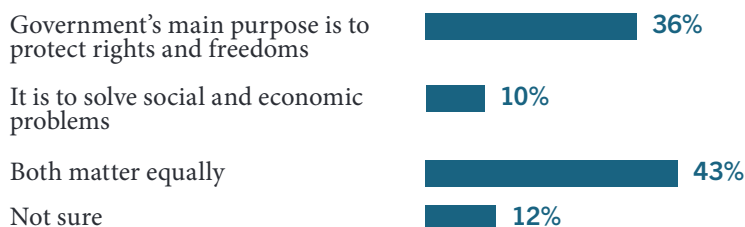
GOVERNMENT & CIVICS

When asked what would most help America succeed in the next 250 years, the most common responses were a lower cost of living and less special interest influence and government corruption (respondents were asked to select up to 3 from a list of 14).



PROPER PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT

Notably, when asked to choose between two core purposes of government, a plurality said both hold equivalent value.



BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

When asked whether they would support or oppose a constitutional amendment to require a balanced federal budget, more than two-thirds were in favor.



Findings from the Cato Institute Fourth of July / America 250 Survey. Survey size and field dates: 2,253 adults from June 25–26, 2026. Margin of error ± 2 points. Some figures are displayed rounded, so some totals may not add to 100%.

Populism's Problem is Technological, Not Economic

by ELI ADLER

In the 1930s, Father Charles Coughlin had one of the largest radio audiences in America. He used his platform to spread divisive populist ideas, railing against the wealthy and political elites, claiming to represent “the people.” Similar rhetoric is plentiful today from online podcasters and even elected officials. From the beginning, Coughlin’s populist rhetoric also was infused with antisemitism, culminating in a 1938 broadcast on Kristallnacht in which he told his listeners that Jews had murdered millions of Christians and stolen billions of dollars in Christian property.

Back then, gatekeepers held the reins to the airwaves and information technology. The invention of radio had allowed new, often populist, voices to gain an audience, but radio syndicators and the federal government regulated what could be aired. Following Coughlin’s infamous Kristallnacht rant, radio stations refused to air his program without first reviewing his scripts. A year later, the Code Committee of the National Association of Broadcasters — speaking for 428 member stations who did not want trouble with the Federal Communications Commission — adopted a new rule that banned member stations from selling airtime to speakers who focused on controversial political issues without advance review. This spelled the end of Coughlin’s radio career. By late 1940, only two major stations still aired his show. Catholic church leaders demanded that he be stopped from broadcasting altogether, and the FBI raided Coughlin’s church, accusing him of circulating “enemy propaganda.”

Those guardrails no longer hold in today’s media environment. Social media companies are protected under Section 230 as “platforms,” not liable for third-party content on their websites. The nature of information technology itself also has changed. Broadcast licenses were once scarce and required federal approval. Today, anyone can open a TikTok or X account. There is no license to revoke for a podcast, no equal-time requirement for a Substack, and no trade asso-

■ What is Populism?

The word “populism” is often misused by commentators and political candidates. The record is rarely corrected because the term is difficult to define. A frequently cited description comes from Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde, who describes populism as a “thin-centered” ideology that divides societies into two homogeneous groups that are definitionally in conflict. It establishes a “pure” common people versus a “cor-

Those guardrails no longer hold in today’s media environment. Social media companies are protected under Section 230 as “platforms,” not liable for third-party content on their websites.

ciation governing algorithms. Polarizing populist and antisemitic rhetoric thrives in this environment. Figures including Tucker Carlson have amassed millions of followers, and socialist Democrats have leveraged social media to spread their messages to larger audiences and win elections. The popularity of these online media figures poses a threat to America’s liberal democratic norms. The most toxic among them eschew core principles like pluralism and tolerance, while promoting hate and distrust of the “other” — which often are Jewish.

rupt” elite, and holds that politics should express the *volonté générale*, or general will of the people (Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist,” 2004).

From there, populism and its adherents offer no coherent ideology, no solutions, and no platform. It must instead latch onto existing ideologies — socialism, communism, conservatism, etc. It is more rhetorical than policy-oriented, making it difficult to capture in traditional understandings of political philosophy. Populism is a vehicle rather than its own program. The

divisions it draws are moral rather than economic. The “elite” are not merely wealthier than “the people”; they are also corrupt. It is through this lens that many of the rhetorical and political tensions we see around US economic policy can be understood.

Some say the rise in populism is due to worsening economic conditions and increasing economic inequality. Recent Pew Research surveys suggest that less than a quarter of Americans describe economic conditions as “excellent” or “good.” The decline in positive perceptions of the economy persists despite numerous positive economic indicators, including a relatively strong labor market (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2026) and notable reductions in wage inequality (Autor, Dube, and McGrew, 2024). In this landscape, we see a broader, explanatory phenomenon. Social media, optimized with recommendation algorithms to maximize engagement and outrage, has an outsized impact on how Americans think about politics and the economy; the medium of social media is primed for populist messaging and hostile to nuance.

■ *Populists in American Media History*

Paul Matzko’s *The Radio Right* (Oxford University Press, 2020) reveals a rich history of populist rhetoric following innovations in information technology. Coughlin relied on the newly invented radio broadcast to air his views before federal regulators started to monitor and limit content and radio syndicates became too risk-averse for controversial political content. Following the development and popularization of television in the 1950s, broadcasters shifted investment from radio to TV shows. This left a void in the radio broadcasting space, creating room for independent, typically conservative, voices to spring up. Broadcasters such as Carl McIntire and Billy James Hargis capitalized on the “Wild West” of radio to criticize the Kennedy administration.



Father Coughlin addresses a rally at a stadium in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1936. (Photo: Everett Collection)

But these shifts were short-lived as the relatively still concentrated world of radio syndicates was more easily regulated by the federal government. Starting in 1963, following the strategy recommended by the Reuther Memorandum, the Kennedy administration directed the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to audit radio broadcasters, and the FCC used the Fairness Doctrine against stations running right-wing shows. The Fairness Doctrine required a station airing one side of a controversial political issue to give free response time to the other side, but for cash-strapped radio shows, this was too expensive. Right-wing broadcasters lost hundreds of stations and millions of listeners. The movement was finished by the early 1970s, and did not start to recover until broadcasting deregulation under President Carter and President Reagan.

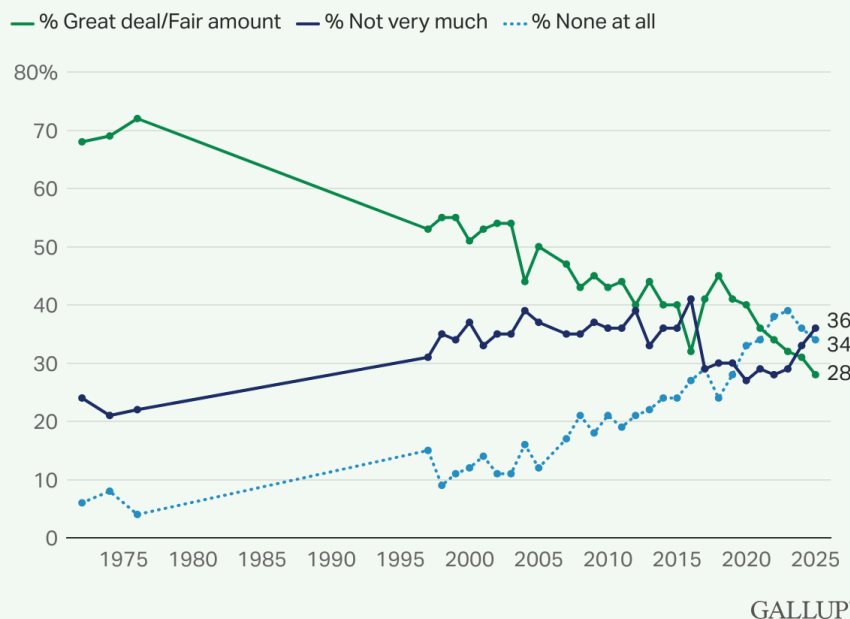
Today, insurgent populist voices similarly use new media technologies to spread their messages. However, the institutions that suppressed populist rhetoric in previous decades are weak — and overwhelmed by the amount of content that resists regulation. Following the January 6 attacks on the US Capitol, Tucker Carlson

used his Fox News show to promote the conspiracy theory that the attacks were actually provoked by federal agents and not organic. Days after Fox settled Dominion Voting Systems’ defamation suit for \$787.5 million — a case in which Carlson figured prominently — Fox News abruptly canceled his show. In a previous era, this likely would have ended Carlson’s public career, but in today’s media environment, even the most widely criticized figures can find an audience online. After his departure from Fox, Carlson started his own online show where he continues to express extreme and conspiratorial views, including claims that Israel manipulates US foreign policy.

In today’s media environment, Fox cutting Carlson is not career-ending; it’s a career boost. His online show has amassed a significant following, averaging 1.7 million views per episode across YouTube, Rumble and podcast feeds, according to Podscribe data cited by the Anti-Defamation League. Today, when one account is deleted, or a show is canceled, a new one appears on a different platform. Content moderation by social media platforms is insufficient to suppress populist political rhetoric.

Americans' Trust in Mass Media, 1972-2025

In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media — such as newspapers, TV and radio — when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly — a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?



■ The Public Has Options

The failure of content moderation is a symptom of a larger sea change in information technology. This shift is best explained by Martin Gurri, who spent 28 years reading the world's newspapers and broadcasts as a CIA media analyst, and watched the flow of information reverse. In his 2014 book *The Revolt of the Public*, he argues that the twentieth-century arrangement where elites exercised top-down control over information has ended.

Before the introduction of user-generated content that now dominates our media diets, figures like Walter Cronkite were the sole source of news for many Americans. Government agencies, newspapers, universities, and corporations were the only parties that could see the whole picture and disseminate knowledge to the public. But when the public gains access to the same communication technologies — videos that reach millions, podcasts that go viral — the seams in the elite narratives become more apparent. The authority these institutions

once held has eroded, and the public has options. They can choose new authoritative voices, when once they were limited to the same few news outlets.

This dynamic is what underlies populism, the “vibecession” that defines our political era (Scanlon, 2022). The public isn't objectively evaluating the labor market or actual economic conditions when they report negative views of the economy; they are assessing the institutions that measure, report, and endeavor to manage the economy, and they have lost confidence in all of them. Confidence and sentiment detach from the traditional indicators because the indicators come from messengers the public no longer trusts.

Polling bears this out. Gallup's 2025 survey found that trust in the mass media to report the news “fully, accurately, and fairly” is at a record low — 28 percent. That same year, Pew Research Center found that 38 percent of adults under 30 get news from social media “news influencers,” and they trust these influencers about as much as traditional news organizations. For

young Americans, there is not even a distinction between institutions and an individual who simply has a following. It is not just a drop in trust; it's the disappearance of the category that created “authority” in the first place.

■ Why Populists Rule Our Feed

This new media environment does not just permit populism to thrive; it actively selects for it. The populists emphasize an us-versus-them tension. Conspiratorial anti-elite rhetoric is primed for the low-context, short-form content that dominates social media. Platforms are tuned to reward conflict and engagement, so they reward creators (and politicians) whose entire message is intended to ramp up conflict. This is compounded by declining trust in institutions. An establishment politician's credentials and endorsements are presented by an entity which has already lost the public's trust. The populist firebrand can turn this establishment disapproval into proof of their own authenticity.

Research from the University of Copenhagen (2026) analyzed almost 48,000 TikTok videos from the 2025 German federal campaigns. The researchers found that the insurgent, right-wing populist party, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), dominated hashtag rankings, while some established parties, such as the Greens, were nearly absent from the app. On election day in 2025, AfD's hashtag was used almost three times more than the second most mentioned party. As of September 2026, AfD has won regional elections within Germany, indicating how successful this strategy can be.

In the US, we see similar dynamics playing out. Abdul El-Sayed, the Democratic nominee in the Michigan Senate contest, has been building an online audience for himself since his failed 2018 governor's race, starting a podcast, publishing a book, and starting a YouTube channel. He launched his Senate campaign in April 2025 with a staff of four, running on a progressive left-wing



platform and rallying against corporate money in politics, which he's framed as a movement of the "many" against the wealthy — a distinctly populist message. He's also maintained a close relationship with a populist leftist streamer, Hasan Piker, who has repeatedly minimized the rape and sexualized torture perpetrated by Hamas during the October 7 attacks.

Chuck Schumer, and Nancy Pelosi. None of these attempts to use traditional party authorities succeeded, and El-Sayed won the primary. Whatever the defects of Stevens' campaign, it's undeniable that El-Sayed successfully leveraged new media to spread a populist message and generate public support in a way establishment money and figures could not.

and on our screens. It has helped fuel attacks on Jewish students at universities and Jewish-Americans in general; it has coarsened the climate in which Charlie Kirk was assassinated; and it drove the storming of the US Capitol.

It's tempting to find the "switch" to shut it all off. To find a government policy or an individual company that should be held responsible for stopping this whole mess and returning us to more responsible politics. That instinct is honorable, but it is ultimately doomed. The nature of the internet has changed the game. The amount of content is far too great for a handful of institutions to quell populist rhetoric. Additionally, 20th century approaches often skirted the line of encroaching on First Amendment rights.

Instead, non-populists, those who respect American institutions and want to see a return to a more rational politics, must adjust to the new media environment. Rationality must win the argument again, albeit on a far more hostile terrain.

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Confidence and sentiment detach from the traditional indicators because the indicators come from messengers the public no longer trusts.

Establishment Democrats threw everything they could at him to try to defeat him during the primary. El-Sayed faced nearly \$65 million in outside spending, much of it from AIPAC-aligned groups backing Representative Haley Stevens. Stevens received endorsements from well-known mainstream Democrats, including Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Sen.

■ No Easy Solutions

Populism generates dangerous "us" versus "them" rhetoric, as is often used with antisemitism, and social media is uniquely successful at spreading these messages. Father Coughlin's rhetoric wasn't contained to just radio; it inspired antisemitic street violence. Today, we see dangerous populist rhetoric online

Speak, and Speak, and Speak Again

by MATTHEW BROOKS

I write what follows with a troubled mind and heavy heart—but also with hope for what is possible. For three years, hatred and vicious incitement against Jewish-Americans and Israel have steadily increased online and on the public airwaves. We are fighting multiple wars we did not want — one in Gaza, another in Iran, and a war of words with those here in the US who would see us demoralized, defeated, dead.

From an antisemitic song blasted loudly in a Jewish neighborhood in the Bronx; to conspiracy theories about a “dangerous” Hasidic Jewish group “taking over entire towns;” to lies about references to child sacrifice in the Talmud; to the amplification of white supremacist tropes; to falsehoods about secret Jewish groups orchestrating social crises; to ludicrous claims that Jews were responsible for the murder of Charlie Kirk; to attempted legitimization of targeted violence against individuals associated with Jewish and Israeli institutions — describing murder and terrorism as “resistance” — we have been repeatedly accused, attacked, assailed.

Alternative news outlets and commentators are levying accusations of “genocide” in Gaza, and public figures who have fallen under the spell are repeating them. Israel-hating activists are accusing respected American journalists of lies and cover-ups. An official publication of the Democratic Socialists of America refers to the conflict in Gaza as “a genocide carried out, defended, and authored by elite liberals and liberal institutions.”

I am glad to say the propaganda-pushing has finally sparked a widespread institutional response in the US. On Sept. 9, more than 5,000 prominent American public figures, academics, and entertainment executives signed a joint open letter published by Creative Community for Peace. It vehemently rejects the term in relation to Israel’s actions in Gaza. The signatories said that they were “outraged and sickened by the latest blood libel to be inflicted on the Jewish people,” noting that the difference between waging war and attempting genocide is *intent* — and accurately stating, as every Jew in Israel knows, that only Hamas has that intent.

I am less glad to note that a Sept. 13 report by *The New York Post* revealed that in the early stages of the war in Gaza, *The New York Times* repeatedly downplayed Israel’s casualties and minimized Hamas’ role in sustaining the conflict. In the 1,559 articles published on the subject between Oct. 7, 2023, and June 7, 2024, the *NYT* routinely omitted the number of deaths sustained by the Israeli military while including personal accounts of Palestinian suffering on its pages two out of every three days. We have Professor Edieal Pinker of the Yale School of Management, who published his findings in the *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* academic journal, to thank for the revelation. For the record, 437 Israeli soldiers have been killed since Israel began its offensive in Gaza, along with dozens of police officers and Jewish civilians critically injured or killed in terror attacks.

I am grateful for those who have spoken out. It is time for all other

truth-telling influencers, fact-reporting members of the media, and honest political and community leaders in this country to step up and also speak out — and then speak, and speak, and speak again until their voices drown out the detestable rhetoric of those who would see the Jewish people defeated, enslaved, or erased from this earth. I also believe public figures and editors should decline to speak or print the names of attention-seeking, Israel-hating individuals — as I chose to do in this message — and refuse to comment publicly on their depraved rants. It is time to separate the wheat from the chaff, and restore America’s public spaces to a state of civility and sanity.

As for you, our essential supporters, I encourage each of you to write to editors and broadcasters when you notice instances of anti-Israeli or pro-Hamas bias in reporting, analysis, and commentaries. Their email and mailing addresses can generally be found on the About or Contact page of their publications.

In closing, I would like to invoke a powerful and sacred ideal in our great tradition: *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh baze*h—near or far, we are all responsible for one another. Let us embrace our kinship, seek friendship where we can, and hold hope in our hearts for a day when Israel — and all nations and people — can exist in safety, prosperity, and peace.

Shana Tova!

MATTHEW BROOKS is the publisher of *inFOCUS Quarterly* and the CEO of the Jewish Policy Center.

Capitalism, as Told by Its Enemies

by PHILLIP W. MAGNESS and CALEB PETITT

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The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (SEP) is widely known as a reputable and accessible compendium of articles on complex scholarly subjects, offered free of charge to the public since 1995. Think of it as Wikipedia for philosophy, but with authors who are known experts in their subjects and peer review to maintain quality control.

That quality control broke down last week when the SEP published a new entry for “capitalism,” its first-ever foray into the subject. The concept of “capitalism” is an admittedly complex topic, and one might reasonably expect that an encyclopedia article on it would include not only its theoretical underpinnings dating back to Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, but also its critics such as Karl Marx.

Instead of attempting some semblance of balance, the new SEP entry author Chiara Cordelli, a professor of political philosophy at the University of Chicago, used this platform to air her own personal grievances with capitalism as an economic system. The resulting product gives scant attention to proponents of free-market economics. By contrast, Cordelli’s article is loaded with content from the Marxist or socialist far left. Space devoted to critics of capitalism far outpaces even basic descriptions of the economic concept, and proponents of capitalism are reduced to shallow parodies.

In an era when academia is under fire for a well-documented leftward

ideological shift as well as declining standards of scholarly rigor, the publication of an encyclopedia entry with a pronounced anti-capitalism skew only confirms the public’s declining trust in our university system. Rather than serving as a curator and disseminator of knowledge, higher education has become an institutional home for a single specific brand of ideological activism.

■ Improper Emphasis

The new “capitalism” encyclopedia entry illustrates how higher education’s leftward ideological ecosystem erodes basic quality checks on published research. In an attempt to quantify just how critical of capitalism the author was, we researched the political

updated in 2024) to see how it compares against Cordelli’s new entry. The difference was striking. Of the 160 authors cited in the socialism article, only two were overtly critical of socialism and nearly two-thirds were supportive.

The ideological imbalance of both entries became even more apparent when we dug deeper into the philosophical perspectives that are given airtime in Cordelli’s article. Of the 93 cited authors we were able to sort into specific ideological camps, Marxist perspectives—such as orthodox Marxism, critical theory, and analytical Marxism—far outnumbered any other group. In addition to the Marxists, Cordelli’s entry gives ample space to a stream of non-Marxian socialist and anti-capitalist thinkers such as the

Over half of the sources listed in the capitalism entry’s bibliography were overtly hostile or critical of capitalism, and just 8 percent were supportive.

perspectives of each of the 169 authors cited in the entry’s bibliography and recommended readings list. The results showed an overwhelming anti-capitalist skew: Over half of the sources listed in the capitalism entry’s bibliography were overtly hostile or critical of capitalism, and just 8 percent were supportive.

As a point of comparison, we repeated this exercise for the SEP’s “socialism” article (first published in 2018 and

sociological historian Karl Polanyi, the far-left economist Thomas Piketty, and self-citations to Cordelli’s own writings in the “democratic socialist” tradition.

Compare that to Cordelli’s citations of free-market classical liberal authors in the tradition of Adam Smith—just four are mentioned. Adjacent thinkers from libertarian or pro-capitalist traditions, such as Robert Nozick and Ayn Rand, add only a handful of additional references.

Cordelli's prose functions as an anti-capitalist advocacy piece rather than a neutral and descriptive encyclopedia entry. It breaks with the normal format of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, in which a concept or a philosopher's work is usually described in its component parts to give a better view of the whole. While other entries usually offer space for debate and criticisms of the author or subject, they seldom comprise the majority of their verbiage.

Cordelli's barrage of critiques against capitalism is almost twice as long as her description of capitalism's supporters. Marxist accounts of capitalism account for three times the combined word count of Cordelli's descriptions of market capitalism and institutionalist theories of capitalism. The author was clearly more concerned with highlighting every minute facet of anti-capitalist academic writing imaginable than with helping readers understand what the concept means, or the reasons that people defend it.

The resulting product is even more egregious when one considers the track records of these competing perspectives. Whatever criticisms may be offered of capitalism, its underlying economic theories have coincided with an unparalleled rise in prosperity and well-being between the late 18th century and today, often known

her entry. Neither do any of its catastrophic copycat regimes, from Maoist China to recent socialist experiments in Venezuela. Economists of any non-Marxian or socialist stripe are relegated to a minimal presence, and where their ideas are discussed at all, a socialist or anti-capitalist critic is

references tend to be wrong. She gives short shrift to economist Friedrich Hayek's work, yet manages to misrepresent those positions that she does discuss, such as when she depicts him as a theorist of equilibrium instead of as a theorist of coordination and information,

The bizarre result is something akin to an encyclopedia entry about "astronomy" in which the majority of consulted sources are astrologers ... privileged over the empirical calculations of actual scientists...

almost always brought in at the end and given the last word.

The bizarre result is something akin to an encyclopedia entry about "astronomy" in which the majority of consulted sources are astrologers, and furthermore their horoscope readings are privileged over the empirical calculations of actual scientists who study star movements.

■ **Factual Errors**

The imbalanced ideological emphasis of the entry should be readily apparent to a neutral reader, but anyone familiar with the study of capitalism

which are distinct and often contradictory approaches. Hayek's work focuses on how prices act as signals of changes in the relative scarcity of goods over time and coordinate how people respond to changes in supply and demand. General equilibrium theory deals with statics (like optimizing resource allocation or production decisions with a starting set of resources, preferences, and production capabilities), and Hayek's work deals with dynamic changes over time. They are very different approaches to understanding how prices function and could not easily be confused by someone who understands economics.

In an illustrative thread on X, Ben Golub, a professor of economics at Northwestern University, identified a number of other basic factual errors in the entry, such as the author's claim that Hayek and Milton Friedman believed that, for capitalism to exist, "there must be complete, private, and unregulated markets for all 'factors of production,' including capital and labor," despite both making allowances for regulation and market rules. Cordelli also conflated two different papers, published decades apart, by Nobel Prize-winning economist Ronald Coase and even misrepresented details of Marxist philosopher G.A. Cohen's position on Marx. Cohen's *Karl Marx's Theory*

Compare that to Cordelli's citations of free-market classical liberal authors in the tradition of Adam Smith—just four are mentioned.

as the Great Enrichment. By comparison, the Marxist perspectives that dominate Cordelli's work carry the ignominious baggage of mass atrocity and economic ruin in the 20th century, though the phrase "Soviet Union" never appears in

or economics would also notice how Cordelli warps the details of her subject matter to fit an ideological agenda.

Almost all the sources used to defend free markets are given superficial treatment, and even those superficial

of *History* is a defense of Marx's theory of historical materialism, not an exploitation-based critique of capitalism, which is what Cordelli cited him for.

Cordelli also opens the first section of her entry with Marx's definition of capitalism and makes reference to the "labor theory of value" without acknowledging that this concept has been considered obsolete by mainstream economists since the 1870s. Yet Cordelli proceeds as if Marx's economic theories remain intact, ultimately devoting some 800 words spread across two different sections of the entry to exegesis on "surplus value." That's more verbiage on a single debunked Marxian concept than she provides to the entirety of Friedman's work. This is a philosophical equivalent of treating geocentrism or flat-earth theory as valid and useful ideas.

an older mercantilist economic order that used government policies to steer an economy for nationalistic objectives. It might also discuss the period of both political and philosophical contestation between the "capitalist" and "Marxian communist" worlds following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and culminating in the collapse of the latter in 1991. It could discuss in greater depth the theoretical contributions of institutionalist economists like Ronald Coase, Oliver Williamson, and Douglass North in the mid-20th century around the theory of a market economy. It might mention Deirdre McCloskey's work on the Great Enrichment as a positive argument for what we colloquially refer to as capitalism. And it might explore the tensions between these and other theorists of market capitalism. As it stands, this

mainstream economic critiques of socialism. Early in the 20th century, there was famously a debate among economists over whether socialist central planners were capable of engaging in economic calculation. The economists who argued against the possibility of socialist calculation ultimately won the debate—though one would not know this from reading Cordelli's entry.

Welfarist arguments for capitalism would not be confined to a single paragraph, and would describe in detail how free-market capitalism has been responsible for lifting the world out of poverty. The way that capitalism incentivizes entrepreneurship, and the role entrepreneurs play in arbitrage and the creation of new goods and services, would play a more important role than the entry's single paragraph on Joseph Schumpeter, the first economist to make entrepreneurship central to the understanding of economic development and change.

The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's* unwillingness to select an author for the entry on capitalism who could provide a charitable or even neutral assessment of the concept is ultimately unscholarly. In the 20th century, socialism resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of people, and capitalism and free markets were the critical factors for lifting billions out of poverty, and yet it is socialism that received the positive encyclopedia entry and capitalism that garnered the hate. Such imbalances could only emerge from an academic environment in which an ideological echo chamber supplants rigorous peer review, and the fashionable socialist perspectives of the professoriate lead it to mistake bad caricatures of a market economy for descriptive fact.

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Whatever criticisms may be offered of capitalism, its underlying economic theories have coincided with an unparalleled rise in prosperity and well-being between the late 18th century and today.

■ What Could Have Been

A more balanced entry on capitalism for the SEP could have offered a constructive assessment of this subject, its history, and the contemporary state of scholarship around it. Such an entry could still have room for critics in the Marxist and many other socialist traditions, but they would not have the disproportionate dominance found in Cordelli's piece. Instead, a better entry might include serious engagement with the Scottish Enlightenment precursors to the emergence of market capitalism in the late 18th century, with references to David Hume's work on trade and currency, as well as something more than superficial references to Adam Smith.

It might also discuss how the ideas we call "capitalism" came to supplant

rich and complex academic literature receives nary a mention beyond a few passing citations.

Since capitalism is fundamentally an economic concept, one could reasonably expect to see mainstream economic voices discussed, and competently so, by someone versed in economic theory. There would be a clear description of how profits work both as signals of demand and incentives for entrepreneurship, how competition between firms disciplines market actors, how market prices make economic calculation possible by signaling the relative scarcity of goods in a common denominator, and how government policies contribute to the creation of monopolies. Marxist and socialist critiques of capitalism from the far left would also be balanced with

The Torch Must Be Carried

An *in*FOCUS interview with Sen. NORM COLEMAN

Sen. Norm Coleman is National Chairman of the Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC) and senior counsel at Hogan Lovells. He serves as vice chair of the Defense Policy Board, which advises the secretary of defense and senior Pentagon officials. He represented Minnesota in the US Senate from 2003 to 2009 and remains the last Republican the state has elected to the chamber. Sen. Coleman chaired the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee's Western Hemisphere subcommittee and served as ranking member of its Near East subcommittee. Earlier in his career, he worked in Minnesota's Attorney General's office and served as mayor of St. Paul. *in*FOCUS interim editor Elizabeth Thompson spoke with him in early September.

■ *Honoring Sen. Lindsey Graham*

*in*FOCUS: I WANT TO BEGIN BY ASKING ABOUT YOUR DEAR FRIEND AND LONGTIME COLLEAGUE, SEN. LINDSEY GRAHAM, WHO WAS HONORED IN A MORNING CEREMONY IN THE US CAPITOL ROTUNDA ON TUESDAY, JULY 28, EULOGIZED LATER THAT DAY BY PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP AT THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL, AND LAID TO REST ON JULY 29 IN MOUNT ZION CEMETERY IN HIS HOMETOWN OF CENTRAL, SOUTH CAROLINA.

Sen. Coleman: Lindsey was an extraordinary human being. I could tell a thousand great stories because there really are that many to tell. He was brilliant, really smart. He grasped things so quickly, and he was always engaged. He showed up. Over the years, he always carried the torch when it came to Israel and regional integration. He was a one-man shuttle of diplomacy, always trying to make things happen.

I'll share one story to underline that. I had the good fortune of accompanying him on a couple of trips to Riyadh and Jerusalem. It can't be overstated how critical that was, and how he was always trying to move the ball forward. Obviously, October 7 made that effort profoundly difficult. I think he

would have said that before October 7, we were very, very close to making good things happen for all the right reasons. I'm not speaking for the Saudi crown prince, and I'm not speaking for the Israeli prime minister—I'm saying that in Lindsey's mind, that was the case. At the same time, he was always working on broader issues of incredible importance to the world—peace in the Middle East, Israel working hand-in-hand with its Gulf neighbors, and well beyond the extent of the Abraham Accords. He was always talking about what was possible for Israel with a broad array of Muslim nations. Lindsey's vision was always far-reaching.

So in the middle of all that... I was with him one time in the middle of the Saudi desert, not too far from AlUla, where the Saudi crown prince had his winter retreat—a big tent there in the desert. Lindsey was there to discuss serious things. The US ambassador was there. The Saudi ambassador, too, and a number of the princes and ministers, they're all there. So there we are in a very formal, intense setting. And in the midst of that, Lindsey turned to the crown prince and asked, "So how do you become crown prince?"

The crown prince was happy to answer. He began explaining how crown princes are elected and how members of the royal family are involved. He talked

about the process, pointed to one individual, a deputy governor or something of that sort, and said, "He's my—what do you call it in the US?—my 'whip.'" He's happily explaining to us the process of assessing support. Everyone present got the full explanation. Only Lindsey could ask a question like that, there in the middle of the desert with the ambassadors from both countries, the foreign ministers of the Kingdom, the crown prince, and then seamlessly move on to more profound matters, discussions of what's at stake and why it is important.

iF: THOSE WHO KNEW HIM SAY HE WAS ALWAYS SO REAL—AND CURIOUS. I SAID TO HIM ONCE AFTER A GREAT CONVERSATION, IN WHICH HE HAD LISTENED INTENTLY AND POSED A NUMBER OF GREAT QUESTIONS, "I HOPE YOU WON'T TAKE THIS AS AN INSULT, SENATOR, BUT YOU WOULD HAVE MADE A GREAT JOURNALIST."

Sen. Coleman: Yes. [laughing] People also often said he would have made a great stand-up comedian. He was just really funny. Everyone who knew him knew that. One of the refrains at the celebrations of his life was that even at the most intense times, when protocol was thick and the issues complex, Lindsey always had a great quip or remark that

lightened the mood in the room and made it easier to reach a resolution. It helped get things done.

On a more serious note, I want to be sure to mention Lindsey's part in one of the issues that was a major initiative for RJC: the passage of the Taylor Force Act. For those who don't know, Taylor Force was an American citizen, a West Point graduate, and a US Army officer who was stabbed to death by a Palestinian terrorist in 2016 during a school trip to Jaffa, Israel. The Palestinian norm at that time was to provide rewards to the families of terrorists, of murderers. The more Jews or Americans who were killed, the larger the reward to the family.

One of RJC's board members, Sander Gerber, a man of great passion, pushed the issue forward at a time when some Jewish organizations, and even the Israeli government, didn't want to take it on. I think they were worried that in some way the effort would make things worse—but RJC quickly embraced it, and said, "Yes, you're absolutely right. This is an abomination. We have to speak out and stop this practice." And Lindsey—Taylor's parents are from South Carolina—carried that ball. Lindsey was the guy who stood up for the Taylor Force Act, and for so much more. He would take things on because he believed it was the right thing to do, even if it was not well-received in some quarters.

iF: WITH SEN. GRAHAM GONE, CAN OTHERS CARRY THE TORCH WITH THE SAME ENERGY, COMMITMENT, ACUMEN—OR HAVE WE LOST SOMEONE AND SOMETHING THAT CAN'T BE REPLACED?

Sen. Coleman: The answer is yes—and yes. We have lost someone and something that can't be replaced—but the torch will be, must be, carried. It may not be by a single individual. One of the great traits of Lindsey, one of his hallmarks, was that he was very collaborative. I'm thinking of a number of dinners with him where Senator Katie Britt of



Sen. Norm Coleman in 2023. (Photo: RJC)

Alabama would be there, Senator Susan Collins from Maine would be there, former Oklahoma senator and Secretary of Homeland Security Markwayne Mullin would be there. And Lindsey would look around the table and say, "These are the toughest people in the Senate."

At an RJC event, we welcomed Tim Sheehy, a former Navy SEAL, a war hero, and a successful entrepreneur who is passionate about the US-Israel relationship and many other things Lindsey worked for and was passionate about. There's also Senator Jim Banks, a member of the Armed Services Committee, and Tom Cotton—he's been a champion side by side with Lindsey on issues regarding Israel, the Middle East, America's role in the world, and in support for Ukraine.

Lindsey's last trek before he passed was to Ukraine. He always understood the importance of America's place in the world and the role that we play—not as the world's policeman, but as a nation that stands up with moral clarity for nations, including Ukraine against Russian aggression. Lindsey saw that as

a noble effort, not to let Ukraine be overtaken by a tyrant and a thug.

So I could see Tim Sheehy taking up the gauntlet. I could see Katie Britt taking up the gauntlet. I could see Tom Cotton taking up the gauntlet. I believe you'll get an amalgam of folks who share Senator Graham's beliefs and passion, who are willing to stand with our ally, Israel, and with America's other allies and friends, as he did. He was a loyal friend.

■ **Middle East Strategy & Regional Alliances**

iF: WHAT ACTIONS, SECURITY GUARANTEES, AND RED LINES SHOULD THE US BE MAINTAINING, AND IS THERE AN AREA IN WHICH YOU THINK WE SHOULD BE DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY?

Sen. Coleman: I would first like to say that President Trump has unequivocally been the best friend Israel has ever had in the White House—though we've had some very good friends, I should note, on both sides of the aisle. George W. Bush was



A US sailor observes as an MH-60R Sea Hawk takes off from the USS Rafael Peralta in the Arabian Sea as it enforces a maritime blockade against ships entering or exiting Iranian ports in May 2026. (Photo: US Navy)

a great friend. Bill Clinton was a strong friend. Israel has had many friends in the White House; support has been bipartisan. The sad thing is... it seems the Democratic Party has abandoned support for Israel. I mean, within the Democrat base, Israel has become a pariah, which is heartbreaking. We see kowtowing to the AOCs, the Tlaibs, Bernie Sanders, and many others who are not friends of the Jewish state—there is a total abandonment of our greatest ally in the Middle East. I say that with great sadness.

President Trump, in Las Vegas in 2019, the first time he spoke at an RJC event, I introduced him, and talked about his policy decisions by adapting *Dayenu*, the Jewish song of gratitude. It was around Passover time, and I went through a litany: If President Trump had only recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017. *Dayenu!* If President Trump had only opened the US Embassy in Jerusalem. *Dayenu!* If President Trump had only recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights—he had just done that in very recent days. The crowd roared: *Dayenu!* Extraordinary acts. And he rejected the Iranian nuclear deal, working hand-in-hand with Israel, to make sure Iran didn't have a nuclear weapon.

Remember, Iran has always said: *America is the great Satan; Israel is the little Satan.* Their ballistic missile capacity—Obama left that untouched. The so-called nuclear deal during that administration literally gave Iran free rein to get a nuclear weapon. The opening of the floodgates, including economic largess, millions and millions of dollars, allowed Iran to continue with its nefarious actions in support of terrorism throughout the region—and Donald J. Trump has put an end to all that. He has destroyed the Iranian Air Force, Navy, and nuclear facilities. I give the president great credit for dismantling the Iranian war machine. And with Israel taking out the leadership of proxies in Hezbollah and Hamas, together, we have been a tremendous force for good in the region and the world.

So hopefully that will continue, and hopefully we will come to a resolution where Iran is simply no longer a threat, where they can't be supporting Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis, or the Revolutionary Guards and the militias in Iraq—where the Iranian threat is totally gone. Right now, it's been severely diminished. And hopefully soon it will be totally gone.

iF: REGARDING US TRADE POLICY AND ADJUSTMENTS TO TARIFFS, HOW DO YOU SEE THE TENSION BETWEEN TRADITIONAL FREE-MARKET PRINCIPLES AND THE BELIEF BY SOME—including, obviously, the President—that things are too far out of balance and that we need to change the way global trade works to better serve American interests? ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT DAMAGE TO RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY ALLIES, OR DO YOU HAVE A POSITIVE OUTLOOK?

Sen. Coleman: I have a very positive outlook, and let me explain why. And by the way, let's remember that the mainstream press is never going to say anything good about Donald J. Trump or anything he does, so that's already a given. Look at what went on with NATO, by way of example. The mainstream press was on the attack, saying President Trump was destroying the NATO coalition. No. What the president did was to get NATO to finally act as NATO was intended to act. You had nations that simply were not making any contribution, no commitment, weren't funding military and security efforts. So President Trump comes in, says it's got to change, and all of a sudden, there are contributions by other nations, some 3 percent, some 5 percent. NATO was revitalized. The president changed the dynamic. It wasn't in a quiet way. He does things in a Trump way: loud and clear.

I think the debate over tariffs is similar. I was always a traditional free trade Republican. But I recognize that what President Trump has done by trying to bring jobs back to America, trying to bring manufacturing back to America, revitalizing the economy, that is something no one else was even attempting. During COVID, we all saw the impact of having medical supplies, drugs, and other essential goods produced in China and other

countries, and the effect that had on American health, national security, and American interests.

President Trump has taken action and changed the debate. Right now we have a tiff with Canada, but I think these things will work themselves out.

and then you bring in Venezuela—I was just there last week—and they have over 303 billion barrels of oil underground, and because of President Trump, they're now a partner with America. We haven't even begun to reap the benefits of that.

So there may be some rough edges,

chest for 15 years, with remarkably little criticism from Democrats.

And of course, we have to take on any bad elements in our own party. But I have great pride in the fact that we, and the people of Kentucky, ended up rejecting Thomas Massie. And Marjorie Taylor Greene is no longer in the Republican Party. And we have taken on Tucker Carlson, who gives a platform to antisemites and anti-Israel conspiracies. You have to take it on, on all fronts. It breaks my heart, and I worry, when I look at surveys of young people who have been influenced by things said on TikTok and social media, to the point where Israel is no longer seen as America's friend among young people. We have to work for our young people, for Jewish kids on college campuses who are subject to all sorts of harassment and abuse.

By the way, this is another area where the Trump administration has been strong—I'm thinking of Harmeet Dhillon at the Department of Justice, the work she has done fighting antisemitism on American college campuses, at UCLA and Harvard, and elsewhere. I'm thinking of Rep. Elise Stefanik, too, the congressional hearings after October 7, calling out the presidents of Penn, MIT, and Harvard for tolerating antisemitism.

There's more work to be done. It is and always has been an issue. We've dealt with it for centuries, since the Inquisition in 1492. But today, with social media, the disease spreads more quickly. It's more virulent, it finds its voices both on the far right and the far left. And it's not just an American issue; it's across the globe.

So we must stay committed.

I'll end with this: Winning on this issue is a race without a finish line. We just have to keep at it. I give my appreciation to the President, the folks at Justice, Leo Terrell, and others. They are fighting the good fight. And with Hashem's grace, we will be able to rise to the occasion.

It breaks my heart, and I worry, when I look at surveys of young people who have been influenced by things said on TikTok and social media, to the point where Israel is no longer seen as America's friend.

China is an interesting case in all this because clearly, in many ways, China is our greatest adversary, and at this point, a key competitor. We can't have them stealing our intellectual property. But President Trump has not entirely cut the cord. He's been tough when he needs to be tough, but China is still buying American products. And it's all in the interest of revitalizing the American economy, in making sure America is where it should be.

Going back to the Biden Administration, now—if I can talk about this a bit—no one's talking about how high inflation was; how unsettled the markets were; how expensive oil was, without any conflict with Iran. And under Obama, too, you know, there was a push for policies that would restrict American oil production—a direction that was taken much further with the Green New Deal. It was a scam in so many ways. And here we've got President Trump, and he is turning all that around, too. We have some challenges, to be sure, with the economy and the cost of a gallon of gas, but American energy production is in a whole new place. We're the dominant energy producer in the world,

at times, some uneasiness with what's happening with trading partners, but American jobs are being enhanced and American energy is being made available. These are noble goals. And America is still a force of good in the world, because of this administration.

IF: LAST QUESTION, AND FAR FROM LEAST. ANTISEMITIC RHETORIC, HOSTILITY TOWARD ISRAEL, AND AGGRESSION TOWARD MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN AMERICA HAVE INCREASED—ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES, WITHIN CIVIC INSTITUTIONS, AND IN POLITICAL SPEECH. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY ABOUT IT?

Sen. Coleman: It needs to be called out and condemned, both in other people's houses and, if needed, in our own. On the Democratic side, it often seems as if antisemites have taken over the party; such as the politician in Michigan who wouldn't condemn an attack on a Jewish synagogue. That's hand in hand with somebody who says America is responsible for 9/11 and the candidate in Maine who had a Nazi symbol tattooed on his

Israel: A Security Asset for the United States

by SHOSHANA BRYEN

Editor's note: We reprint the following analysis of US-Israel relations for two reasons. First, to honor the memory of its author, Shoshana Bryen, senior director of the Jewish Policy Center and editor of its flagship magazine inFOCUS since 2012, who died in July. Second, because Shoshana's insight remains as valuable today as it did when the essay was published in 2019. The fraying of bipartisan support for close US-Israel ties to which she alluded has continued, to the benefit of enemies and adversaries of both countries. May her perceptive, articulate analysis serve as a reminder and warning — and recall for all of us Shoshana Bryen's leadership in drawing and developing links between the essential big democracy and the essential small one. The article has been lightly edited to bring numbers, facts, and indisputable examples current, as we are certain Shoshana would have wanted.

One of the few points of unbounded bipartisan agreement in Washington has for decades been that US-Israel security cooperation is right, good, mutually beneficial, and worth every nickel spent on it. It is well-grounded in facts and acknowledged benefits to both sides. Today, however, support for Israel is becoming polarized. Even within the United States military, younger officers — and certainly cadets and midshipmen in the service academies — have been exposed to one or more of the following canards:

- That a close relationship with Israel precludes a close relationship with Arab

states. This despite the clear shift in Gulf Arab states' positions not only on Israel as a partner in addressing Iran, but also on Israel as a legitimate state in the region.

- That the United States is defending the State of Israel. This despite the fact that no American soldier has yet been dispatched to defend Israel, and despite the return of more than 75 percent of America's security assistance funds through purchases in the United States — plus the results of Israel's research and development. This percentage is set to rise.

This despite the clear shift in Gulf Arab states' positions not only on Israel as a partner in addressing Iran, but also on Israel as a legitimate state in the region.

- That Israel uses American security assistance to oppress hapless Palestinians. This despite the facts of security assistance cited above, and Israel's clear need for border security.

The election of several pro-boycott members of the House of Representatives, and the retirement of several staunch supporters of Israel, are indications that misinformation will continue its malicious spread in Washington.

■ *Where We've Been and Where We Are*

The origins of US-Israel security cooperation are in the Cold War understanding that the United States could not engage all the adversaries of all its allies and friends around the world.

The first US-Israel Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on military cooperation was signed in 1981, recognizing "the common bonds of friendship between the United States and Israel" and building "on the mutual security relationship that exists between the two nations." It was embraced warily at first

— the Americans were unconvinced they would receive anything of value, and the Israelis were concerned about continued freedom of action.

But, it worked. Israel went from being considered a net security consumer to a net security producer, meaning the United States did not have to expend resources to defend Israel; and Israel participated in making the Middle East and eastern

Mediterranean regions more secure by its presence.

Today, the volatility of the Middle East is unlikely to be constrained. The United States, desirous of limiting its soldiers in the region even as it understands the risk attendant to a resurgent

The United States is Israel's ally of first choice. And Israel remains the one country the United States can rely on to defend itself by itself and in coordination with American interests.

Russia and an increasingly desperate Iran, is as much in need of capable regional allies now as it ever was.

At the same time, Israel finds itself with new, positive relations in the Sunni Arab world, including a deeper relationship with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain on some security matters. Political hostility in Europe has not yet manifested itself in a lowering of security cooperation. Israel's place in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue appears secure.

The United States is Israel's ally of first choice. And Israel remains the one country the United States can rely on to defend itself by itself and in coordination with American interests.

■ **But Why?**

The late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks believed it has to do with the unique nature of our two societies, starting with the Jewish people's demand of the prophet Samuel to have a king. God told Samuel to explain what having a king would mean, and if the Israelites still wanted one, to give them one. Rabbi Sacks:

What happened in the days of the Prophet Samuel is a social contract, exactly on the lines set out by

Thomas Hobbes in "The Leviathan." People are willing to give up certain of their rights, transfer them to a central power, a king, a government, who undertakes to ensure the rule of law internally and the defense of the realm externally.

In fact, One Samuel, Chapter Eight is the first recorded instance in all of history of a social contract.

But what makes the Hebrew Bible unique... and makes it completely different from Hobbes and Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau is that this wasn't the first founding moment of Israel as a nation, as a political entity. That took place at Mount Sinai when the people made with God not a contract but a covenant. And those two things are often confused, but actually they're quite different.

In a contract, two or more people come together to make an exchange... which is to the benefit of the self-interest of each.

A covenant isn't like that. It's more like a marriage than an exchange... A covenant isn't about me, the voter, or me, the consumer, but about all of us together. Or in that lovely key phrase of American politics, it's about "We, the people."

Biblical Israel had a society long before it had a state... And there is only one nation known to me that had the same dual founding as biblical Israel, and that is the United States of America which has its social covenant in the Declaration of

Independence in 1776 and its social contract in the Constitution in 1787. Covenant is central to the Mayflower Compact of 1620. It is central to the speech of John Winthrop aboard the Arbella in 1630. It is presupposed in the most famous line of the Declaration of Independence... "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." They are self-evident only to people who have internalized the Hebrew Bible.

End, Rabbi Sacks.

That is the center of America's security relationship with Israel — the notion that our two countries have the same founding principles, the same respect for the social contract and the social covenant. I have taken more than 400 American security professionals — primarily retired American admirals and generals — to Israel in more than 30 trips. And at the other end of their careers, I have sent more than 500 cadets and midshipmen of our service academies to Israel before they received their commissions. I can say that they all understood the fundamental and profound principles that guide both the United States and Israel.

They don't always agree with Israel's politics — or Israel's defense choices — or any other single aspect of Israeli political, military, and social life, but I never found one that didn't believe in the relationship between Jews and the land of Israel, and between Israel and the United States.

■ **The Practical Relationship**

Starting there — and you have to start there — you quickly reach the practical aspects of the partnership. Those haven't changed since 1979, when I first published a "quick reference guide" to security cooperation. Israel brings to the cooperation party:

- A secure location in a crucial part of the world

- A well-developed military infrastructure
- The ability to maintain, service, and repair US-origin equipment
- An excellent deep-water port in Haifa
- Modern air facilities
- A position close to sea-lanes and ability to project power over long distances
 - A domestic air force larger than many in Western Europe and possessing more up-to-date hardware
- Multilingual capabilities, including facility in English, Arabic, French, Farsi and the languages of the (former) Soviet Union
 - Combat familiarity with Soviet/Russian style tactics and equipment
- The ability to assist US naval fleets, including common equipment
- The ability to support American operations and to provide emergency air cover
- A democratic political system with a strong orientation to support the United States and the NATO system.

Added in 1996: Israel's military R&D capabilities complement those of the US; its intelligence services cooperate closely with ours — to our benefit; and large numbers of American troops train in Israel.

Added in 2006: The establishment of police-to-police counterterrorism training in Israel. Can you imagine the American police learning tactics from Saudi Arabia, China, or Venezuela?

Added in 2016: Israel's permanent diplomatic mission and security cooperation office established at NATO Headquarters in 2016.

Added in 2021: The formal incorporation of Israel into the US Central Command (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility, operationalizing direct military coordination and integrated air/missile defense architectures alongside regional Arab partners and US forces.

■ **The Practical Result**

In 1967, in the 1970 War of Attrition, in 1973, and over Lebanon in 1982, Israel fought pro-Soviet forces and provided intelligence information and Russian equipment to the US. Most of the equipment had never been inspected close-up



CENTCOM commander Adm. Brad Cooper (left) meets with IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir in 2025. (Photo: CENTCOM/X)

by American troops that then expected to face them in battle.

It was the aftermath of Israel's Yom Kippur war that led to the American "combined arms doctrine" that was so successfully deployed in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990/1991.

In 1981, Israel's bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak meant the US knew it wouldn't be facing a nuclear-armed Iraq in 1991.

After 9/11, Israel "opened the closets" for the US, supplying battle-tested experience in combating terrorism and urban warfare. Americans benefitted from Israel's tactics against car bombs, IEDs and homicide bombing.

After the 2003 allied invasion of Iraq, American military personnel were being introduced to Israel's bomb-sniffing dogs. The US wanted such dogs, but the training period is fairly long. The IDF was willing to make Israeli dogs available, but they only took commands in Hebrew. It was quicker to train the Marines than retrain the dogs, making some interesting scenes in Baghdad.

In September 2007, the IAF destroyed a Syrian-North Korean nuclear

plant, extending the US's strategic arm and providing vital information on Russian air defense systems, which are also employed by Iran.

In 2017: Israeli cyber-intelligence operators hacked an ISIS bomb-maker cell in northern Syria, discovering that the terror group had engineered compact explosives designed to fit invisibly inside commercial laptop battery compartments in order to bypass airport X-ray machines. Israel immediately passed this actionable intelligence to US counterterrorism officials. The Department of Homeland Security and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) immediately changed the rules related to large electronics in cabin luggage on inbound flights.

In January 2018: Mossad operatives breached a heavily guarded industrial warehouse in southern Tehran, cutting open dozens of safes in under seven hours to extract half a ton of original Iranian government documents and electronic files. Transferred directly to US and allied intelligence agencies, this primary-source trove mapped previously unknown underground nuclear facilities, warhead design blueprints, and

illicit procurement networks. It provided the United States, NATO allies, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with actionable site coordinates to inspect undeclared nuclear locations.

■ In Today's World

Not a single American serviceperson needs to be stationed in Israel. Aside from training missions, there have been a few hundred American soldiers stationed in Israel since 2009, working with the US-Israeli co-designed X-band radar system — a deployment that helps the US and Israel monitor air threats from the east.

And, as a reminder, Israel's missile defense capabilities — developed and produced in conjunction with American industry — not only protect Israel from Hamas and Hezbollah missiles, but protect the United States from emerging threats from North Korea and Iran. Various branches of the US military have purchased a variety of Israeli-developed systems and participated in joint development of anti-tunnel defenses, the Arrow Missile Program, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Plane, THEL Laser Program, the Advanced Urban Combat Training Facility as well as Iron Dome.

After the 2014 Gaza War, during which Israel was roundly criticized by the American administration for allegedly not taking proper precautions to limit Palestinian civilian casualties, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey said:

Israel... did some extraordinary things to try to limit civilian casualties, to include... making it known that they were going to destroy a particular structure. The IDF is not interested in creating civilian casualties. They're interested in stopping the shooting of rockets and missiles out of the Gaza Strip and into Israel.

General Dempsey surprised his audience — the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs — by telling them he had already sent an

American delegation to Israel to learn lessons from the IDF, “including,” he said, “the measures they took to prevent civilian casualties.”

Israel has been a partner in US and multi-lateral military exercises for years — interestingly, long before anyone might have imagined, there was an exercise in which Israel and the UAE flew together, signaling a change in Israel's relations with Persian Gulf countries.

In late 2018, Israel hosted the largest aerial training exercise in its history — Blue Flag, in the Negev Desert. Seventy foreign aircraft from around the world

And, as a reminder, Israel's missile defense capabilities — developed and produced in conjunction with American industry — not only protect Israel from Hamas and Hezbollah missiles, but protect the United States from emerging threats from North Korea and Iran.

and hundreds of pilots and air support team members took part. Participants included the United States, France, Italy, Greece, Poland, Germany, and India. It was the first time French, German, and Indian contingents trained in Israel.

And if you thought you would ever see the Luftwaffe flying in Israel, you have a better imagination than I do.

Reciprocally, Israel participated in 2019 in US-EUCOM's Spirit X exercise in Germany with nearly 4,400 American and European troops.

In November 2021, Israeli naval forces joined the navies of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain aboard the amphibious transport dock USS Portland in the northern Red Sea. It was the first time in history the two Gulf states publicly conducted military operations alongside Israel. Focusing on Visit, Board, Search,

and Seizure (VBSS) tactics and maritime interdiction, the drill operationalized joint defense of commercial transit corridors connecting the Suez Canal and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. This paved the way for Israel's February 2022 participation in IMX 2022, training across the Middle East alongside 60 partner nations — including Saudi Arabia and Oman.

■ Conclusion

Israel and the United States are drawn together by common values and common threats to our well-being. The bipartisan support of our ally Israel is

a testament to those values as well as to the practical recognition that the threats require cooperation in intelligence, technology, and security policy.

We have that with Israel. But more than that, the United States and Israel share an intimate understanding of nationhood. The British — our other best friends in the world — can't say that rights are inalienable and come from The Creator. For the British, rights came from the earthly King or Queen, and only those rights the sovereign chose to give — which is why we had a Revolution.

SHOSHANA BRYEN *z"l* was the Senior Director of The Jewish Policy Center from 2012 to 2026 and Editor of *inFOCUS Quarterly*. Research and editing provided by interim *inFOCUS* Editor ELIZABETH THOMPSON.

Formidable — In Memoriam

by ARI BRYEN

My mother, Shoshana Bryen, was formidable. She was driven in all things, but two stand out: Her children and her country. With respect to her children, she was a force of nature in our lives. She was always willing to push us to do our absolute best, to advocate on our behalf, and to offer her thoughts on how we might navigate any particular challenges. Aside from her three children (Ari, Sarah, and Mollie, plus Gabrielle from my father's first marriage), she made many others her children as well.

Rebecca and Shira Singelenberg, Zainab Marks, and others benefited from her advocacy, her coaching, and her desire to see them thrive in their personal and professional lives. But there were even more. My mother was a fierce advocate for immigrants. She loved the idea of new Americans — decent and hard-working people who came to this country to live better lives and create opportunities for *their* children. She took pleasure in knocking down bureaucratic hurdles for them, feeling that they were, at the end of the day, a deep injustice that prevented excellent people from living productive lives.

She loved America deeply. She was also an ardent Zionist. In her mind, these two ideas were inseparable, and she devoted her working life to convincing people of this. A world with some space for Jewish sovereignty was, for her, an absolute necessity. It served as a reminder to others that Jews belonged in the modern world, and that treating them with decency and respect was an obligation of civilized peoples.

America fulfilled this obligation — not without struggles, of course, but ultimately. It was one of the few places Jews could thrive without being themselves

But ultimately, for our house, it never made much difference: My father had the comic timing, and the children inherited it from him. We put it to great use at the

She loved the idea of new Americans — decent and hard-working people who came to this country to live better lives and create opportunities for their children.

sovereign, and for this, it was worthy of her love and respect. Understanding *why* this was, was for my mother a lifelong endeavor. It made her a student of history, American history in particular. She read extensively on it, but she also loved living in the city that was America's political center. She loved walking in Washington, D.C., appreciating its monuments and architecture, surrounded by the history of the country she loved.

That she was so driven meant that she rarely changed her mind — and when she did, she would often pretend she had always held that particular belief. This amused her children to no end, even when it periodically frustrated us. Being driven also meant that she lacked the ironic detachment one needs to tell a joke effectively. In fact, I can recall no moment in my life where she succeeded at this.

dinner table on Shabbat, doing our best to one-up one another with sarcasm, gallows humor, and snark. In retrospect, we were all seeking to make my mother laugh uncontrollably, and we succeeded most of the time. At the point where she had finally broken down with laughter, she would “complain” that we were all our father's children, and say we were demented.

Those times around my parents' table were some of the best of my life: eating, drinking, talking, and laughing. They taught me more than I can ever fully account for — about friendship, about the world, and about family. Those times will be deeply missed, as will my mother.

ARI BRYEN is an Associate Professor of History, Associate Professor of Classical and Mediterranean Studies, and Associate Professor of Law at Vanderbilt University.



ראש הממשלה
PRIME MINISTER

July 19, 2026
ה' אב תשפ"ו

Dear Stephen,

It was with great sadness that I received the news that your beloved wife Shoshana passed away last week after a long battle with cancer.

I want to express my deep appreciation and that of the State of Israel, for Shoshana's singular contribution to building the alliance between Israel and the United States.

At JINSA she served as a critical link between the general officer corps of the US military and the Israel Defense Force. The interpersonal relations she developed over decades were critical building blocks towards the intimate operational and strategic ties that bind our military leadership together. Operations Rising Lion-Midnight Hammer and Roaring Lion-Epic Fury were the natural progression of the relations that Shoshana did so much to build.

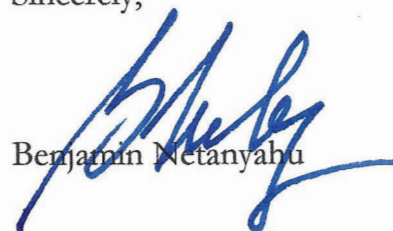
At the Jewish Policy Center, Shoshana continued her work preserving and strengthening the intellectual and strategic foundations and rationales for the strengthening of our alliance.

Her work has brought our nations closer to the benefit of both our countries and the entire world.

Sara and I send our deepest condolences to you and your children.

May her memory be a blessing.

Sincerely,



Benjamin Netanyahu

Shoshana Bryen, 1953–2026

by SEAN DURNS

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Popular opinion has it that Washington, D.C., is filled with amoral, self-interested people who don't really believe in anything save their own professional advancement. Of course, such people do exist. But their influence is short-lived. They come and go.

Real influence comes from those who gain a reputation for their honesty, thoughtfulness, and selflessness. Those who quietly and sometimes not-so-quietly toil to advance the causes that they believe in.

Shoshana Bryen, who died on July 16, 2026, after a long battle with cancer, was precisely that sort of person.

Bryen was a leading figure in foreign policy debates for more than four decades. Her legacy and what she embodied deserve to be remarked upon. Not only because it's considerable, but because it's valuable to future generations of aspiring foreign policy practitioners.

For more than a dozen years, Bryen was the senior director for the Jewish Policy Center. Previously, she worked for the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, for more than 30 years, serving in several positions, including as executive director.

Bryen was a leading specialist in US defense policy and Middle Eastern affairs. While much of her life's work was focused on the US-Israel relationship, the scope and scale of her knowledge were vast. She was capable of informed

analysis of everywhere from Mali to Moscow and beyond.

She worked with the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, and lectured at the National Defense University.

For more than three decades, Bryen organized and led trips to the Middle East for more than 450 US military officers. She planned and ran national security-related programs, conferences, and symposiums in the United States, Jordan, Israel, Taiwan, and elsewhere.

But Bryen was arguably best known for her facility with the written word.

The celebrated American journalist Edward R. Murrow famously said that Winston Churchill "mobilized the

members of Congress, generals, admirals, diplomats, and veterans of presidential administrations stretching back decades.

She was astonishingly prolific and wrote dozens of columns a year. This pattern continued, unbroken, as she fought cancer. In her final months alone, she wrote numerous articles, hosted podcasts, and continued to be active and engaged in debates about America's past, present, and future.

More importantly, these were items of real substance. And that, it must be lamented, is a very rare thing nowadays.

We live in an era of "hot takes," in which everyone posits themselves as an "expert" on everything and where actual experts are, more often than not, wrong. There is precious little humility

Bryen was the antithesis of this trend. Her work was informed and guided by both history and a keen strategic sense.

English language and sent it into battle." Bryen marshaled entire fleets, writing for the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Times, Newsweek, the Daily Caller, the New York Sun, Asia Times, among many, many others.

At the JPC, Bryen served as editor of the center's inFOCUS Quarterly, a flagship foreign and domestic-policy journal whose various contributors included

and plenty of self-importance in the social media age.

Bryen was the antithesis of this trend. Her work was informed and guided by both history and a keen strategic sense. She was inquisitive and was unafraid to be the sole person in the room to fearlessly challenge conventional wisdom. Indeed, she excelled at doing precisely that.



Shoshana Bryen

And, having known her myself for more than a decade, I can honestly say that the only time I heard her brag was about her husband of 48 years, Steve, a former US deputy undersecretary of defense and pioneering thinker on national security issues, and their children, Gabrielle, Ari, Mollie, and Sarah.

For a woman whose knowledge and contacts were justly well-regarded, I can't recall a single bit of braggado-

For all of her professional accomplishments, another one should be added: mentor. Bryen mentored a generation of foreign policy thinkers, analysts, and writers. In a world where the idea of community is becoming passe, this is no small thing.

Lawyers must pass the bar. Doctors must pass their boards. But there is no licensing and no set career path for becoming a foreign policy commentator or practitioner.

Real influence comes from those who gain a reputation for their honesty, thoughtfulness, and selflessness.

cio. I do recall, however, hearing about her children's professional accomplishments (even if I'd never met them). This, it can fairly be said, is the mark of a good person. It certainly made an impression on me.

For those hoping to come to Washington, D.C., and become involved in matters of state, the real answer is simple: have something to say, say it well, and defend it with all your heart. And do so with humility. After

all, you might be wrong. Odds are that you will be at some point.

But above all: don't be indifferent. Stake your claim. Do not be a "cold and timid soul who knows neither victory nor defeat," as Teddy Roosevelt famously railed against in his 1910 speech at the Sorbonne. After all, such individuals are not who built this country. They will not be what sustains it.

No one could accuse Shoshana Bryen of indifference. Since her death, a number of tributes have poured in, often employing similar adjectives. Perhaps the most common one was "formidable." I myself can't think of a better one-word summary.

SEAN DURNS is the deputy commentary editor for the Washington Examiner. He is a longstanding commentator on foreign affairs and national security matters. He has appeared in the Washington Times, the Washington Free Beacon, Newsweek, National Review, the Daily Caller, the Daily Wire, Fox News, and elsewhere. He has a master's in diplomatic history from the London School of Economics.

The Beautiful Blessing of Shoshana Bryen

by LAURI B. REGAN

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I don't remember the first time I met my dear friend, Shoshana Bryen, but I will never forget the last time we spoke. It would be our final "wine and Zoom," something we did occasionally since I live in New York and she was in D.C. Those calls took place around 6 p.m. and ended with Shoshana's husband of 48 years, Stephen Bryen, the cook in the family, calling out that dinner was ready. That was the signal it was time to go.

It never crossed my mind that this would be our final conversation—the last time I would see her smile and have the pleasure of talking to this kind, warm, brilliant and beautiful woman I had come to cherish. As we toasted and said goodbye, taking our last sip of wine, I was too naive to realize the seriousness of the surgery she was about to undergo. Shoshana wanted it that way. Steve later shared that she internalized fears and concerns about her health to just about everyone in her life, lest people worry about her. She was selfless.

She was also humble. Her colleagues at the Jewish Policy Center, where she served as senior director and editor of its *inFOCUS* Quarterly, recognized that Shoshana was "the smartest person in the room." What many people might not have realized was how that brilliance translated into becoming invaluable at the JPC, doing the work of at least three people—work that she loved and with others with whom she loved working.

Her responsibilities included writing multiple articles a week, published across leading media outlets; editing the quarterly journal which, through her stewardship, evolved over the years into a highly regarded publication; fundraising; public speaking on the Middle East, US defense and security policy, and Israeli domestic and foreign affairs; working with foreign-policy professionals and government representatives, including meetings on the Hill; handling social media; and holding weekly webinars with experts on a vast array of topics.

Several people who knew Shoshana used the term "indefatigable" to describe her. She worked tirelessly in the battle to save the West, to ensure strong

United States." I thought the column was perfect when I sent it to her; she made it that much better. Her editing skills were unique, as were her patriotism and Zionism. Combined with her knowledge of the subject matter, she was formidable.

This was how her son, Ari, described her in his eulogy. As soon as he mentioned the word, everyone laughed because to know Shoshana was to understand that she was a force to be reckoned with.

She wasn't a particularly large presence physically; in fact, in her later years, I would describe her as frail, though she commanded respect. One person described her as a "gentle giant." I couldn't agree more.

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US national security, to fight for Israel's survival and to confront the rise of antisemitism, about which we bemoaned continuously over the years. She was a passionate and unapologetic American patriot and Zionist.

One of the essays I wrote for her spring 2023 issue of *inFocus* was titled "Israel: A Strategic Ally for the

Her modest nature and integrity in a field of massive egos and personalities were assets that drew people close to her. Shoshana earned the respect of colleagues and peers across the think-tank world in Washington, D.C.; national security and defense industries (she spent 30 years at the Jewish Institute for the National Security of America); and

political institutions. All who knew her recognize her passing as a loss for the country and the Jewish people.

As her husband stated, “she was truly a woman of valor.”

One of the things that I loved most was her positive nature. It was impossible not to commiserate whenever we got together: about failures in US foreign policy; fears for Israel and its ability to survive; elections that ended with results anathema to Western values and our constitutional republic; and global antisemitism. But we did so with perspective, and I always left feeling hopeful. Shoshana ended her webinars asking guests to end by sharing something positive.

Not only was she a treasure trove of knowledge, people, history and wisdom, but she provided the best advice. We’d share ideas for potential webinars or articles, and she helped me navigate difficult issues in my professional life. In one instance, after I thanked her for talking me down from my emotions, she replied: “Taking the high road pays off! Hugs.”

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That was Shoshana: wise enough to always take the high road, and doing so with warmth and kindness.

One of the many things I’ll miss is our “sleepovers” in New York City. She had an annual speaking engagement, and we would have dinner and stay over together. They were opportunities for us to get to know each other

better, bounce ideas off of one another and discuss things outside of our professional worlds.

She loved talking about her family. And her large heart and generosity led her to “adopting” a whole family of chil-

dren over the years that she and Steve took in and helped throughout their formative years. They were there at her funeral, some serving as pallbearers, helping Shoshana travel to her resting place after her long, 14-year battle with difficult health issues that finally got the best of

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touched through her mentoring, advising, supporting and loving, and, of course, through her family. Ari’s stories of family dinners for the holidays made it clear where Shoshana’s priorities lay. Steve, her children and grandchildren,

and those of us who were blessed to have shared part of our lives with her will carry on her work and continue to make her proud — because we know what she would say if we didn’t.

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While Jewish people say to those in mourning, “May her memory be a blessing,” Shoshana shared with me recently that in her shul, they say, “May her neshama have an aliyah in Heaven.”

I will miss you, dear friend — your love and friendship, support and wisdom, grace and compassion, kindness and warmth.

May your neshama have an aliyah in Heaven. Hugs.

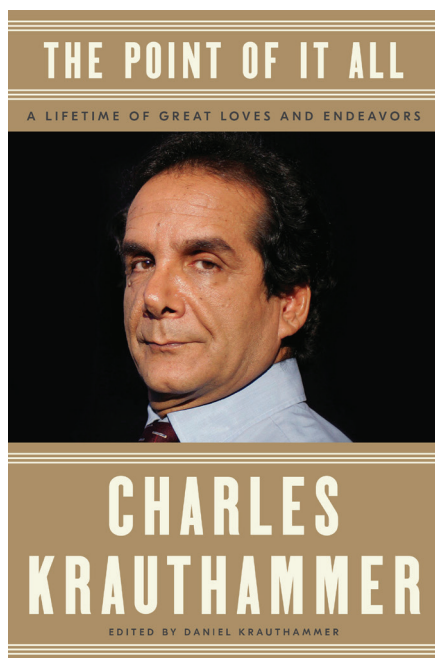
her. I learned how spiritual she was, with a deep belief in the power of prayer. I believe that her faith helped her through her battles with cancer and also helped her remain optimistic about the frightening events taking place around us.

Shoshana’s legacy will endure through her multitude of written materials, edited works, all of the people she

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A Portrait of Conscience and Conviction

review by ELIZABETH THOMPSON



The Point of It All:
A Lifetime of Great Loves
and Endeavors

by Charles Krauthammer
edited by Daniel
Krauthammer

Crown Forum
2018

Editor's note: Charles Krauthammer's posthumous book of selected columns, essays, and public addresses became a New York Times bestseller shortly after its publication in late 2018. Commentators, peers, and literary reviewers praised it as an essential, profound, and beautifully crafted testament to one of the pre-eminent political and cultural thinkers of our time. By then I had been reading Krauthammer's columns for 30 years — and heartily agreed.

In keeping with my habit of revisiting beloved books every seven years or so, I decided to read it this past summer. Midway through, I was asked by RJC Executive Director and JPC CEO Matt Brooks to step in as interim editor for inFOCUS after JPC's longtime senior leader Shoshana Bryen had stepped back from her work and into a hospital for care. I finished the book the same week the final chapter of Shoshana's life came to a close. I have since learned that her death was a shock to many who knew her, and as I read all the heartfelt remembrances, I came to regret that I didn't know her.

I felt the same way about Charles Krauthammer when he passed into the Hereafter — and felt it again upon rereading his tremendous body of work in this month's IF-featured book. For those who knew Shoshana, Charles, or both: How marvelously blessed you were! The rest of us have "only" their work by which to love and remember them. It is a testament to their remarkable lives and unquenchable spirits that to have that is a very great thing, indeed.

The collected works in *The Point of It All* offer readers what Charles Krauthammer consistently delivered in nearly four decades of essays, speeches, and syndicated weekly columns for the *Washington Post*: knowledge, intelligence, insight, thoughtfulness, and wit. The word most frequently exclaimed by this humble reader at the end of a particularly poignant CK piece: "Brilliant!" To miss this book is to miss a treasure trove of truth-telling and inspired writing.

The collection was conceived and loosely assembled in an Emory University Hospital room by the author and his only child, Daniel, then 32 years of age, who lovingly finished it after Charles died in 2018. The articles are not in chronological order. They move from topic to topic, decade to decade, anchored by the author's distinct approach to a sustained inquiry into the American condition.

What defines the book is what defined everything Charles wrote and said: keen observation, cogent connections, elegant phrasing, fearless honesty, and a humble humanity — rolled out in a cadence that has you in its thrall before the second turn around the dance floor. He leads deftly. The reader trusts, and glides along. Even his sarcasm is soft, subtle. No sting, only pointedness. The truth — delivered with grace.

For those who don't know his work, Krauthammer's reputation was as an independent thinker. Though he frequently served as a staunch conservative voice, he sometimes challenged strict party lines or took nuanced positions on divisive topics, including parental rights in

extreme medical cases, assisted suicide, and the morality of the death penalty. I had been reading Krauthammer's work for years before learning why his writing on medical issues was so thoughtful, and at times, unexpected. Before turning to writing, Krauthammer had been a physician and psychiatrist.

He graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1975 — completing his studies on time despite a diving board accident during his first year that left him permanently paralyzed from the waist down, paired with a wheelchair for life. He went on to serve as the chief resident in psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital and was involved in planning and creating a book that fundamentally reshaped how modern psychiatric conditions are classified—the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. He then relocated to Washington, D.C., where he directed psychiatric research planning for the Carter administration. By 1980, he had exited psychiatry and pivoted into political discourse. He was a presidential speechwriter for Vice President Walter Mondale before formally launching his

37-year journalism career at The New Republic in 1981.

The reader will find his political commentary is rooted in a firm thesis on the proper purpose of the federal government: preserve individual dignity and liberty, protect life and property,

many readers, it will work best as a volume to sample slowly. A column a day will keep you on your mental toes; two or three will fill your dance card nicely. Others may wish to listen to the book on Audible, read by stage, film, and television actor Jeremy Bobb (The Knick, The

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defend the homeland and its allies, and otherwise let people be. His foreign policy essays are rooted in conservative realism, including his long-form essay on the challenge modern populism poses to liberal institutions worldwide. His lighter pieces are on love and loss in baseball, the worthiness of sustained space exploration, and his quick shift (after suffering under the intense pressures of a formal competitive event) into speed chess.

The principles and ideals in the collection remain profoundly relevant. For

Outsider, Russian Doll). As a bonus, Daniel Krauthammer narrates his own foreword and the book's final entry: the deeply loving, poignant eulogy he delivered for his beloved father, whom he rightly described as one of the greatest minds of the modern age. Be sure to have a box of tissues handy.

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■ *The Last Word ...*

The Houthi Blockade: An Act of War, Not a Traffic Dispute

For nearly three years, an Iranian-armed militia operating from the Yemeni coast has maintained a chokehold on global commerce. By hurling ballistic missiles and loitering munitions at commercial vessels in the Bab el-Mandeb, the Houthis have effectively shuttered the southern approach to the Suez Canal. Western capitals have met this siege with reactive missile intercepts, legal protests, and defensive avoidance, treating the crisis as a shipping dispute rather than a coordinated act of war.

We have seen this movie before. In May 1967, Gamal Abdel Nasser evicted UN peacekeepers and closed the Straits of Tiran, severing Israel's southern sea lane. A decade earlier, the US and 17 maritime nations had pledged to ensure free navigation through the gulf. When Israel called in the security guarantee, the Western coalition dithered. In Paris, Charles de Gaulle declared neutrality and told Jerusalem not to fire the first shot. President Lyndon B. Johnson suggested an international flotilla dubbed the "Red Sea Regatta"—an armada meant to run the blockade. European allies declined to commit warships, Congress balked, and the West urged Israel to sit tight and trust diplomacy.

Israel refused to bend the knee to an international committee unwilling to keep its promises. On June 5, it shattered

the siege on its own terms: obliterating Egypt's air force, racing paratroopers south to rip open Sharm el-Sheikh, and redrawing the region's strategic map in six days. Israel recognized the reality the West evaded: Maritime blockades are acts of war that do not tend to easily dissolve, nor do adversaries tend to cease when military aggression and extortion prove profitable.

Then and now, a foundational principle hung in the balance: freedom of the seas, established and (mostly) protected by American naval hegemony since 1945. While Saudi Arabia and regional Gulf partners watch with justified alarm—recognizing that an unchecked Iranian proxy on their southern border imperils much—Western capitals seem to be clinging to the illusion that limited deterrence and diplomacy will eventually restore order.

It will not. A superpower that tolerates a militia closing international sea lanes concedes control over global commerce. If Tehran's Yemeni outpost can shut the Red Sea with impunity, Beijing and Moscow will assuredly take note of how easily Western maritime resolve can be broken.

– Elizabeth Thompson
Interim Editor