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An.
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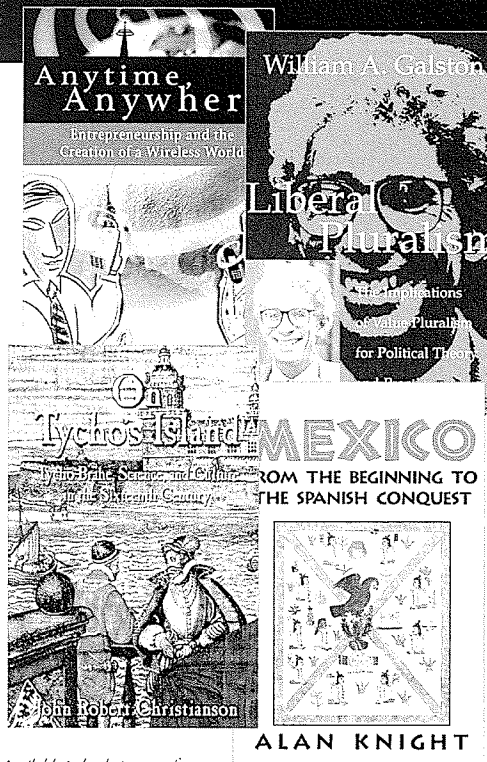
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Empire used to be an epithet critics hurled against U.S. power. But after America's swift victory in distant Afghanistan and its mobilization for a global war against terrorism, others too are wondering whether *empire* is indeed the right word to describe the U.S. role in the world. Ranging from ancient Rome to the modern Middle East, our contributors ponder that and other possibilities.

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COVER: *The Spirit of Liberty* (1986), by T. F. Chen, courtesy of the T. F. Chen Cultural Center, New York. Design by David Herbick.
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Editor's Comment

An American empire? Our cover story for this issue is inspired not so much by a settled view of the question as by a conviction that the debate between “multilateralists” and “unilateralists” long ago stopped being very illuminating. September 11 showed that there aren't many pure multilateralists when New York is in flames, and I haven't encountered too many unilateralists who want to pull the plug on, say, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Perhaps America is an empire. It may be merely a great power of unusual strength. Or it may be only first among equals, the powerful leader of a mighty coalition. These alternatives hardly exhaust the possibilities. The point is that how the United States sees itself ought to influence how it acts in different situations. That's why we asked five thinkers to take up the question of empire from their various perspectives.

The cover story owes a particular intellectual debt to one of those contributors, Andrew J. Bacevich, whose provocative writings in the *WQ* and elsewhere over the past few years have often dealt with the implications of what he sees as America's imperial role in the world. Though he is no partisan of empire, Bacevich believes that the United States has almost unwittingly become the new Rome, and he argues that Americans must confront this fact of their national existence in molding U.S. military and diplomatic policies.

Bacevich has not been alone in thinking about empire, but he has a unique perspective, shaped in part by a background that includes a 23-year career in the U.S. Army and a Ph.D. in history from Princeton University. This fall, Harvard University Press will publish his new book, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*, which is sure to reward readers and stir wide debate. Congratulations, too, to editorial adviser and “empire” contributor Martin Walker on the publication of his novel, *The Caves of Périgord*.

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THE WILSON QUARTERLY (ISSN-0363-3276) is published in January (Winter), April (Spring), July (Summer), and October (Autumn) by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004–3027. Complete article index available online at www.wilsonquarterly.com. Subscriptions: one year, \$24; two years, \$43. Air mail outside U.S.: one year, \$39; two years, \$73. Single copies mailed upon request: \$7; outside U.S. and possessions, \$8; selected back issues: \$7, including postage and handling; outside U.S., \$8. Periodical postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. All unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Members: Send changes of address and all subscription correspondence with *Wilson Quarterly* mailing label to Subscriber Service, *The Wilson Quarterly*, P.O. Box 420406, Palm Coast, FL 32142–0406. (Subscriber hot line: 1-800-829-5108.) Postmaster: Send all address changes to *The Wilson Quarterly*, P.O. Box 420406, Palm Coast, FL 32142–0406. Microfilm copies are available from Bell & Howell Information and Learning, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. U.S. newsstand distribution by Ingram Periodicals, Inc. (for information, call 1-800-627-6247, ext. 33660). ADVERTISING: Suzanne Napper, TEL.: (202) 691-4021, FAX: (202) 691-4036. PUBLISHER/MAIL ORDER: Kalish, Quigley & Rosen, TEL.: (212) 399-9500, FAX: (212) 265-0986.

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A Strong Executive

In his insightful article, "The Return of the Imperial Presidency?" [WQ, Spring '02], Donald R. Wolfensberger rightly points out that the executive came to dominate the American political system in the 20th century. But this does not keep presidents from feeling frustrated when they cannot get their way in battles over public policy. In times of crisis, it is natural for the rest of the political system to delegate more power to the executive because it can act quickly and has the resources to defend the country. But as the Framers realized, concentrated power is dangerous and must be checked.

A careful reading of the joint resolution supporting the war on terrorism can lead to the conclusion that it is even broader than the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The September 14 resolution applies to "those nations, organizations or persons" that "he [the president] determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks." The president is not required to convince anyone else; if he "determines" that Iraq was connected to the terrorist attacks, the resolution might be read as congressional authorization for an attack on Iraq.

Many Americans may be comfortable trusting George W. Bush alone to decide whether to go to war. But regardless of how much we might trust any particular incumbent, we must remember that precedents established in the present can be used in the future by other presidents with whom we might disagree. As Justice David Davis said in *Ex parte Milligan* (1866):

This nation, as experience has proved, cannot always remain at peace, and has no right to expect that it will always have wise and humane rulers, sincerely attached to the principles of the Constitution. Wicked men, ambitious of power, with hatred of liberty and contempt of law, may fill the place once occupied by Washington and Lincoln.

Wolfensberger correctly concludes that an appropriate balance between the branches is essential to the preservation of our constitutional liberties.

James P. Pfiffner
Professor of Public Policy
George Mason University
Fairfax, Va.

The imperial presidency, if by that we mean one "characterized by greater power than the constitution allows," has definitely not returned. President Bush has not exercised any extra-constitutional powers. And as Mr. Wolfensberger concedes, he clearly had inherent authority to commit troops in response to September 11. Certainly—and consistent with what the Framers anticipated would happen in wartime—the presidency is now the more dominant of the elective branches. But that's different from saying it is an imperial, i.e. unconstitutional, presidency.

The more interesting question is whether—to pursue "the more benign definition" of the imperial presidency—the president is also dominant on domestic issues, at least in the sense that past presidents said to be imperial were. The answer is surely no. But why? One reason is divided government: Controlling the Senate, the Democrats are better positioned (to make the obvious point) to thwart the president's domestic agenda than they would be if the GOP held both houses. But there's another reason as well: This White House simply lacks the necessary domestic ambition. By which I mean it lacks the kind of ambition that came easily to such progressive presidents as FDR and LBJ. Unlike the progressives, Bush (like his father and like Ronald Reagan) does not see the presidency as an office from which to grow the federal government by seeking and implementing measures that expand the size and reach, not to mention the cost, of the federal government.

Mr. Wolfensberger discusses the elective branches only. The third, however, is surely



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pertinent to assessing the contours of the executive and legislative powers. In recent years, the Supreme Court has proved more active in policing the federal separation of powers and, especially, the division of power between the federal government and the states. In its federalism decisions, the Court has repeatedly told Congress it overstepped its constitutional authority. In all of these cases the Court, by ensuring that the elective branches act constitutionally, has ensured its own dominance among them, indeed its supremacy. Judicial supremacy is hardly a new story, of course. But it is here today. You could say it has "returned."

Terry Eastland

Publisher, The Weekly Standard
Author, Energy in the Executive: The Case for the Strong Presidency (1992)
Washington, D.C.

The Law's Limits

Michael J. Glennon's essay "Terrorism and the Limits of Law" [WQ, Spring '02] makes the compelling case that often, in this war on terrorism, the "role of law is limited," and sometimes, it should remain silent. Invoking Justice Black's famous reply ("yes, but we could never say that") to the notorious law school hypothetical that asks if government should torture a man who knows the location of a bomb, Glennon states that there are some government actions in times of crisis that simply stand outside the "outer bounds of what the law is able to accomplish." While I may differ with Glennon's position regarding the legitimacy of some of the Bush administration's activities during this war on terrorism, his argument is appealing. There are things that governments may need to do that, as a nation, we choose not to define by the laws. But while that may be true, our continuing focus on these hypotheticals is also somewhat distracting.

This nation's endless fascination with the fringes of legal activity (torture warrants, the assassination bans, racial profiling, or military tribunals) has too often

deflected us from a serious analysis of the real, difficult legal work that needs to be done. How do we catch terrorists? While long-term detentions, military tribunals, or the interrogation of immigrants may satisfy the public that our government is on the case, they have so far proved futile, ineffective, or irrelevant.

It is becoming apparent that the challenge for crime fighters has more to do with better information sharing, focused intelligence gathering, and a commitment to analysis that overcomes bureaucratic and structural barriers. True, the lawyers' role in this war may be limited; certainly, military action, intelligence gathering, and diplomacy all contribute to the undermining of this continuing threat. But these tough hypotheticals are just that; they provide for interesting analysis and intense debate on the fringes of the law's true relevance. They are a diversion. For the most part, this nation will be better served if the lawyers focus on what they have been trained to do. That job is hard (hard in the tedious sense), it is slow, and it is not particularly public.

Juliette N. Kayyem
Executive Director

Executive Session on Domestic Preparedness
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.

Michael Glennon's thoughtful argument against the viability of legal absolutism in dire social circumstances is well taken. He is also right to remind us of Justice Black's admonition that there are some things that governments must do, but which the law must never expressly sanction. I agree with him that the specter of courts issuing "torture warrants"—even in extreme situations—really does "place a stamp of legitimacy on an activity that no civilized society can afford to legitimate" (though, surely, comparable concerns arise when judges are routinely asked to impose the death penalty).

But I am not persuaded by Glennon's conclusion that the best answer may be to exempt some socially compelling violations of human rights from legal scrutiny altogether. While law cannot, of course, provide perfect answers in every situation, the history of the rule of law makes abundantly clear that abuse is much less likely where some

legal oversight is possible. Even a casual observer of contemporary international affairs would surely recoil from the suggestion that we should simply "count on public servants to discern and respect those limits" to acceptable infringement of basic rights.

A happy medium between legal absolutism and complete trust in government officials to get it right is suggested by the approach of the United Nations' Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. A government may derogate from the duty to respect some, though not all, basic rights "in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation." But derogation must be reported, can never be discriminatorily implemented, and is subject to review by the UN Human Rights Committee. Even more flexible is the provision in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms under which rights are not guaranteed in an absolutist fashion, but rather "subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society." This provision gives government the flexibility it needs to make hard decisions in difficult cases, but allows courts to intervene to ensure that suspensions of basic rights really are motivated by, and proportionate to, a risk to the greater good. Law operates with a relatively light touch, but that may be just enough to avoid the worst nightmares of civil libertarians.

James C. Hathaway
Professor of Law
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Michael J. Glennon ends his article with the unsupported assertion that "striking a pragmatic balance between competing values is the key—a balance that recognizes that each value has its limits." It logically follows that the value of balance also has its limits. The implied subject of the article—how to strike the proper balance—is precisely where the law is supposed to guide us. Without the law we are left using philosophical arguments, the weaknesses of which Glennon well articulates, in attempting to resolve the most difficult value issues. If both law and philosophy are inadequate to address the most important value conflicts, where will the "hearts of men and women" find guidance?

Correspondence

Glennon makes other logical errors in his list of examples of recent value clashes. When he says it was reasonable to believe that the Qaeda cells were poised to strike again, and it was therefore reasonable to arrest the likeliest terrorist suspects, he assumes that the major premise is true. But the major premise is the subject of the debate. On what basis would one arrest those suspects? What makes them the likeliest suspects? Is there evidence that meets the legal standard of probable cause? It is precisely in questions such as these that a civilized society needs the guidance of law. If law is inadequate for the task, where does that leave our society? It leaves our society subject to whims of the heart, and Glennon has shown the dangers of that. We have the choice of hearts, philosophy, or the law, and I think our only hope lies in the last.

Bruce D. Hartsell
Bakersfield, Calif.

Confronting Microbes

Joel L. Swerdlow and Ari D. Johnson's "Living with Microbes" [WQ, Spring '02] thoughtfully describes the futility of waging war against creatures far more wily and resourceful than ourselves. The authors rightly call for new perspectives from medicine and public-health perspectives that draw on the complex web of relations between people and disease-causing organisms.

In researching my new book, *Secret Agents: The Menace of Emerging Infections*, I heard a similar theme from bench scientists. These men and women had a tremendous admiration for the organisms they studied. As one microbiologist told me, "Never underestimate an adversary that has a 3.5-billion-year head start." Another researcher, who composes chamber music in his spare time, likened the flu virus to a Bach fugue.

My book surveys the public-health landscape from food-borne and insect-borne diseases to antibiotic resistance, from infectious causes of chronic afflictions to bioterrorism. Like Swerdlow and Johnson, I found that humans and microbes do indeed carry on an intimate dance, and that we delude ourselves if we think we have taken the lead in this tango. Squandering antibiotics on livestock and poultry has spawned invasive and

drug-resistant infections in people. Deadly strains of staph resist every drug on the hospital shelf, including the most recently approved last-resort medications. And a growing list of diseases whose origins had been deemed "multifactorial" or just plain mysterious, from atherosclerosis and diabetes to multiple sclerosis and schizophrenia, may turn out to be triggered by infections.

Emerging infections such as AIDS, Ebola fever, and pandemic flu represent evolution in action. But change is what creates more intersections between humans and emerging pathogens, and the pace of change is faster today than ever. Swerdlow and Johnson suggest that as humankind continues to face down invisible pathogens, war imagery will give way to an ecological sensibility. Whatever metaphor we choose, however, we will need a public-health system that is as efficient and creative and relentless as the bugs themselves.

Madeline Drexler
Author, *Secret Agents: The Menace of Emerging Infections*
Watertown, Mass.

The Best Deterrent?

Stuart Banner touched upon many poignant points in his well-researched and thought-provoking piece, "The Death Penalty's Strange Career" [WQ, Spring '02]. But he didn't go deep enough on three aspects of capital punishment that I consider crucial: Is it better to allow a murderer to go free than to execute an innocent man, or is it wiser to put an innocent man to death rather than take the chance of a murderer being released and being free to kill again? Is the death penalty a deterrent to murder? And could some methods of execution be unconstitutional because they would be considered cruel and unusual?

Taking a human life can never be regarded as a pleasant thing, but is there a better method of punishment or retribution? I cannot think of a more appropriate punishment for a murderer than to be put to death himself. We, as a society and as a race of mortals, kill all the time, and most of the time think nothing of it. We kill animals for food and sport. We send our young men and women

off to foreign shores to die in battle, staunchly justifying the action and even giving it the label “just cause.” More and more states and individuals are advocating the assisted suicide of terminally ill persons on humanitarian grounds. Many who object to the death penalty quote the Bible, but doesn’t the Bible say, if it is translated properly, not “Thou shall not kill” but “Thou shall not murder”? In a capital case the state kills someone who has murdered, and this makes it ethical, legal, and moral.

In criminal justice, an occasional innocent is likely to die in its administration. But to eliminate capital punishment and risk allowing murderers to be released into society is unwise. Statistics show that 67 percent of released murderers kill again after leaving prison. By not executing convicted killers, we may contribute to the deaths of many innocent people.

Is the prospect of being executed a deterrent to murder? I don’t think so. Murder, by

its very nature, is usually an act of passion. I doubt very much that, in the case of most murders, the killer takes time to question, “If I do this, will I be caught, tried, and condemned to death?” But I know one thing for sure: If you execute a murderer, he is sure as hell not going to kill anyone else again.

As for execution being cruel and unusual punishment, the methods used by the states and the federal government can’t be described this way. Most of the anguish and trauma suffered at an execution are experienced by the onlookers, and that is forced on no one.

I say the death penalty is the way to go. I think that the chance of executing an innocent person is slim enough and the benefits are great enough to continue with this method of justice. It need not be cruel or barbaric. And as for its deterrent value, any murderer who is executed won’t commit murder again.

*Al Taylor
Providence, R.I.*

Marshall Plan for the Middle East

Recalling the Marshall Plan's legendary role in the rebuilding of Western Europe after World War II, Joseph A. Cari, Jr., advocates a U.S. initiative to spur economic development of Palestine as the first stage of a "Marshall Plan for the Middle East" ["From the Center," *WQ*, Spring '02]. Although exemplifying the bold and creative thinking he considers vital to addressing "today's worldwide tensions and the need to protect America's next generation," Mr. Cari's conception of a Middle East development strategy should go further than it does. The Marshall Plan was intrinsically a regional initiative. A Middle East initiative similarly should be a regional enterprise that addresses all U.S. concerns in that area, from solving the Israeli-Palestinian crisis to rebuilding and developing Afghanistan and even sending development aid to the Central Asia republics.

A well-orchestrated regional strategy providing development aid to all Middle East countries committed to crucial standards, including a commitment to democracy, protection of human rights, and the combating of terrorism, could even be the framework that could lead to the toppling of Saddam Hussein.

Since Iraq under Saddam Hussein could not meet the standards required for participation in the program I envisage, anti-Saddam Iraqis (in and outside Iraq) would be all the more impelled to mount a well-organized campaign to overthrow the regime. Their request for military assistance would conceivably evoke a positive response both inside and outside the Middle East. Only in this context should the United States take military action against Saddam Hussein (unless justified by an immediate Iraqi threat to U.S. security or the security of our allies). A well-designed Marshall Plan-style initiative in the Middle East, dramatically undertaken by the United States in concert with other world powers and appropriate international agencies, has been too long delayed.

David J. Steinberg
Alexandria, Va.

The writer worked on the Marshall Plan in Washington and London.

Joseph A. Cari, Jr., falls into the same trap that has prevented American policy in the region from being effective. While it seems rather obvious that Palestinian people would prefer a higher standard of living to a lower one, there is no evidence that attaining this higher standard will improve the prospects for peace at all, and much evidence that it would actually increase the level of violence. The Palestinians, and indeed essentially all Arabs and Muslims, reacted very negatively to Shimon Peres's concept of a "new Middle East" in which economic integration between the Arab states and Israel would lead to prosperity for all. Peace with Israel, and integration with it, were seen as too high a cost for prosperity. To this day, there is still propaganda against this concept, much of it coming from Egypt. Palestinians employed in Israel had higher standards of living than many of their brothers who couldn't get such jobs, but that didn't stop them from murdering their employers or even Jews who volunteered to provide transportation for them to their jobs. Note, too, that most of the September 11 hijackers came from solidly middle-class backgrounds.

The only economic step that would lead to a reduction in violence would be the permanent resettlement of Palestinian refugees, but that is guaranteed to lead to more violence because it would deprive "the cause" of a source of troops and imply the abandonment of the Palestinian purpose. Establishment of a Palestinian state, and outside assistance to its economy, in the absence of a firm commitment by the Palestinians to live in peace, will only encourage them to continue their war to destroy Israel. Indeed, it would be hard not to interpret such support as outside *encouragement* for pursuing the destruction of Israel. Establishment of a Palestinian state is a fateful development. If Palestine proves itself unprepared to live in peace next to Israel, what options are available? Could it be occupied? Destroyed? Or would it become a permanent base for terrorists and violence a few hundred meters from Israeli population centers? Failure to ask these questions has led to some major errors in policy.

Yale M. Zussman
Weymouth, Mass.

Findings

Half Full or Half Empty?

Look on the sunny side and you'll breathe easier, according to a new study. After completing a psychological test, 670 Boston men took periodic pulmonary exams over 10 years' time. Optimists had better lung function than pessimists at the beginning, and though both groups worsened with age (everybody does), the gap between them widened. On one measure—the volume of air expelled in a second—the difference between the rate of decline for optimists and that for pessimists was comparable to the difference between smokers and nonsmokers.

Laura Kubzansky of the Harvard School of Public Health and several colleagues report the results in a forthcoming article in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*.

That's not the only health boon associated with a cheery outlook. Optimism also seems to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease in older men, according to a study published last year in *Psychosomatic Medicine* (also cowritten by Kubzansky). Other studies have correlated optimism with immune function resilience and general longevity.

So what's not to like about optimism?

A fair amount, in the view of Wellesley College psychology professor Julie Norem, the author of *The Positive Power of Negative Thinking* (2001). She counsels against trying to make optimists out of “defensive pessimists.” Defensive pessimism—the pattern of setting unrealistically low expectations and then reflecting at length on possible outcomes—turns out to be a means for innately anxious people to alleviate stress. When forced to cheer up, defensive pessimists get more anxious and less effective. Further, Norem reports, anxious college students who rely on defensive

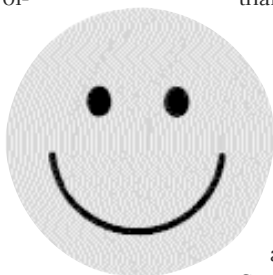
pessimism do better than their anxious classmates who adopt other coping strategies.

Even where optimism does contribute to the individual's mental health, it may leave a gap between confidence and competence. Norem finds that optimists sometimes edit out criticism of themselves—participants in one study “remembered feedback about a social performance as significantly more positive than it actually was, and also thought they had less need to improve their performance than observers perceived they did.”

Norem, collaborating with Edward Chang of the University of Michigan, summarizes the research on defensive pessimism in a forthcoming *Journal of Clinical Psychology* article.

Include Dorothy Parker among the pessimists. According to Stuart Silverstein's *Not Much Fun:*

The Lost Poems of Dorothy Parker (1996), Samuel Goldwyn once ordered her to tack a happy ending onto a script. “I know this will come as a shock to you, Mr. Goldwyn,” she replied, “but in all history, which has held billions and billions of human beings, not a single one ever had a happy ending.”



Lasch's Punctilios

Christopher Lasch was no Merry Sunshine—his best-selling book was *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (1978), credited with influencing Jimmy Carter's “malaise” speech—but some forms of decline he could not abide. When the rudiments of English composition seemed to elude his graduate students at the University of Rochester, he assigned William Strunk and E. B. White's *Elements of Style* and George Orwell's “Politics and the English Language,” and administered pop quizzes. The same errors kept popping up—misplaced apostro-

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phes, missing hyphens, misused words—so Lasch wrote a brief usage guide of his own in the mid-1980s. Ever since, the Rochester history department has photocopied the booklet and distributed it to students.

Lasch's "least expected and least known but perhaps most serviceable work," in the words of editor Stewart Weaver, is now in print. *Plain Style: A Guide to Written English* is concise, opinionated, unyielding, and agreeably idiosyncratic. A sampling:

"*Fraught*: Becomes a cliché when used with *difficulty* or, indeed, with most nouns."

"*Interface*: Not to be used as a verb; to be avoided even as a noun."

"*Life style*: The appeal of this tired but now ubiquitous phrase probably lies in its suggestion that life is largely a matter of style. Find something else to say about life."

"*Meaningful*: Usually a meaningless word, as in *meaningful experience*, *meaningful relationship*, *meaningful dialogue*."

"*Problem*: Much overused, and misused as well, as a synonym for any kind of trouble, difficulty, mishap, obstacle, or misfortune—probably in conformity with the national belief that every untoward or unexpected turn of events has a simple solution."

Lasch's death in 1994 deprived us of a great deal, not least his pronouncements on *paradigm*, *proactive*, and *closure*.

Wireless Gossip

Our mothers and our sociologists, respectively, drilled into us that gossip is harmful and that modern technologies tend to fray social bonds. Now, though, the cell phone is helping reconnect people. The tie that truly binds, according to the Social Issues Research Center in Oxford, England, is gossip.

The SIRC study (available at www.sirc.org/publik/gossip.shtml) characterizes gossip as a form of "social grooming" that accounts for two-thirds of all human conversation. The researchers find that "men gossip for just as long and about the same subjects as women, but tend to talk more about themselves. . . . Male and female gossip also sounds different, as women use more animated tones, more detail, and more feedback." Most gossip is

benign: "Only about 5 percent of gossip-time is devoted to criticism and negative evaluation of others—but this 'negative gossip' has clear social benefits in terms of rule-learning and social bonding."

Concludes the study: "The mobile phone, by facilitating therapeutic gossip in an alienating and fragmented modern world, is helping us to cope, adapt, and survive."

By the way, BT Cellnet, a British provider of cell phone services, funded the research.

The Poet and the Press

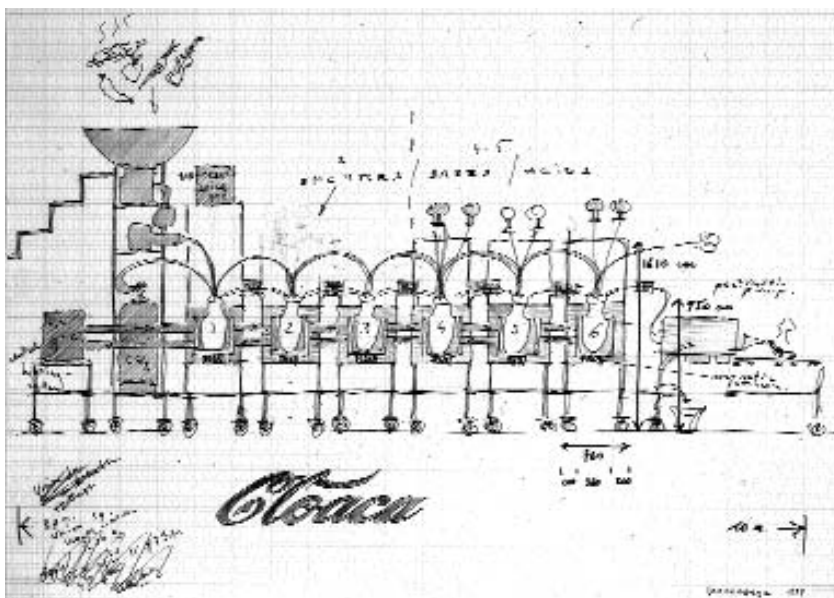
If guests at the *Yale Daily News's* 1941 dinner expected an evening of hosannas to the press, they were disappointed. "Until the year 1933 I never opened a daily paper, and I must confess that for me, Utopia would be a place and time where I no longer felt it my duty to read one," declared the keynote speaker, poet W.H. Auden (his remarks appear in the new installment of his *Complete Works*). Later, he elaborated on the "prodigious" number of facts available to everyone:

"Newspapers, radios, libraries pour over us every moment of our lives their stupendous floods of information so that perhaps the greatest educational problem of today is how to teach people to ignore the irrelevant, how to refuse to know things, before they are suffocated. For too many facts are as bad as none at all. Were I ever to write a volume for that famous How To series, it would be on how not to read more than 1,500 words a day."

Grief Work

It's a cherished tenet of our secular faith: Grief must be aired and shared and validated, not bottled up and left to putrefy.

Researchers, however, are now raising doubts, according to *Science News* (March 2, 2002). One study found that new widows and widowers felt less depressed as time passed regardless of whether they voiced their unhappiness. In another study, widows and widowers assigned to ponder their feelings in a diary coped no better than a control group. Time, not talk, really is the great healer.



Belgian artist Wim Delvoye's design drawing of Cloaca

Art Happens

In the art world, says Hilton Kramer, things are always worse than you suspect. Consider *Cloaca*, a “unique biotechnical installation” displayed early this year at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. Created by Belgian artist Wim Delvoye, *Cloaca* is, at earthy root, a \$200,000 defecating machine. A plateful of food, often from a pricey restaurant, gets “fed” into a garbage disposal at one end, inches through transparent vats of chemicals, and finally emerges as biochemically authentic excrement.

Museumgoers learn that *Cloaca*, with its “computer-monitored enzymes, bacteria, acids, and bases,” subverts the “elitism and preciousness that often accompany art objects in Western culture” and, in the process, forces viewers to confront “abjection as a fundamental part of the human condition.”

Those profundities bring to mind the response of the narrator in Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution* (1954) when an artist elucidates the methods and meanings behind her metal sculptures: “Some of what she said was technical, and you would have had to be a welder to appreciate it; the rest was aesthetic or generally philosophic, and to appreciate it you would have had to be an imbecile.”

Mimicry Happens

Among recent trademark applications: Spit Happens (baby bibs), Zits Happen (acne meds), Scrap Happens (metal recycling), Shift Happens (ergonomic keyboards), and Meatloaf Happens (cookbooks). The folks behind Y2K Happens have let their application lapse.

Bloodshot Eyeshades

A stunner from *Behavioral Research in Accounting* (yes, trees are felled for this journal): Overwork causes stress. “The Effect of the Busy Season Workload on Public Accountants' Job Burnout” reports that “additional hours worked during the busy season caused public accountants' job burnout to escalate to alarmingly high levels,” with subjects reporting “significantly greater emotional exhaustion.”

Backstage

- When Woody Allen, defensive pessimist par excellence, first tried stand-up comedy in the early 1960s, stage fright nearly ended his career. At a Greenwich Village nightclub, his managers once caught him trying to crawl

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out a window just before he was due on stage, according to club manager Paul Colby. Allen's rapport with the audience was nonexistent, too. "He couldn't deliver his material," Colby writes in *The Bitter End*. "He recited it." Before going on stage one evening, Allen tried a quasi-spiritual relaxation exercise with fellow performers. "Woody became very serene, and he started to smile and quiet down," recalls Colby, "and he calmly and peacefully walked out on stage and proceeded to bomb. It was one of the worst shows he ever did. He must have needed that tension to make his act work."

- Why did Tom Lehrer stop performing at the peak of his popularity? "I said what I had to say and shut up," he tells *The Door Magazine* (March–April 2002). A good deal of the interview is devoted to the mathematician-musician's pet peeves: organized religion, comedians who evoke smug applause rather than uncontrollable laughter, and a cautionary announcement often heard on TV: "The following program contains adult content." "They don't mean that," says Lehrer. "They mean adolescent content. Dirty words and sex and stuff like that. Adult content would be like scholarships and wills and retirement plans and putting kids in college and health problems and all that stuff."

Musings of Professor Tuan

"Yi-Fu Tuan may be the most influential scholar you've never heard of," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* declared last year. Tuan, professor emeritus of geography at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, founded "human geography," which seeks to understand the relationships between humans and their environment. But his interests are wide-ranging, as evidenced by his new book *Dear Colleague: Common and Uncommon Observations*. One example:

"A dangerous educational myth in America, convenient to adults who (for one reason or another) wish to shirk their responsibility to teach, is that children learn best from their peers. They do. They learn street smarts and power politics—who is strong and must be deferred to, who is weak and can be exploited. They learn, in other words, what

young chimpanzees learn. They do *not* learn the feeding habits of dinosaurs, the importance of zero in mathematics, why stars sparkle, and why it is more blessed to give than to receive. They do not learn how to be distinctly—uniquely—human."

The Old School Noose

It's said that the fights in academe are so bitter because the stakes are so small. But sometimes the stakes matter. Consider the case of historian Andrea Hamilton, author of a seemingly uncontroversial study of Baltimore's Bryn Mawr School. Like its more famous sister college, the school was established in the 1880s to provide young women with a "male" education—a radical notion in those days. When Hamilton decided to write her doctoral dissertation on the school, Bryn Mawr happily opened its archives to her. A university press later agreed to publish her work.

Everyone seemed delighted, according to news accounts, right up to the moment former headmistress Barbara Landis Chase, now head of the Phillips Academy, read the manuscript. Suddenly Bryn Mawr declared that Hamilton would not be allowed to publish material from its archives. What caused the turnabout has never been fully explained, though *The Baltimore Sun* notes that Hamilton's generally positive outlook on the school is tempered by her view that it "evolved into an institution of the establishment" and quietly abandoned some of its earlier ideals about the education of women. Whatever the reason, the book was dead in the water and Hamilton, a part-time instructor at Southern Methodist University, faced a career-threatening crisis.

Then reporters at the *Sun* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* took an interest in the story, setting off a flood of criticism, including a letter of protest signed by 140 historians. In May, two years after its first turnabout, the school reversed itself again. Hamilton's book will, eventually, be published.

Ironically, it was under Chase that Bryn Mawr embraced psychologist Carol Gilligan's belief that women have a "different voice," and are guided by an "ethic of care" in resolving collective issues.

Where Does Europe End?

Throughout its history, Ukraine has straddled the border between East and West. Now, barely a decade after breaking away from the crumbling Soviet Union, it is leaning strongly toward Europe. But Europe is wary.

by Nancy Popson

Even the tiniest of the 33 parties competing in Ukraine's parliamentary elections this past spring boasted all the ephemera of the modern American-style political campaign, from catchy logos to slick television ads. A few members of Ukraine's burgeoning homegrown public relations elite snatched some of the business from even the dominant Russian and Western imagemakers. One 30-second television spot perfectly distilled the choices facing Ukrainians. It opened with a black-and-white animated line drawing of an old train filled with elderly people. The passengers sit tiredly in the compartments, dressed in peasant garb that hangs loosely on their sturdy frames. Their faces are gaunt. The train moves slowly, and the viewer soon sees that the tracks lead to a cliff, where the rails are mangled and broken. The scene then changes to a color animation of a modern high-speed train filled with young people enjoying themselves. The passengers—good-looking, thin, happy—are dressed in European-style clothes. The spot ends with the declaration that it is time for a new generation to take the reins of power in Ukraine.

The ad failed to win the New Generation Party a single seat in the Rada, or parliament, but it put the choices clearly: What kind of train will Ukraine be, and in which direction will it head?

These are questions that Ukrainians have been trying to answer for hundreds of years. Since the 15th century, Ukrainian leaders have struggled to carve out a space for themselves between East and West, between Russia (and later the Soviet Union) to the east and a succession of other powers to the west—Lithuania, Poland, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and now the European Union (EU). Ukraine's very name means "borderland."

Twice before in the 11 years since the country achieved its independence from the Soviet Union, voters gave a relatively clear answer to the question of the nation's future, saying, in effect, *ni dyakuyu* (no thanks) to a distinctly Western orientation. Awarding the Communist Party of Ukraine the most seats in the Rada, they chose to pursue a glacial pace of reform and to maintain very close ties with Russia. But on March 31, Ukrainians chose a somewhat different course.

This time, the Communists came in second in the party-list contest. A plurality of seats in the new parliament will be held by groups that back either President Leonid Kuchma, a canny ex-apparatchik and self-proclaimed reformer, or some dozen economic oligarchs who, for the most part, support him. These groups are generally pro-Western. Far more signifi-

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cantly, for the first time in Ukraine's brief democratic history, voters put a notable pro-reform opposition in parliament. The top vote-getter in the party-list contest was Our Ukraine, a bloc led by the 48-year-old former prime minister Viktor Yushchenko. It was joined by the reform-minded Bloc for Julia Tymoshenko, led by the charismatic former vice prime minister for energy issues, and Oleksandr Moroz's Socialist Party. Together, the three blocs, which run from the center-right to the center-left, control about one-third of the seats in parliament. (The exact balance of power is difficult to determine, because only half the 450 deputies are selected in the national party-list vote, while half come from single-member districts where the party identities and loyalties of those elected are often unclear.) If these three blocs are able to work together and attract unaffiliated deputies, they may be able to nudge the Ukrainian train toward higher speeds and, working with the pro-presidential forces, in a distinctly westward direction. A few weeks after the election, the presidentially appointed foreign minister, Anatoliy Zlenko, declared, "Ukraine chooses the union it prefers. This is the EU."

The West, however, may not choose Ukraine.

For generations, it was said derisively that "Europe ends at the Pyrenees." Now it appears that Europe's leaders may be drawing another line across the landscape. They have met Ukraine's inquiries about eventual membership in the EU with studied cool. The EU is already preoccupied with plans for an enlargement that could boost membership from the current 15 countries to 27 by the end of the decade, including four of Ukraine's western neighbors—Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania. Ukraine's appeal to the Europeans is further limited by political and economic institutions (especially its legal system) that fall far short of European standards. Perhaps just as damning in the EU's eyes is the fact that Ukraine's main

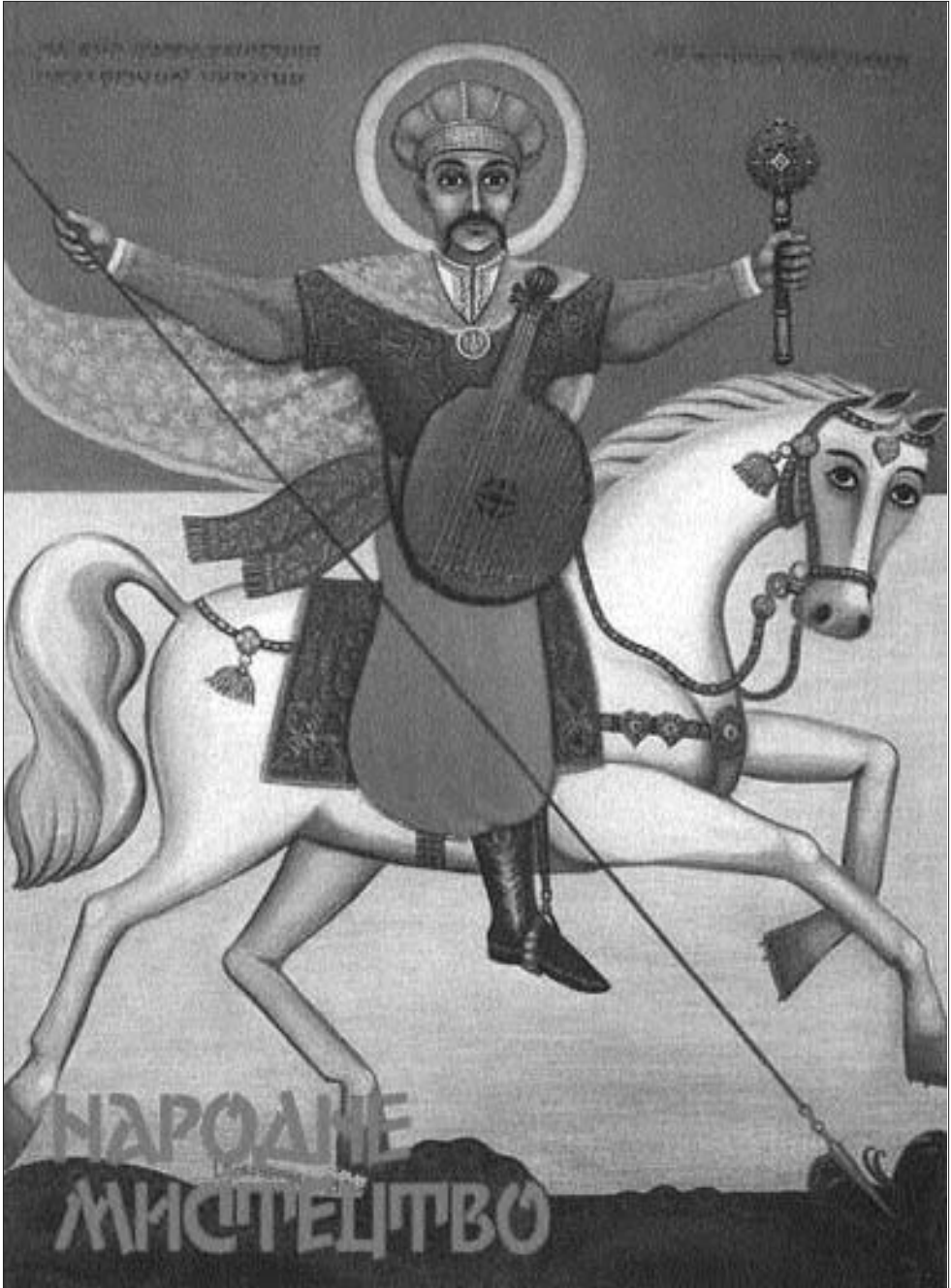
exports are items already overproduced by important EU countries, notably farm products and steel. European officials encourage Ukrainian cooperation and compliance with European legal, democratic, and economic standards, but despite regular entreaties from Kyiv, they refuse to speculate about a schedule for Ukraine's accession to the EU.

As if the cold shoulder were not bad enough, the EU's expansion is likely to measurably harm Ukraine. Because EU rules require members to tighten visa requirements for visitors from non-EU countries, Ukrainians will have difficulty crossing borders into Poland and other countries where they have prospered as traders, and where many have relatives. The border could become, in effect, a new cliff lying in front of the Ukrainian train.

The past decade has not been kind to Ukraine's dreams. When the country declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and later agreed to give up the hundreds of formerly Soviet nuclear weapons on its soil, many observers thought it would quickly become a success story. Larger than any country in the EU and with a population of almost 50 million, Ukraine has abundant natural resources. Its "black soil" farmland made it the breadbasket of the Soviet Union. It contains major industries, concentrated in the east, and like other former Soviet republics it boasts a highly educated population. The eastern city of Kharkiv alone is home to more than 25 universities.

But the reality has fallen dismayingly short of expectations, thanks largely to the Communists' power in parliament. The country's official gross domestic product (GDP) shrank more than 60 percent in the first nine years of independence (though the large, unofficial shadow economy cushioned the fall). Privatization, especially land reform, progressed slowly. The transformation of Ukraine's large collective farms into joint stock companies, peasant associations, cooperatives, and the like has been completed, yet little has really changed. Smaller private

>NANCY POPSON is deputy director of the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute. Copyright © 2002 by Nancy Popson.



Ukraine's separation from the Soviet Union in 1991 rekindled national pride. Ivan Novobranets's icon-like painting from that year evokes the Cossacks and other glories of the Ukrainian past.

farms remain rare. Ukraine's GDP per capita was only \$3,850 (in purchasing-power parity) in 2000—about the same as El Salvador's. According to a 1999 U.S. government estimate, 50 percent of the population lives in poverty. Many workers are paid intermittently, if at all.

The electoral success of Our Ukraine

owes much to Viktor Yushchenko's engineering of a significant economic turnaround during his stint as prime minister, from 1999 to 2001. Yushchenko insisted on transparency in economic transactions, particularly in the energy industry, where barter and the process of holding long-term debts on official books (in the full knowledge

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that the government would bail out enterprises in dire straits) had become common practice. Government budgets were kept in check. Ukraine worked closely with the International Monetary Fund, securing credit and implementing IMF-mandated reforms. But many of these changes hurt the interests of the country's dozen or so powerful economic oligarchs, and in April 2001, just as the economy was beginning to pick up, the oligarchs and Communists in the Rada dumped Yushchenko's government in a vote of no-confidence.

While Ukraine struggled economically, its democratic development took an encouraging path, at least through the 1990s. Parliamentary and presidential elections were considered free and fair. A new constitution, ratified in 1996, provides for both a strong president and a vigorous parliament. (Some observers argue that the difficulty of pushing economic reforms through the strengthened Rada is a testament to the strength of the new constitutional system.) And unlike in Russia, the president has not resorted to tanks and mortar shells to mold the parliament to his wishes.

But more recent developments have been less encouraging. In April 2000, a Kuchma-backed national referendum on proposals that would give the president much greater power over parliament won the approval, according to the official tally, of more than 80 percent of the voters. But there were widespread reports of fraud and other irregularities, and the Rada has refused to implement the measures. An even more ominous sign came with the release in November 2000 of audiotapes allegedly made in Kuchma's inner office. The tapes—whose authenticity has not been established—include excerpts of conversations between Kuchma and his aides that cast doubt on the legitimacy of the voting in the 1999 presidential election and the 2000 referendum. Other conversations allegedly document Kuchma's approval of the sale to Iraq of advanced air defense systems capable of detecting stealth bombers. They also suggest that Kuchma or his highest aides were involved

in the disappearance of journalist Hryhoryi Gongadze, an outspoken opponent of the president. An official review of the investigation inspired no confidence in Kuchma's government. When Gongadze's headless body was found in a ditch outside Kyiv, his hands and torso marred by acid, a series of DNA tests by Russian and Ukrainian authorities purportedly showed that the body was not that of the missing man. A Western test proved that it was.

Kuchma soon cracked down on his critics. Julia Tymoshenko was jailed in February 2001 on corruption charges, which raised eyebrows not so much because the charges were implausible—few Ukrainian politicians could pass Western tests of political hygiene—but because of the timing. After spending six weeks in jail, Tymoshenko was released for lack of evidence by a Kyiv court. Two months later, Kuchma supported parliament's dismissal of then-prime minister Yushchenko, a potential rival.

The elections in March 2002 probably put an end to Kuchma's hopes of implementing the referendum measures, but he remains a powerful force, especially with the uncertain balance of power in the Rada. There is no guarantee that Kuchma will not take advantage of future divisions to strengthen his presidential powers and challenge the legislation that bars him from seeking a third term in the 2004 election.

To a certain extent, Ukraine's political divisions reflect the deep cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences that even a casual visitor can see etched in the country's landscape. It requires only a short drive from the Polish border to reach the regional capital of L'viv, a city of picturesque cobblestone streets whose life revolves around its grand old opera house and the tree-lined pedestrian park that lies before it. The rolling countryside is dotted with crumbling palaces of the Austro-Hungarian elite and farms that would look at home in Île-de-France. But some 500 miles to the east, the city of Kharkiv offers a blunt contrast, its grandiose boulevards lined with monumental buildings in the

Stalinist and post-Stalinist style and a vast central square—one of the largest in Europe—still dominated by an imposing statue of Lenin.

Almost in the middle of the country's east-west axis, appropriately enough, sits the capital city of Kyiv. It is no Moscow—life moves a bit more slowly here, skyscrapers are nowhere to be seen, and the streetscape is muted by many trees and parks. Kyiv too has kept its monument to Lenin, and a hulking metal statue of a redoubtable female comrade defending the city with upraised sword (called the “Baba” by locals) dominates the view of its bluffs from the river below. Yet the real center of the city is at Independence Square, the site of a substantial underground shopping mall and a monument to independence, which, in an ambiguous testament to the country's modernizing impulses, occupy space once graced by an array of European-style fountains.

Ukraine's oldest ties are to Russia. Both countries trace their origins to a single ancient society, Kyivan Rus, and its capital, Kyiv. The Orthodox religious tradition dates back to Kyivan Rus's acceptance of Christianity in the 10th century, and the

modern Russian and Ukrainian languages both descend from old church Slavonic.

For centuries after the collapse of Kyivan Rus in a 13th-century Mongol invasion, the territory that is now Ukraine was divided. The western principalities found themselves under Lithuanian and later Polish rule, while those to the east fell under what would become the Russian Empire. After World War II the Soviet Union reunited the regions, and in 1954 it transferred Crimea, which had been an autonomous republic within the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic since 1921, to Ukraine.

While eastern areas of Ukraine have more deeply rooted ties to Russia, decades of Soviet rule strengthened the entire country's web of connections to its former master. After World War II, the Soviets forcibly resettled most of Ukraine's Poles and Hungarians, leaving a population that was 73 percent Ukrainian and 22 percent ethnic Russian, according to the last Soviet census. Russians form a majority in the Crimea, and they are especially numerous in other areas that were part of the Russian Empire. Then there is a linguistic split, which follows slightly different lines from the ethnic divide. Because Russian was the language of social mobility during the Soviet period,



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many ethnic Ukrainians—especially in the cities in the south and east—are more comfortable speaking Russian than Ukrainian. However, the two languages remain mutually intelligible, at least to people raised in the bilingual atmosphere of Ukraine.

Culturally, Ukraine straddles the divide that defines what political scientist Samuel Huntington famously called “the clash of civilizations.” More than 97 percent of its religious congregations are Christian, but most are Orthodox and trace their history to Kyivan Rus. More “Western” strands of Christian faith are also

strong, notably the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the west and the Roman Catholic Church in the central part of the country. Some of the country’s cultural-religious fault lines were exposed last summer when Pope John Paul II’s visit to Ukraine stirred protests by Orthodox leaders who were alarmed by alleged Latin-rite encroachments on their turf. However, the Orthodox believers themselves are not united. Most of the Orthodox communities remain loyal to the patriarch in Moscow, but many now proclaim their allegiance to an independent Ukrainian patriarch in Kyiv or to the smaller Autocephalous (independent) Orthodox Church.

Ukraine’s history of division and heterogeneity goes a long way toward explaining its post-independence “multivector” foreign policy. Opinion polls show that the public is equally willing to support closer ties with Europe and with Russia, depending on how the question is worded. The voting patterns of the March 31 elections reflected some of these divisions. Opposition candidates fared best in the western regions, while the Communists (who are seen as pro-Russian) did very well in the south and east. This is a somewhat simplistic picture of the cultural-regional divide, but it underlines the difficulty Ukraine—and the new generation in parliament—will have in charting the future.

No such ambiguities hamper Russia. Many Russians cannot understand why



A portrait of President Leonid Kuchma looms over then-prime minister Viktor Yushchenko. The reform-minded Yushchenko, now a parliamentary leader, hopes to succeed his former boss in the 2004 presidential election.

Ukraine wants to be independent, or why Ukrainian patriots choose to emphasize the differences between their close cultures and languages. Russians saw Ukraine's decision to separate from the Soviet Union in 1991 as a pragmatic vote for freedom from communism and for what seemed a rosy economic future, not as a break from the historical relationship between the two countries. While many Ukrainian voters may have shared that view, the first post-communist politicians used their mandate to rebuild the country as an independent nation-state. The sharp focus on nation-building throughout the 1990s led to a pervasive discourse of Ukraine as "other" than Russia. In textbooks and the popular media, Ukrainian history was recast as a long, winding path out of oppression toward the ultimate goal of becoming a united, independent state. While that ideal state is viewed as multicultural and inclusive, it is built on a foundation of Ukrainian ethnic distinctiveness.

All of this is unfathomable to many Russians. The very fact that Kyiv—the historical center of Kyivan Rus, and thus a very strong part of Russian national identity—is now located in another country is baffling to them. Russian business has close connections with Ukrainian factories and mines that were built when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, and Russian nationalists are acutely aware of Ukraine's large Russian-speaking population. Although no official claims have been made, popular Russian politicians such as Moscow's mayor Yuriy Luzhkov often speak of Crimea as rightfully Russian territory. Even the most liberal Russian thinkers cannot conceive of that traditional playground of the tsars and their Soviet successors as part of another state. The Russians maintain a distinctly proprietary demeanor. When a Ukrainian foreign ministry official spoke recently of the country's commitment to EU membership and declared that Ukraine could not simultaneously integrate with the Eurasian Economic Community (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Belarus), the Russian ambassador undiplomatically declared him an "obtuse man"

and reminded Ukrainians that the EU had not issued them any invitations.

Politicians in Kyiv have openly courted Europe. Ukraine has been active in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Partnership for Peace—it recently announced plans to apply for NATO membership—and since 1992 has sent more than 8,000 soldiers to serve in the former Yugoslavia under the United Nations flag. And Ukraine's western regions cooperate with their Central European neighbors in regional economic and environmental initiatives such as the Carpathian Euroregion.

This is not to say that Ukrainian politicians are anti-Russian. Russia is the country's biggest trading partner and a vital source of oil and gas. The two countries are bound by strong cultural, linguistic, and familial ties. Ukrainians may savor their political independence, but the prospect of severing all links is something few can imagine.

Which way will the Ukrainian train go? While the majority of the Rada's deputies now look to Europe as Ukraine's future partner, the tracks leading toward Russia, though fraught with perils for Ukrainian independence, remain alluringly open. Ukraine's leaders are likely to turn back to brother Russia if faced with too many obstacles on the track to Europe.

With Ukraine occupying an important position on the new frontier between "the West and the rest," the country's domestic political squabbles and shifting coalitions take on far more international importance than they otherwise might. A Ukraine that embraced Western standards of law, business, and politics would be in a position to enhance European stability, either within a larger Europe or as a strong, democratic, economically stable neighboring state. Ukraine needs the support of the international community if it is to move in that direction. Building more restricted borders between Ukraine and Europe will only weaken the reform impulse and strengthen Russia's influence, leaving a frontier that in the future could require far more attentive guarding. □

Snobbus Americanus

American democracy is a fine soil for growing the great oaks of freedom and opportunity, but that same rich earth has also been especially accommodating to the rank weed of snobbery. There's no aristocracy of birth to keep Americans in their place. Envy and scorn send them up—and down—in the society.

by Joseph Epstein

William Makepeace Thackeray, in his *Book of Snobs*, reports that “first, the World was made, then, as a matter of course, Snobs.” Yet it is not altogether certain that this is true. One hears little about snobbery before the 18th century, and scarcely anything at all about it then. The Snob, one would think, would be a staple figure in Restoration comedy, but not so. Neither are there any snobs in Shakespeare, Dante, Aristophanes, or the Bible. Not that there isn't plenty of truckling to superiors, parasitism, heavy-handed flattery, back scratching and bottom kissing, all calculated to bring special advantages to its purveyors. Pretension, too, has never been in short supply. We see much pretension that veers on the snobbish in the plays of Molière. The painter Benjamin Robert Haydon, friend to Wordsworth, Keats, Lamb, and Hazlitt, practically swooned when in the company of the highborn. But snobbery as we know it today, snobbery meant to shore up one's own sense of importance and to make others sorely feel their insignificance, was not yet up and running in a serious way. It took the spread of democracy to make that possible.

The reason is that, until the 19th cen-

tury, there was a ready acceptance of rank and social position and, accompanying this, an understanding that most people were everlastingly locked in their place. Where social rank is clearly demarcated, as it is when a nobility and a gentry are present, jockeying for position of the kind that is at the heart of snobbery tends to play a less than strong part in daily life; nor is it quite so central in the interior dramas of men and women whose hearts are set on rising in the world.

Snobbery thrives where society is most open. It does particularly well under democracy, even though, theoretically, it is anathema to the democratic spirit. Snobbery is, wrote the political philosopher Judith N. Shklar in *Ordinary Vices*, “a repudiation of every democratic value.” The social fluidity that democracy makes possible, allowing people to climb from the bottom to the top of the ladder of social class in a generation or two, provides a fine breeding ground for snobbery and gives much room to exercise condescension, haughtiness, affectation, false deference, and other egregious behavior so congenial to the snob.

The unavoidable Alexis de Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America*, reminds his



readers that “democratic institutions most successfully develop sentiments of envy in the human heart.” He also remarks that in America he “found [that] the democratic sentiment of envy was expressed in a thousand different ways.” In a democracy, there are so many ways of rising in society: through the acquisition of money, through marriage, even through, *mirabile dictu*, merit. But such is the spirit behind democracy that no one really believes that, apart from innate talent, anyone is intrinsically better than anyone else, and especially that no one is better than oneself; therefore, any difference in social status between one person and another is taken to constitute an injustice of a

kind—and one that can be remedied and rectified by careful plans. From the early Henry James (*Daisy Miller*) to Edith Wharton (*The Custom of the Country*) to Theodore Dreiser (*An American Tragedy*) to F. Scott Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*), some of the best 19th- and early-20th-century American novels are about attempts to carry such plans to fruition. The attempt to rise in American democracy may be the primary, the central, the essential American story.

One finds touches of snobbery in our nation’s early history. John Adams must have felt he was scoring heavily when he called Alexander Hamilton

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“the bastard brat of a Scotch pedlar,” and the tragic rivalry between Hamilton and Aaron Burr has always seemed to have about it a social-class tinge. But for the most part, the Founding Fathers felt that honor was more important than social position. If one wished to sink a man, the best way to do it was to attack not his birth or manners but his reputation. “Probably nothing separates the traditional world of the Founding Fathers from today,” the historian Gordon S. Wood has written, “more than its concern with honor. Honor was the value genteel society placed on a gentleman and the value a gentleman placed on himself. . . . Honor subsumed self-esteem, pride, and dignity, and was akin to glory and fame.”

Little snobberies existed even in this rarefied atmosphere. Some American families considered themselves aristocratic; some states felt more highly placed than others—the gentry of Virginia and Maryland, for example, early took on aristocratic pretensions. The phenomenon of avowed descent from *Mayflower* passengers—that is, of claiming status through precedence—was part of the mythos of the American founding. As late as the last half of the 19th century, this was continued by such organizations as the Daughters of the American Revolution. But whereas the DAR, as it was then known, once carried some punch in its disapproval, its current-day existence seems largely a joke.

Snobbishness, Marcel Proust noted, implies that there are people to whom one feels oneself inferior. In democratic America, where everyone was thought to be created equal, this became a dubious proposition—at least officially, if not realistically. In a country with so brief a history, no one could say, as Aimery de La Rochefoucauld is supposed to have said when refusing to invite a family to his home, that “they had no position in the year 1000.” Snobbery therefore became identified with pretension—the snobs were those who pretended to be above the

ruck. Yet in the new America, this did not mean that great numbers of people did not wish to rise as high as possible. Thank goodness the law of contradiction has never been enforced in social life, for the jails would overflow.

Elsewhere in the world the social system was fixed because of the stability of a class system, with aristocracy at its top, a substantial peasantry below, a thinnish middle class between. Samuel Johnson felt that “subordination is very necessary for society, and contentions for superiority very dangerous.” A firmly locked-in social system, with little mobility either upward or downward, can be the best stifler of snobbery.

By the time the United States was founded, the first tremors of the forthcoming collapse of aristocracy were being felt. The French Revolution, in 1789, provided more than tremors. Tocqueville, himself of an aristocratic family, knew the game was up well before his visit to our shores in 1831. Behind the writing of *Democracy in America* was the fear that then-rising equality would destroy liberty. He never mentions snobbery in his book, but he is unlikely to have been surprised by the fact that the spirit of equality could only excite the behavior that goes into the making of the snob. Let us add to these the underbelly emotions of uncertainty, uneasiness, and a worrisome self-consciousness about one’s true status that bedevil all snobs.

In public life, a political candidate could be attacked on what were essentially snobbish grounds. Even so cultivated a gent (as he now seems) as Thomas Jefferson took a number of hits about his wardrobe, his grooming, his too easy manners. Andrew Jackson was called by his opponents “the Tennessee barbarian,” and his poor spelling was mocked. Abraham Lincoln, progenitor of the main American myth—that in the United States one can go from a log cabin to the White House—was put down in his day by *The New York*

>JOSEPH EPSTEIN, a lecturer in English and writing at Northwestern University, was editor of *The American Scholar* from 1975 to 1997. This essay is adapted from *Snobbery: The American Version*, by Joseph Epstein. Copyright © 2002 by Joseph Epstein. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

Herald as “a fourth-class lecturer who can’t speak good grammar.” Henry Adams, the consummate American snob, devoted an entire novel, *Democracy*, to excoriating the coarseness of American senators, and in that novel, after setting out their low principles, called political corruption “the dance of democracy.” Adams’s friend Henry James wrote a story, “Pandora,” with characters modeled on Adams and his wife, who are planning a party and in which the Adams character remarks, “Hang it, there’s only a month left; let us be vulgar and have some fun—let us invite the President!”

Perhaps there is something fraudulent about democracy, not as a method of conducting politics but as a social arrangement. In America, this was highlighted by the predominantly middle-class makeup of the country. Vague and wide-ranging though the term *middle class* may be, it does render anyone who is part of this stratum capable of, if not intrinsically susceptible to, snobbery in both directions. To be middle class positions one nicely to be both an upward- and a downward-looking snob, full, simultaneously, of aspiration to rise to the position of those above and of disdain for those below.

H. L. Mencken makes this same point, possibly with more glee than is absolutely required, but then his prose glands were always stimulated by the contemplation of what he liked to refer to as Boobus Americanus. In an essay he titled “The Pushful American,” Mencken, along with George Jean Nathan (though the voice of the essay is dominantly Mencken’s), claimed that Americans are distinguished above all by their desire to climb socially. But this appetite for the climb was strongly hedged by a fear of slipping and losing one’s original place.

Mencken’s larger point is that socially the American is on a perpetually icy slope, wanting to climb “a notch or two” but “with no wall of caste . . . to protect him if he slips.” He wrote: “Such a thing as a secure position is practically unknown to us.” Without a true aristocracy, with full

titles and the rest of it, he argued, no American is ever securely lodged. (Tocqueville wrote that “in no country of the world are private fortunes more unstable than in the United States.”) With a title—especially a title handed down to one and handed down in turn to one’s children—one can act the utter rascal or rogue without worry about losing one’s place; one can be drunk, stupid, immoral, with insane politics, but one is still an earl, marquis, count, grandee: a status that cannot be taken away. Lacking a true aristocracy, what we have had, Mencken contends, are cities “full of brummagem aristocrats” who have turned out to be little more than plutocrats aping aristocratic behavior. Instead of a settled society, Americans have a regular rhythm of rise and fall. “The grandfather of the Vanderbilts,” Mencken writes, “was a bounder; the last of the Washingtons is a petty employee in the Library of Congress.”

Americans attempting the social climb Mencken found pitiful, and the group at the top contemptible, with its “shameless self-assertion, its almost obscene display of its importance and of the shadowy privileges and acceptance on which that importance is based.” These arrangements gave way to an almost inevitable snobbery—though Mencken, too, doesn’t use the word—with those who may be said to have arrived anxious to keep down the newcomer, and the newcomer ready to abase himself, to “sacrifice his self-respect today in order to gain the hope of destroying the self-respect of other aspirants tomorrow.”

Mencken’s description of American life, with every city having its own upper-caste groups, with various undergroups plotting to slip past the gates to enter a social Valhalla of sorts, is now so badly dated as to be quite without reality. But where Mencken wasn’t wrong was in noting that democracy “is always inventing class distinctions, despite its theoretical abhorrence of them.” The Ins and Outs, especially in recent years, change with considerable rapidity. Capital-S Society,

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which once stood for *le gratin*, the upper crust, in every modest-sized town and above all in New York City—where such groups existed as Ward McAllister’s Four Hundred, the number of people who could fit into Mrs. Astor’s private ballroom—and which once dominated American social snobbery, is all but finished. This was Society of the society page, where the cotillions, debutante balls, marriages, and other doings of the putative upper class were reported on regularly, generally in a tone of gushing admiration. No one knows who killed Society, or even the date of its death, but one can fix the demise around the time the Society pages were banished from the newspapers, to be replaced by the “style” sections, which began to happen in the 1960s.

The disappearance of a formal, structured Society didn’t mean the end of snobbery, for social envy continued unabated, only becoming more amorphous and turning on things other than birth or wealth alone. “A degree of proximity is required between two classes to make possible envy of the upper by the lower,” the sociologist Robert Nisbet wrote, adding: “This is why envy proliferates during periods or in societies where equality has come to dominate other values.” Nisbet felt that the American competition for “status becomes in its own way as tyrannical as anything before it.” Making roughly the same point, the English journalist Malcolm Muggeridge reported that, at lunch with the editor of *Burke’s Peerage*, he was told of the great interest in titled Englishmen among Americans. “I said that, inevitably, the more egalitarian a society became, the more snobbish.”

While Society was still running strong in America, there was much copying of the English aristocracy, in the naming of suburbs, schools, housing developments, even children. In no other country was the ennobling suffix, usually awarded only to kings and popes, sometimes added to names, resulting in J. Bryan III, or Daniel

Thomas V. Americans, for all their official allegiance to the notion of democracy, seemed to long for an aristocracy. If a full-blown aristocracy could not be brought off, then something resembling a patriciate was thought acceptable.

The ultimate effort in this direction, which is not over yet, is the attempt on the part of many Americans to render the Kennedy family our patriciate. The assassination of John F. Kennedy aided this effort immensely. Panegyrists there have been in plenty to stoke and keep the sacred flame. But too much scandal elsewhere in the family—including the near-fascism and anti-Semitism of the Founding Father, as Joseph Kennedy, Sr., came to be known—and the serious want of talent among Kennedy descendants have made it difficult to sustain. Even now the desire refuses to be quite extinguished, as witness the good-night-sweet-prince press treatment of the sad accidental death of the son of Jack Kennedy. Not even Ted Kennedy, a bloated Falstaffian figure without any of the winning humor, can put it to sleep.

Perhaps the most striking evidence of this is the mythical aura that arose around Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis, or Jackie O, in the grocery-press and fashion-magazine styling of her name. Here was a woman of modest attainments, who put up with a frightful amount from her philandering husband and supplied a veneer of culture over his presidency, but whose personal motto, finally, might have been—what the hell, let’s Frenchify it—*Je vais pour l’argent*: I go for the money. One cannot say that she longed for the role, yet she became our older, longer-suffering Princess Diana. Not through any intrinsic merits but chiefly because of her connection to the Kennedys she became, in that thinnest of over- and misused words, an icon. (In the one joke I have ever heard attributed to Mao Zedong, the Chinese leader is supposed to have said, “If Aristotle Onassis was interested in power, I wonder why he didn’t propose to the widow of Nikita Khrushchev.”)

Even as Americans may long for a patriariate, a royal family even, we hate what seem to us distinctions of rank not based on merit. The only time I ever encountered such arrangements was in the peacetime U.S. Army, where the officer class did not seem to me to earn its privileges. (Only a handful of sergeants, most of them black, impressed me as truly able men.) Many of the officers I had to do with were ROTC trained and seemed dullish, undeserving of the deference that was theirs by right of rank. Not that I rebelled. In my dealings with them, I merely fell back on what I took to be my intrinsic superiority, reminding myself that they may be majors or colonels in a military setting, but outside this setting, in the larger world in which I planned to act, they were corporals at best. If this was the snob in me reacting to what I took to be an undeserving hierarchy, it was, I now think, even more an almost purely American reaction.

Perhaps Americans in their democracy were especially prone to snobbery because they felt themselves so snobbishly judged by Europeans. Right out of the gate, it was Old World versus New, with the New World having little going for it besides a certain raw energy. When Mrs. Frances Trollope, the mother of the novelist, arrived here in 1827 to report on the “domestic manners of the Americans”—eventually the title of her once-famous book on America—she had almost nothing good, and plenty dreary, to say about her subject. Of Americans generally, and American soldiers in particular, she wrote: “I do not like them. I do not like their principles, I do not like their manners, I do not like their opinions.” Here she is on Americans at table:

The total want of all the usual courtesies of the table, the voracious rapidity with which the viands were seized and devoured, the strange uncouth phrases and pronunciation; the loathsome spitting, from the contamination of which it was absolutely impossible to protect our dresses; the frightful manner of feeding with their

knives, till the whole blade seemed to enter into the mouth; and the still more frightful manner of cleaning the teeth afterwards with a pocket knife, soon forced us to feel that we were not surrounded by the generals, colonels, and majors of the old world; and that the dinner hour was to be anything rather than the hour of enjoyment.

Lots more of the same issued from Europeans during the 19th century and well into the 20th. Charles Dickens, in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, devoted the better part of a thickish novel to attacking American manners and mores. The main charge of Europe against America was coarseness and vulgarity. With the exception of Tocqueville, whose criticisms were not so superficial and whose admirations were genuine, scarcely any Frenchman missed taking a shot at American life when the opportunity was presented. The Germans were not more charitable. But the English were the most relentless of all in this line, allowing no one, but no one, to get off. Here is Virginia Woolf, in her diary for September 12, 1921, complaining about Henry James’s *The Wings of the Dove*: “Not a flabby or slack sentence, but much emasculated by this timidity or consciousness or whatever it is. Very highly American, I conjecture, in the determination to be highly bred, and the slight obtuseness as to what high breeding is.”

This of Henry James, the man who T. S. Eliot said achieved the status of being a complete European but of no known country. James himself reminded Americans not to be cowed by Europe. But rather than fight it, many Americans, especially those with high social and cultural aspirations, chose to join it. They decided to view themselves outside European social condemnation and to turn essentially the same criticisms on their compatriots, thus beginning a chain of snobbery that, from the top down, would never quite end, even in our own day, when its patent absurdity ought to disqualify it straightaway. □

The Lost Prophet of Architecture

Few thinkers are more difficult to categorize than architect Christopher Alexander. Is he a visionary genius of the built world? An intolerant utopian? A New Age Martha Stewart for narcissists? Or all of the above?

by Wendy Kohn

Christopher Alexander believes he has the answer to one of the supreme challenges of human existence: How do we create beauty? Once the province of artists and architects, the question has become one of the great democratic conundrums, engaging more and more people as affluence, education, and leisure breed discontent with the ugliness of suburban sprawl, dysfunctional cities, and soulless houses and office buildings. In large numbers, city dwellers and suburbanites alike have been following Alexander, and this vast audience thinks he is on to something.

His fame rests on *A Pattern Language*—a book that appeared 25 years ago—and a stream of subsequent writings. Translated into six languages and often one of the 1,000 top-selling titles on *Amazon.com*, *A Pattern Language* is among the most widely read architectural books of all time, and is commonly called a design “bible.” When it appeared in 1977, *Architectural Design* magazine declared that “every library, every school, every environmental action group, every architect, and every first-year student should have a copy.” Today, it has legions of devotees, some of whom simply value its practical advice, while others savor its New Age speculations. The enthusiasts include yuppies fixing up their country houses in

Vermont, gray-haired do-it-yourselfers in comfortable shoes, and ponytailed counter-culturalists. Real-estate agents proudly present copies to their clients once the deal is done and renovations are about to begin.

Alexander’s ideas have also influenced fields far beyond architecture, from poetry to organizational management, but nowhere have they been of more consequence recently than in the world of computer software design. In the late 1980s, a few leading software engineers started using Alexander’s definition of *pattern* (a three-part rule, which expresses a relation between a certain context, a problem, and a solution) as a blueprint for analyzing computer routines and sharing successful design patterns. He is said to have influenced Herbert Simon and other early



Alexander at home: a surprising intersection of theory and practice

giants of computer science, and today labs at AT&T, Motorola, and Siemens use his ideas to train their designers, document ideas, and write new software. Techies avidly discuss Alexander's oeuvre on the Web.

Yet Alexander's own colleagues in the American architectural establishment will have nothing to do with him. After warmly embracing Alexander early in his career, his most natural audience has effectively air-brushed him out of its current canon. In the past 15 years, few undergraduate or graduate architecture programs have included *A Pattern Language*—or any of his other writings—in their syllabuses, and even those architects who have been influenced by his ideas are rarely willing to say so out loud. His critics dismiss him as a utopian, a messianic crank, and a contrarian who produces words instead of buildings. Although Alexander speaks with deep insight about some of the central questions of our lives, the gap between popular enthusiasm and professional antipathy for him is likely to widen over the next several months with the publication of his new

four-volume opus, *The Nature of Order: An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe*.



The son of two archaeologists, Alexander was born in Vienna in 1936 and raised in England. His soft voice still bears the traces of his Sussex upbringing, and he is almost self-effacingly polite. He graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge University, in 1958 with degrees in mathematics and architecture. He dismisses his architectural training; he “learnt nothing, thought it was absurd.” But he went on to pursue a Ph.D. in architecture at Harvard University, and wrote a dissertation in which he attempted to introduce mathematics into architecture. Published as *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* in 1964, it received, in 1972, the first Gold Medal for research ever given by the American Institute of Architects.

Alexander observed in *Notes* that the typical design project faced by practitioners in



the building boom after World War II was becoming ever larger and more complex, and the results ever less satisfactory. Other architects responded that big problems simply required big architecture—ambitious innovations and entirely new mechanical solutions, such as people movers and prefabricated modular rooms. For Alexander, the problem was the architectural profession itself: Because architects avoided quantifying or rationalizing the way they made decisions, there was no standard by which to judge whether their buildings were successful. Instead of placing a traditional big bold entrance right on the street, for example, an architect designing an office building might disguise its main entrance by blending it into a glassy, repetitive structure. The decision would be defended as artistic inspiration, and people decades hence would have to live with an anonymous, disorienting building. Alexander was determined to eliminate uncomfortable designs that he saw as mere flights of artistic fancy.

Diagrams were the answer he proposed. After enumerating each of the requirements of a project—the need for southern light in a garden, the need for memorable public squares in a district—the designer would develop a series of diagrams describing the interrelationships among them. Then, in a spectacular high-tech twist (at least for 1964), the resulting algorithms would be fed into a computer for analysis. The product would be a kind of schematic showing the designer how and where the various parts of the project should fit together. As pure analysis, the idea was brilliant, addressing one of the most time-consuming steps in design.

Even in this early, acclaimed proposal, however, Alexander displayed one of the characteristic inconsistencies that have since come to infuriate his fellow architects: In order to create buildings of true individuality, perfectly suited to their purposes, he proposed to control methodically the individuality of their designers. Yet even as architects acknowledged the usefulness of his tool, Alexander himself began to move beyond it.

Within a decade of the publication of

Notes, he had jettisoned his first theory of design on the grounds that it was too removed from the information anyone could glean from careful, plain observation of his surroundings. From 1963 through 1998, Alexander taught architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, and generated an almost constant flow of words to describe different components of his philosophy. The “complicated and formal” method he had proposed in *Notes* was “unnecessary,” he wrote, because he had realized “you can create, and develop, these diagrams in the most natural way, out of your experience of buildings and design.”

In 1967 Alexander, along with Sara Ishikawa and Murray Silverstein, established the Center for Environmental Structure. Ishikawa and Silverstein joined him, and three others, in writing *A Pattern Language*. Still going strong in the Berkeley hills, the CES is an independent nonprofit that functions as a design firm, a laboratory for testing Alexander’s perceptions, and an intellectual launching pad for his ideas. (He maintains an active website, www.patternlanguage.com.) Nearby is Alexander’s own home, a sunny, informal, 1920s structure adorned with plenty of comfortable chairs and strewn with mementos of his travels around the world.

At the CES, Alexander’s single-minded focus has been on observing the natural and built environments, doggedly logging his observations, and distilling from them consistent underlying rules. Patterns of desirable relationships between windows and walls, entrances and streets, and neighborhoods and entire cities are deduced from his own, his students’, and his CES colleagues’ repeated observations of existing places they love. The best-known product of all this study has been *A Pattern Language*, a kaleidoscopic manual for transforming the world, complete with instructions for effecting the transformation.

The book contains nearly 1,200 pages of text, black-and-white photographs, simple hand-drawn diagrams, and the occasional table of experimental results. It works in conjunction

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Alexander's Eishin School, Tokyo

with a subsequent volume called *The Timeless Way of Building* (1979), which elaborates the philosophy behind the more famous work.

In 253 individual lessons, or “patterns,” *A Pattern Language* shows how to weave together a “language” of patterns to form everything from window seats to cities in ways that satisfy the human need for functionality and beauty. It breaks places down into component parts, such as fronts and backs, stairs and floors and windowsills, or roads and parking lots and stores. It then describes how to make a good rendition of each particular part and how to assemble the parts into a whole. The text speaks directly to “you,” in plain language, about where closets should go in your house (between rooms, on interior walls) and where sports facilities should go in your town (scattered throughout, easily visible from the street). It’s a book of architectural recipes.

Alexander manages, with astounding economy, to provide answers to problems in planning and building faced not only by architects but by anyone planting a garden or trying to make sense of the morning commute. His great skill is to speak plainly where others speak abstractly, to simplify where most of his colleagues perceive, and generate, only complexity.

The scale of what he considers runs from the minuscule (Pattern 201: “Waist-High Shelf”) to the grand (Pattern 16: “Web of Public Transportation”). “Accessible Green” (Pattern 60) gives some sense of the variety: “People need green open places to go; when they are close they use them. But if the greens are more than three minutes away, the distance overwhelms the need.” A logarithm is presented to prove the point: “Simple inspection of these data shows that while the probability measure, *P*, drops in half between one and two blocks. . . .” The solution is to supplement the few large city parks with many small greens, and Alexander and his coauthors provide simple specifications and cross-references to other useful patterns. The whole business requires only five pages. Problem solved.

Alexander’s building-block approach demystifies design by making a building—or a city—understandable as simply the sum of basic parts. What’s particularly engaging to Alexander’s legions of readers outside the architectural profession is that his building blocks are not just bricks and mortar. Children and corner stores and sports and pets are equally elements to be considered in the design mix. A Sunday morning ritual such as reading the paper in a cozy kitchen

nook becomes an essential consideration of good architecture. No wonder this child of the 1960s has been compared to Martha Stewart, “with New Age metaphysics thrown in.”

But Alexander’s New Age notes are not just thrown in. They are an essential, paradoxical, maddening, and sometimes alarming element of his work. Describing the “timeless way of building” in his book of that name, he writes:

It is so powerful and fundamental that with its help you can make any building in the world as beautiful as any place that you have ever seen.

It is so powerful, that with its help hundreds of people together can create a town, which is alive and vibrant, peaceful and relaxed, a town as beautiful as any town in history. (italics in original)

Without the help of architects or planners, if you are working in the timeless way, the idea is that a town will grow under your hands, as naturally as the flowers in your garden.

One of the most apparent of Alexander’s unavoidable contradictions is the deep devotion to romantic visions and utopian principles that exists alongside an equally persistent drive to quantify, prove, and universally pronounce “scientific” bases for his architectural prescriptions, just as Karl Marx labored to provide a scientific basis for his vision of a stateless society. Rigorous experimentation proves that his patterns and methods will work, Alexander insists. His commitment to absolute certainty and his tendency to issue commandments about freedom have earned him a label in some quarters as a New Age totalitarian. At the same time, his repeated claims that he can prove his increasingly metaphysical ideas are undercut by his oracular pronouncements. “When a building works,” he declares, “the space itself awakens. We awaken. The garden awakens. The windows awaken. We and our plants and animals and fellow creatures and the walls and light together wake.”

Where does one begin to argue with that?

Alexander’s patterns have never been truly tested. Some of them (for example, rooms must have windows on at least two sides) are

so well known that they have become almost synonymous with his name, and most appear to make a good deal of sense. (Some, however, such as his thoughts on communal sleeping and bathing arrangements, are badly dated, or at least very culturally specific.) One could easily compile a list of wonderful spaces that violate any number of Alexander’s pronouncements. Even within his beloved Alhambra, some of the most masterful and delicate domed rooms are all the more powerful for the minute amount of daylight entering through a single wall. At the University of Oregon, which hired Alexander as its master planner in the early 1970s, his work has been the basis for new building on the campus since 1974, with good effect. But the California Institute of Technology, another architecturally distinguished campus, has grown successfully over the same period as well—without Alexander’s help.

If you are designing a house, *A Pattern Language* will undoubtedly help suggest all sorts of details to think about. But a creative architect can devise ways to satisfy your particular needs with the kind of individuality and style that Alexander never admits. In promoting his own ideal architecture and its “scientific” basis, he seems to pretend that artistry, invention, and personal style can be excised from the act of architecture. But, of course, his patterns and his examples of their use possess a style of their own: quaint, homey, and tending to the traditional. That style may appear as uncontroversial as family values, but to treat it as universal would be both naive and disingenuous.

What, then, so moves Alexander’s readers—and so clearly makes a contribution to architecture? Given how much of our lives we spend in buildings of one type or another, we are all at least latent experts in architecture, and Alexander makes connections between places and the way they affect our experience of them that are unmatched. Alexander’s confidence is thrilling. To realize his whole vision is beyond the capacity of any individual reader, but to focus on individual spatial solutions that appear eminently doable is not.

These qualities in his writing go far with both the Saturday morning crowd at Home Depot

and the organic foods set. Frank Lloyd Wright, for example, also wrote about how the mundane components of architecture should function. But you would be hard pressed to find much practical use for his ideas. Here he is on walls: “My sense of wall was not a side of a box. It was enclosure to afford protection against storm or heat when this was needed. But it was also increasingly to bring the outside world into the house, and let the inside of the house go outside. In this sense I was working toward the elimination of the wall as a wall to reach the function of a screen.”

But Alexander’s appeal derives from more than his commonsense approach. Many of his enthusiasts no doubt agree with him that artists, architects, and others sacrificed the common cause of beauty during the 20th century in the interest of more idiosyncratic, rarified pursuits. Alexander gets to the heart of everyday life in a way that dignifies the importance of our rituals and offers useful tools to support them. Say what you will about the vision behind it, *A Pattern Language* contains a vast supply of practical ideas and principles. Even its detractors concede that it is probably the most informative book on architecture ever written.

House for a Small Family

Few parents feel happy to give up the calm and cleanliness and quiet of the adult world in every square inch of their homes. To help achieve a balance, a house for a small family needs three distinct areas: a couple’s realm, reserved for the adults; a children’s realm, where the children’s needs hold sway; and a common area, between the two, connected to them both.

The couple’s realm should be more than a room, although rooms are a part of it. It is territory which sustains them as two adults, a couple—not father and mother. . . . The children come in and out of this territory, but when they are there, they are clearly in the adults’ world. See COUPLE’S REALM (136).

The children’s world must also be looked upon as territory that they share, as children, CHILDREN’S REALM (137); here, it is important to establish that this is a part of the house, in balance with the others. Again, the critical feature is not that adults are “excluded” but that, when they are in this world, they are in the children’s territory.

The common area contains those functions that the children and adults share: eating together, sitting together, games, perhaps bathing, gardening—again, whatever captures their needs for shared territory. Quite likely, the common territory will be larger than the two other parts of the house.

Finally, realize that this pattern is different from the way most small family homes are made today. . . .

Even though there is a “master bedroom,” the sleeping part of the house is essentially one thing—the children are all around the master bedroom. . . .

Therefore:

Give the house three distinct parts: a realm for parents, a realm for the children, and a common area. Conceive these three realms as roughly similar in size, with the commons the largest.



—From *A Pattern Language* (1977)



“When I wrote *A Pattern Language*,” Alexander says, “I thought everything was going to be fine from now on, that this was going to solve the problem. It sounds so funny but actually it is what I thought.” For all its achievements, *A Pattern Language* did not, according to its principal author, go far enough. “It’s a very illuminating book I think, but it doesn’t really put generative power in people’s hands, not to the extent that I wanted to.” He began working on *The Nature of Order* even before *A Pattern Language* was finished. For years, drafts of the work have circulated among his colleagues and admirers—unbound stacks of pages, curly edged and marked up with questions. Quotations have been traded among software designers—always eager for new tidbits from their guru—before a word was published. Although it sounds “immodest,” Alexander thinks his new work will “change everything.”

A Pattern Language boiled down the built environment into 253 patterns. *The Nature of Order* presents 15 basic “structures” that underlie the patterns and account, Alexander argues, for true beauty in every realm, from a person’s face to a birthday party to a mountain stream. “Strong centers,” “alternating repetitions,” and “contrast” are a few of the properties that work together to produce the pleasurable sensation of beholding beauty.

Having solved what he describes as the “kind of straightforward” problem of what makes something beautiful, Alexander moves on to elaborate a “new, extended idea of truth” that follows from his solution. An ensemble of four individual 480-page treatises, *The Nature of Order* earnestly lays out the argument that “all space and matter, organic or inorganic, is more or less alive.” Throughout the text, he asks repeatedly, “Which one has more life?” and invites the reader to compare photographs that may show two buildings, two rugs, or a chair and a Matisse painting. In every case, Alexander believes there is a discernible, living energy that we all innately perceive but have been “educated” by our overly mechanistic society to ignore. That energy contributes to a quality he

calls “wholeness,” which we experience as beauty.

Alexander speaks of his “squeamishness,” at first, over following his logic to this overhaul of reality. He admits that the idea that everything is alive is “suspicious or potentially ridiculous.” But he believes it, and as you too follow his straightforward explanation and his directions through numerous “proofs,” you might just be charmed, at least for a moment, right into his alternate universe.

The implication of Alexander’s new worldview is that a question such as “Is this house/artwork/city good or bad?” has a definitive answer. *The Nature of Order* is Alexander’s resolution of his career-long struggle to eliminate any debate over style or personal taste. He has spent 35 years running himself and others through the same exercises of perception he presents in the book. The result, he argues, proves his conclusions about what is more-or-less beautiful, and shows why we should always pick the thing with the greatest amount of “life.” Does that building, neighborhood, region, window, or roof detail have it or not? The more life, or “wholeness,” an object, scene, building, garden, street, or region possesses, the better we will feel about it.

Book 1 of *The Nature of Order*, titled *The Phenomenon of Life*, describes the deep structures that account for life and explains how to recognize them. The subsequent three volumes explain, respectively, how to make life, how a world built according to Alexander’s principles would look and feel, and how his theory can, in effect, repair the world. If all this sounds grandiose, it is, sometimes alluringly so. Alexander dives fearlessly into the depths of what accounts for beauty—and comes up with answers.

He proposes an objective basis for what we have taken, in the wake of the Enlightenment, as purely subjective. In his scheme of things, debate is no longer possible over the relative beauty of things—be they buildings or paintings, stage sets, or beaches. Alexander believes that the architectural profession has “gone bonkers” because it thinks that what’s good and bad is merely a matter of opinion. His absolutism solves the problem. With beauty defined as “life,” its alternative becomes death.

As in his earlier work, Alexander has arrived at this new theory—that the source of beauty is definable, and that it is based on the objective truth of our perceptions—through his own experience. As before, he believes he has proven his discovery, and he intends it to be a tool we all can use to create more beauty in our lives.

And what if our perceptions differ from his? Well, we're in the sway of misguided mechanical thinking. We're choosing death. Alexander's theory is based on one of his most problematic convictions—that “ninety percent of our feelings is stuff in which we are all the same and we feel the same things.” At this point, you can't help but wish that Alexander's pragmatic side, his insistence on being “a very plain, down-to-earth person,” had triumphed over his need to reveal The Truth.

It's not hard to see why Alexander has alienated so many of his fellow architects. The simultaneously intimate and all-knowing tone of his writing sounds unbearably condescending to practitioners who take pride in having invented some of their own solutions to the problems of architecture. “Chris is so passionate to discover the truth, he believes he has,” comments a former colleague at the University of California, Berkeley. It comes as no surprise that Alexander is not tolerant of others' ideas. He has a reputation for fits of anger, showers of insults, and storming from rooms when opposed. “Chris's answer to my doubts about *The Timeless Way of Building*,” recounted one of his former students “was to say ‘Find out your psychological problem that prevents you from agreeing.’ His technique is to attack one's motivation for questioning. And if there's anything that honest, intellectual inquiry is about, it's about *not* refraining from questioning.”

Alexander wants a grand unified theory to solve problems, while architectural education has rewarded pure, idiosyncratic invention. One architect observes, “We *are* still in the reign of the individual architectural genius, who produces work that cannot be clearly explained or accounted for by anything that's gone before. To reduce the act of design to a series of rules or commonplace patterns is to

raise the curtain on the wizard.”

In the last decade or so, alternative materials, technologies, and building practices have given life to a new ideal of sublime architecture. Santiago Calatrava's Milwaukee Art Museum, a filigree of bone-white joints gleaming at the edge of Lake Michigan, exemplifies the new ideal. Two wings composed of 72 fins act as a gigantic shading device, folding or rising in a gorgeous arc as sun and wind change course. Frank Gehry has convincingly proven in Bilbao that the power of a single, iconoclastic building can elevate an entire province. Although architects succeed all too rarely at Gehry's lofty level, Alexander's claim that any and all idiosyncratic, artistic architecture is unpleasing and absurd seems stubbornly provocative.

Alexander seldom acknowledges that many architects have been grappling with the same problems as he has, and for just as long. In her 1961 tour de force *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs introduced her topic in language Alexander himself might have used. “This book” she wrote, “is an attempt to introduce new principles of city planning and rebuilding, different and even opposite from those now taught in everything from schools of architecture and planning.” Her homage to the grass-roots wisdom of informal architecture, to untrained and impromptu acts of building, makes Jacobs and her many followers natural allies for Alexander. In a similar but more formal vein, Bernard Rudofsky mounted an important exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1964 called *Architecture without Architects*. Most architects of Alexander's generation are united by an abiding debt to Rudofsky's photographs of the repetitive, anonymous buildings that compose medieval Italian hill towns, much of the built environment of the Greek islands, and long-inhabited ancient villages throughout the world.

Participatory design processes, similar in spirit to what Alexander says is his own ideal approach, were pioneered during the 1960s and '70s. And in their classic *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972), Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour mounted a broad populist attack on the same rarified, aloof architectural practices that Alexander has condemned. Yet you would not know any of

this from reading him. He speaks like an oracle, and rarely hears the echoes in his own pronouncements.

In *The Linz Café* (1981), which chronicles his design and construction process for a building in Austria, Alexander writes that modern architecture constitutes “an absurd and ridiculous—often even immoral—preoccupation with a world of pretense and show, which almost no one believes in . . . but which goes on and on, year after year, as designers, architects, artists, and interior designers go on trying to impress one another, and themselves, with their new ‘conceptions.’” He frequently voices the rather mystical conviction that architects only sully what is ideally an organic process.

But “just as doctors are responsible for the health of all people,” Alexander matter-of-factly states, “architects are responsible for the health of all physical environments.” The catalog of his own completed works, which he likes to describe as “user-designed,” is not extensive. A handful of modest houses in the western United States, the campus of Eishin School in Tokyo, student housing at the University of Oregon, some galleries in England, and a shelter for the homeless in San Jose, California, constitute the better part of it. “So far,” he admits “the effect of this work of mine and of my colleagues has been small.”

One of the most powerful ways architects have of influencing others is publishing their work. Yet for all the photographs Alexander has published in his books and on his website, rarely does one see more than a single snapshotlike view of the inside or outside of each building. Although most of his photographs—often slightly blurred—successfully evoke a mood, they prevent any analysis or comprehension of how architectural components have been crafted to create this mood. Many of Alexander’s houses, at least in his pictures of them, appear so ordinary, rough at the edges, even slightly haphazard, that if you passed one, you would most likely rule out the involvement of any architect in its design. In their improvised appearance, they strongly resemble the hodgepodge stone, half-timber, and clapboard houses of southern England, where he grew up.

Alexander aspires to set architecture in motion more than to control and explicitly pre-

determine its form. He often calls for other architects to engage his ideas. These invitations may be sincere but Alexander makes it difficult for them to oblige. Seldom does he supply an architectural plan or any other conventional method for “reading” his designs. Indeed, he does not believe buildings should ever be graphically represented, in drawings or models, in the course of their design; nor does he believe in the standard contract between client and architect or contractor. Like most architects, Alexander believes that architecture has the power to change people’s lives. But he seems to require an entirely transformed world before he even begins to build.

Alexander is right to argue that there’s a crisis in the way we’re creating the built world today. He’s right, at a time when only a small percentage of all buildings are designed by professional architects, to say that there’s a crisis within architecture itself. And despite its utopian overtones, his vision—“We shall feel the same about our towns, and we shall feel as much at peace in them, as we do today walking by the ocean, or stretched out in the long grass of a meadow”—is not difficult to embrace as an ideal. Throughout his career, he has struggled with the question of how to generate authentic, functional, and wholesome environments not just for wealthy clients of architects but for anyone with an interest. The vast scale of most new development today seems to require ever less personal design. If Alexander’s theory of beauty can help us to mass-produce beautiful new communities, he will have changed our lives.

With *The Nature of Order*, Alexander challenges us to reconsider what is “real.” And yet, the rigid control he demands over how we apply his ideas makes testing them exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. Frank Lloyd Wright wrote essays and gave speeches, but it was his built projects, exemplified by Fallingwater, that changed the world. Alexander claims not to want to “write about philosophy or about the nature of things” but to learn “how to make beautiful buildings.” He has a vision. But if we cannot experience his vision in built form, Alexander is bound to realize his greatest fear—that his ideas will remain pristine, whole, even beautiful, and on the printed page only. □

An American Empire?



The words sound strange on American lips, yet especially since the lightning U.S. victory in Afghanistan, they've been spoken with increasing frequency—and not only as an indictment. Other concepts—*superpower*, *hegemon*, *hyperpower*—seem inadequate to describing America's position today. Does *empire* fill the bill?

We put the question to a group of distinguished thinkers: How should we conceive of America's role in the world? Is America really an empire? And should it resist or embrace an imperial identity?

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What Kind of Empire?

by Martin Walker

In the month before the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, I found myself attending a conference at Moscow's Oktyabrskaya Hotel with the Polish Solidarity activist and writer Adam Michnik. Traditionally the preserve of the Communist Party elite, the hotel had one feature that stunned Adam and me, two veterans of the Soviet experience. It was the first place we had ever found the elusive Zubnaya Pasta, the Soviet-made toothpaste that was reputed to exist but was seldom seen by either foreigners or ordinary Russians. Small tubes of the stuff had been placed in each hotel room, along with shampoo that smelled like paint stripper, bottles of mineral water and vodka, and boxes of tissues that were clearly designed to complete the paint-stripping job started by the shampoo. The evidence of privileged Soviet plenty, to be found exclusively in a hotel usually reserved for visiting party chieftains, and the loss of imperial nerve symbolized by our welcome into these once-forbidden precincts, inspired Adam to muse on the imminent fall of the third Rome.

It had long been a conceit of Russian nationalists and Slavophiles that after the fall of the first Rome to the barbarians in the fifth century A.D., and of the second Rome, Constantinople, to the Ottomans in 1453, Moscow was to be the heart of the third terrestrially sovereign Roman Empire. Now this third Rome was visibly falling, Adam noted, even as he hailed the emergence, far to the west, of a new Caesar who had summoned into existence a fourth Rome. *Arma virumque cano*, Adam declaimed, and dedicated to the newly retired president Ronald Reagan and his rearmament program those opening words of the *Aeneid*: "I sing of arms and the man."

Warming to the theme, we noted the similarities of Roman law and American lawyers. We remarked on the parallels between a Roman and an American culture that were robust and populist, though each was curiously deferential to an earlier elitist style—of ancient Greece in the one case and modern Europe in the other. We spoke of Roman roads and American interstate highways, the importance of Latin and modern English in disseminating their respective open and inclusive cultures, and the relative ease of acquir-





Britain's Imperial Viceroy ruled the Indian subcontinent with great pomp and a handful of administrators. He and his wife mark Edward VII's 1903 accession as King of England and Emperor of India.

ing old Roman or modern American citizenship. We even invoked the two cultures' common obsession with central heating and plumbing.

Some months later, with due acknowledgment to Adam, I published an essay that pursued the parallels between ancient Rome and America, the last remaining superpower; I returned to the theme subsequently in a book, *The Cold War: A History* (1993). The case for the analogy is easily stated. The U.S. military dominates the globe through 200 overseas bases, a dozen aircraft carrier task forces, and a unique mastery of the new high technology of intelligent warfare. This universal presence is buttressed by the world's richest and most technologically advanced economy, which itself dominates global communications and the world's financial markets, their main institutions based—and their rules drafted—in Washington and New York.

The United States also attracts, trains, and commands a predominant share of the world's intellectual talent, through an array of outstanding graduate schools and institutes of advanced learning and research. Only three non-

American universities—Oxford, Cambridge, and London—seriously qualify for any list of the world’s top 20 academic institutions, and thanks to the language, Americans feel at home at all three. Further, the United States has established a unique cultural predominance, not just through the quality of its free principles and constitution but through the seductive power of its entertainments and fashions, from movies to blue jeans to gangsta rap. Never before has there been anything quite like this American domination of the world. Even Rome had always to keep a wary eye on the Parthians and Persians, and one or two of its legions might at any time be swallowed without a trace by the barbarians of the Teutoberger Wald.

The new-Rome analogy that began as a journalist’s flippant conceit more than a decade ago has flourished into a cliché, and I’m now feeling a degree of remorse. The comparison is as glib as it is plausible, and there has always been something fundamentally unsatisfactory about it. Of course it’s possible to see the broad resemblances to contemporary America in the policies of the ancient state. Rome established authority by exercising power. It then spread and maintained the authority through a kind of consent that took root in the widening prosperity of a pan-Mediterranean trading network sustained by Rome’s naval strength, in a tolerable system of law and order, and in the seductive infiltration of Rome’s language and culture.

But the United States does not rule, and it shrinks from mastery. When, for example, in the early 1990s the government of the Philippines requested the return of Clark Air Base and the Subic Bay Naval Station, the American legions calmly folded their tents and stole away. Even important strategic assets, such as the Panama Canal, have been freely bestowed by amicable treaty. American presidents are not the victors of civil wars, nor are they acclaimed to the purple by the Praetorian Guard. They are elected (though we had best pass hastily over the parallel between the fundraising obligations of modern campaigns and the oblations of gold that secured the loyalty of the Roman legions). Moreover, America has a reasonable and accepted system for managing the succession and the institutionalized rejuvenation of power. The president, elected for a specific term, is no emperor; he is a magistrate who administers laws that he is not empowered to enact. His powers are checked and supervised by an elected legislature and restrained by courts. Above all, he does not command the power to declare war.

Rome’s empire was the real thing, held down by brutal force and occupation, at least until the benefits of law and order, trade, and cultural assimilation reconciled colonized peoples to their new status. It was a single geographic block, as classical empires usually were, its frontiers garrisoned and its limits set by the reach and pace of marching troops and the organizing skills that ensured that imperial armies could be paid and fed. Rome was at constant war with barbarians on the

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northern front and with the all-too-civilized Persians to the east. It had no allies, only satellites and client states that were required to reward their protectors with the tribute that symbolized dependence. And Rome showed no magnanimity to its defeated enemies; it organized no Marshall Plans or International Monetary Fund bailouts to help them recover and join the ranks of the civilized world. Carthage was destroyed and salt plowed into its fields to render them forever barren. Of his fellow Romans' approach to pacification, the historian Tacitus said, "They make a wasteland and call it peace."

The historically flawed identification of America with Rome, which has now entered the language and the thinking of senior aides in the White House and the State Department, can foster some dangerously misleading habits of mind.

European friends complain of an alarming tendency of the United States to act alone and treat allies with disdain. In 2001, French foreign minister Hubert Védrine, who coined the

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term *hyperpuissance* (hyperpower) to define America's current preeminence, told a seminar of senior French diplomats in Paris that France would "pursue our efforts toward a humane and controlled globalization, even if the new high-handed American unilateralism doesn't help matters." Chris Patten, the European Union's external affairs commissioner, has complained that the success of the United States in Afghanistan "has perhaps reinforced some dangerous instincts: that the projection of military power is the only basis of security; that the United States can rely on no one but itself; and that allies may be useful as an optional extra."

The troubling habits of mind are not simply a consequence of the attacks of September 11, or even of the arrival of the current Bush administration. Triumphant rhetoric characterized the United States during the Clinton years as, in Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's arresting phrase, "the indispensable nation," endowed with the capacity "to see further" than lesser powers. But the Clinton administration believed in collective international action. The Bush team, by contrast, applauded the refusal of the Republican-controlled Congress to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty or accept American adherence to the procedures of an international criminal court. The same Congress demanded a reduction in America's dues to the United Nations and held back payments until the country got its way. America's friends were outraged that the nation gave priority to domestic political interests. They thought less of America because they expected so much more of America: They presumed that the United States would keep its global responsibilities paramount and be governed always by Thomas Jefferson's "decent respect for the opinions of mankind." But such was not the disposition of the



The Roman empire continued to grow long after Julius Caesar's landmark victory over the Gallic leader Vercingetorix in 52 B.C., but Rome's republican government soon crumbled.

Washington where the Roman analogy had encouraged a frankly imperial ambition.

But can there be an American empire without an emperor? Indeed, how great a sprawl of meaning can the term empire usefully sustain—when it is already overburdened by having to encompass the vast differences among the Macedonian, Carthaginian, Roman, Persian, Ottoman, Carolingian, Mongol, Incan, Mogul, British, and Russian variants, to name but a few? Just as every unhappy family is, for Tolstoy, unhappy after its own fashion, so every empire is imperial in its own distinctive way. There are land empires and oceanic empires. There are empires such as the Ottoman, based on a common religious faith, and there are religiously tolerant, pagan, or even largely secular empires, such as Rome became in its grandest centuries. There are short-lived empires, based, like that of Alexander the Great, upon raw military power. And there are empires that thrive for centuries, usually because, like Rome and Carthage, they achieve a commercial prosperity that can enlist the allegiance of far-flung economic elites, or because they establish a professional civil service, an imperial governing class.

Such bureaucracies, whether the mandarinat of China or the Indian



Civil Service or the staff of the Vatican, have much to offer. They embody the prospect of predictable if not reasonable governance, some form of justice, the stability that allows trade to flourish, and, above all, the likelihood of continuity. Although Germany and Japan after 1945 enjoyed a fleeting exercise of administrative benefits by the occupying U.S. forces, Washington has bred and trained no imperial bureaucracy. Successive presidents have preferred to swallow the embarrassment of having South American dictatorships and feudal sheikdoms as allies rather than be accused of meddling in the affairs of other nations. This squeamishness about interfering with other governments is a telling instance of the difference between the United States and classic empires.

In its current more-than-imperial reach and quasi-imperial authority, the United States is very different from the real empire of Rome, and slightly different from the British Empire. Imagine a gauge of imperial character on which Rome scores 10. Britain might then score between 4 and 8, depending on the temporal and geographic circumstances of the measurement. Various characteristics of the United States in 2002 would score between 2 and 7: high numbers for its military power, commercial dominance, and cultural influence; low for the extent of its rule and for its preferring free allies to client states.

The British Empire seems to have more in common with contemporary America (beyond the importance of their shared language, legal systems, and naval traditions) than either of the two has with classical Rome. The matter is complicated because there were two British Empires, and the differences between them must be understood before any attempt is made to define what is and is not imperial about America's current hegemony. The first British Empire, which ended with the loss of half the North American colonies, was frankly mercantilist. The second, which was accumulated in fits and starts, was far more imperial in style and governance. But it was already being dismantled when it achieved its greatest extent, after the First World War (the League of Nations granted Britain the mandate to run the former German colonies in Africa and to be principal custodian of what had been the Ottoman Empire).

This second British Empire was always controversial. In 1877, the past and future Liberal prime minister William Gladstone claimed that it drained the economy and managed "to compromise British character in the judgment of the impartial world." Queen Victoria bridled at the "overbearing and offensive behavior" of the Indian Civil Service in "trying to trample on the people and continually reminding them and making them feel that they are a conquered people." Historians still pick their way through the varied motivations behind the empire: missionary zeal and commercial greed, high strategic concerns and low political ambitions, an honest faith in human improvement and a determination to force China to import Indian opium. As Cambridge University histo-

The Unilateralist Way

The “axis of evil” caused a sensation around the world because it established a new American foreign policy based on three distinctive principles: morality, preemption, and unilateralism.

Our sophisticated European cousins are aghast. The French led the way, denouncing American *simplisme*. They deem it a breach of manners to call evil by its name. They prefer accommodating to it. They have lots of practice, famously accommodating Nazi Germany in 1940, less famously striking the Gaullist pose of triangulating between the Evil Empire and primitive Yanks during the Cold War.

The Europeans are not too happy with preemption either. Preemption is the most extreme form of activity, of energy, in foreign policy—anathema to a superannuated continent entirely self-absorbed in its own internal integration. (Hence the paralysis even in the face of fire in its own Balkan backyard.) The Europeans hate preemption all the more because it means America acting on its own. And it is our unilateralism above all that sticks in their craw.

Tough luck. A policy of waiting to be attacked with nuclear (and other genocidal) weapons is suicidal. Moreover, self-defense is the self-evident justification for unilateralism. When under attack, no country is obligated to collect permission slips from allies to strike back. And there is no clearer case of a war of self-defense than America’s war on terrorists and allied states for whom “death to America” is not just a slogan but a policy. . . .

When the Bush administration came to power advertising its willingness to go it alone when necessary, the Democrats were apoplectic. Early last year, for example, when George W. Bush made it clear he would be junking the ABM Treaty, Senator Carl Levin, now chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and thus a man who should know about these things, declared: “I have great concerns about [such] a unilateral decision . . . because I believe that it could risk a second Cold War.”

Wrong. Totally wrong. In fact, when Bush did abrogate the ABM Treaty, the Russian response was almost inaudible. Those who’d been bloviating about the diplomatic dangers of such a unilateral decision noted quizzically the lack of reaction. Up in arms over the axis of evil—“it will take years before we can repair the damage done by that statement,” said former president Jimmy Carter—they are warning once again about how the world will rise against us. Wrong again.

Our enemies have already turned against us. Our allies will not. Europe knows that in the end, its security depends on our strength and our protection.

rian J. R. Seeley observed in 1883, “We seem to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind.”

For the seafaring British, the imperial project began as a commercial venture: North America was explored, exploited, and turned into a profitable enterprise by the Hudson’s Bay Company. But Britain came relatively late to formal rule over its far-flung possessions. The first empire—a strange mix of crown lands, semifeudal estates, free ports, penal colonies, and vast tracts for religious dissidents—was forced by the requirements of war with the French and the Indians to adopt a formal sys-

Europeans are the ultimate free riders on American power. We maintain the stability of international commerce, the freedom of the seas, the flow of oil, regional balances of power (in the Pacific Rim, South Asia, the Middle East). and, ultimately, we provide protection against potentially rising hostile super-powers.

The Europeans sit and pout. What else can they do? The ostensible complaint is American primitivism. The real problem is their irrelevance. . . .

The Afghan war, conducted without them, highlighted how America's 21st-century high-tech military made their militaries as obsolete as were the battleships of the 19th century upon the launching of Britain's *Dreadnought* in 1906.

This is not our fault. The United States did not force upon them military obsolescence. They chose social spending over defense spending—an understandable choice, perhaps even wise given that America was willing to pick up the slack. But hardly grounds for whining.

We are in a war of self-defense. It is also a war for Western civilization. If the Europeans refuse to see themselves as part of this struggle, fine. If they wish to abdicate, fine. We will let them hold our coats, but not tie our hands.

—Charles Krauthammer

Charles Krauthammer is a nationally syndicated columnist. This essay originally appeared on March 1, 2002.



In 1904, Joseph Keppler showed the eagle of American imperialism stretching from Puerto Rico to the Philippines.

tem of rule. This empire came to an end at Yorktown in 1781 largely because London belatedly wanted to tax the colonists as if they really were subjects of the Crown.

Britain's nonrule of India continued for 75 years after its first empire crumbled at Yorktown. India was conquered, pillaged, and increasingly ruled by the Honorable East India Company, which was an independent commercial operation until 1773, when the Crown assumed partial control after financial disappointments. As Adam Smith noted in his *Wealth of Nations*, "Under the present system of management Great Britain derives

nothing but loss from the dominion which she assumes over her colonies." The Indian Mutiny of 1856 revealed the limitations of this system, and the Crown then took over, not entirely willingly, a going financial concern. Lord Palmerston, then the prime minister, defined British ambitions as "trade without rule where possible, trade with rule where necessary." Rule was expensive, cumbersome, and problematic, and equivalent commercial benefits could be obtained far more cheaply. A British subject at the head of Chinese customs, for example, might favor British interests and discourage rivals, without the unnecessary expense of a British garrison.

Britain exercised a similarly oblique sway in the Middle East. After defaulting on loans and being visited by a French and British fleet in 1876, Egypt accepted the installation of Anglo-French controllers over its national

finances. Although the powers of the British grew, and the French were squeezed out, the Egyptian monarchy, government, and army all remained in place. That proved a model for British influence throughout the Persian Gulf. Advisers at the sheikh's right hand held the trump card of a British fleet offshore. In parts of the world where there was little to attract British colonists and a reasonably effective local government was in place, the British preferred to rule through that government. Where there was no

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such local government to co-opt, as appeared to be the case in much of Africa, the British installed full imperial rule, through their own law courts, schools, and district governors. The Islamic world proved far more resistant to British sway than did either Africa or Asia because the Christian missionaries, whose schools engaged in a subtle indoctrination, were made most unwelcome.

Reluctant to finance the large standing armies characteristic of the Continental great powers, the British cultivated an oceanic enterprise through trade and their excellent Royal Navy. They avoided the trap that snared many land empires, which overextended themselves and had to defend ever-wider frontiers. Sea power allowed the British Empire to rule by something very close to bluff. Until the South African War (1899–1902) and the demands of the trenches of the First World War, there were never more than 150,000 troops in the entire British Army—a smaller number than today's Pentagon routinely stations overseas (almost 100,000 in Europe, 25,000 in the Persian Gulf, 37,000 in Korea, and another 20,000 in Japan). At its peacetime Victorian peak in 1897, the British Empire rested on the bayonets of 55 battalions of infantry stationed

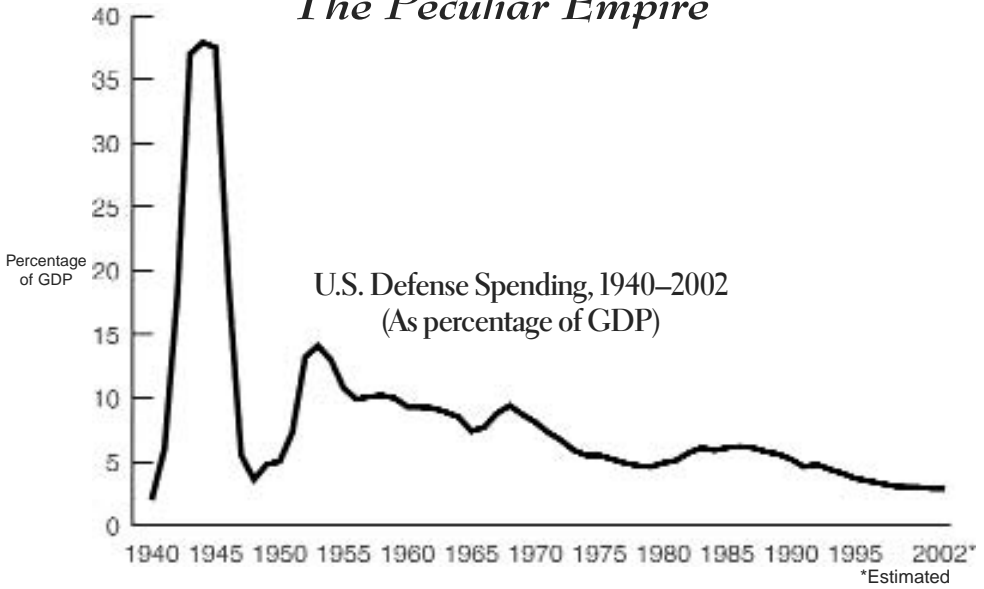
abroad—about 40,000 troops. The locally recruited sepoy of the Indian Army brought the total number of British imperial forces in 1897 to 356,000—slightly larger than the size of the Roman Army at the time of the Emperor Trajan in the early second century A.D., the period of Rome’s greatest extent.

There were always far more British troops stationed in Ireland than in India, and as Rudyard Kipling suggested in “The Green Flag,” his tale of Irish heroism in imperial service, more Irish and Scottish than English troops in India. As Rome had done, the British Raj defended itself with auxiliary forces recruited from the ruled. And yet, having successfully devised the concept of empire on the cheap, the British fell into a technology trap: When sail gave way to steam, carefully spaced coaling stations defined the route to India. The British showed little interest in the Middle East until the building of the Suez Canal in the 1870s required a British strategic presence along the route to the jewel in the imperial crown. Even then, the “imperial” presence was legally less than met the eye. Egypt retained its king, its army, and its customs, while Britain pulled the strings. Throughout the Persian Gulf region, British advisers saw to it that British interests were paramount, without the expense of imperial rule. The Bank of Persia, for example, was founded and run by Englishmen. When the emirs of Aden proved unwilling to build the lighthouses British navigation required in the Red Sea, the P & O Steamship Company built and manned its own on Dardalus Reef.

The erection of that lighthouse out of commercial self-interest was also an act with altruistic implications, and in that respect it sheds light on the current debate about the nature of the American imperium. The British Empire defined its role in terms of a wider good, akin to *la mission civilisatrice* of its French contemporary. Again, the oceanic character of the British imperial project is central. Once its freebooters and licensed pirates had seized command of the Caribbean and North American waters from the Spaniards in the 16th century, the British found it in their commercial interest to suppress piracy; they did so by enacting what became the first enforced international law. In the 19th century, motivated in part by guilt over previous profits, the British ordered the Royal Navy to suppress the slave trade.

The construction of lighthouses and the suppression of piracy and the slave trade gave some meaning to the usually self-serving British claim to be defending the freedom of the seas. For a trading nation such as Britain, peaceful and safely navigable waters were useful, but they also benefited others. Under the benign rule of Britannia, the seas became a common good for all seafarers. And under the guns of the Royal Navy, sovereign states that borrowed money (usually from the City of London) and refused to pay found themselves required to do so. British troops would be landed to seize the ports, control the customs operations, and impose duties and tariffs, as happened in Egypt, until the debt was repaid. If the property of British citizens suffered in local riots, there

The Peculiar Empire



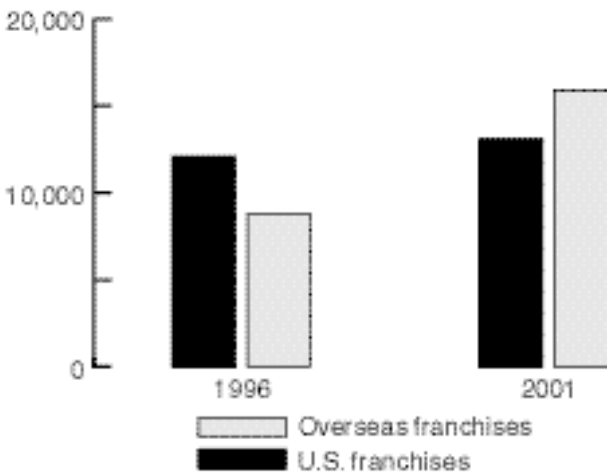
The U.S. defense budget will climb to some \$379 billion next year, a 17 percent increase in two years. Yet in historical terms defense claims a small share of national wealth.

U.S. Bases Abroad, 1947–2000

	1947	1949	1953	1957	1967	1975	1988	2000
Europe, Canada & North Atlantic	506	258	446	566	673	633	627	438
Pacific & Southeast Asia	343	235	291	256	271	183	121	186
Latin America & the Caribbean	113	59	61	46	55	40	39	14
Middle East & Africa	74	28	17	15	15	9	7	7
South Asia	103	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	1,139	582	815	883	1,014	865	794	646

Sources: James R. Blaker, *United States Overseas Basing* (1990), *Defense Base Report* (2001)

McDonald's Goes Global, 1996–2001



One indicator of the “soft power” of American ideas and culture is the global march of McDonald’s, which last year had nearly 16,000 branches abroad—more than in the United States.

was retaliation: When, for example, Athenian warehouses belonging to Don Pacifico, a Jewish merchant who was a British subject of Gibraltar, were damaged, the British fleet bombarded the Greek port of Piraeus until proper compensation was paid. It was in defense of this high-handed action before Parliament that Lord Palmerston made the clearest correlation between the empires of Britain and Rome: “As the Roman, in days of old, held himself free from indignity, when he could say ‘*Civis Romanus sum*,’ so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong.”

Freedom of the seas, the defense of property rights, and the ability to enforce commercial contracts were the essential building blocks of that surge of economic growth and prosperity that marked the Victorian age. British investors financed the railroads that opened the American West, the pampas of Argentina, and the gold mines of South Africa. Vessels were launched from the shipyards of the rivers Clyde and Tyne and Humber, powered by the coal fields of Wales and Durham, and insured by Lloyds of London. The Reuters news service informed all customers—in English, which was also the language of navigation—of the price of commodity X at port Y in the universal currency of the gold sovereign as produced at London’s Royal Mint. The ships, the coal, the insurance, and the gold coins were available, like the seas, to all comers, just as the British market was in those days of free trade, when Britain was the exporting and importing customer of first and last resort.

The parallels are clear between the role of the British Empire in fostering the first great wave of globalization in the 19th century and that of the United States in promoting the second in the latter half of the 20th century. But does that make the United States, as ruler of the waves, guarantor of global finance, prime foreign investor, and leading importer, an empire? It certainly makes the United States, for all the universal benefits its broadly benign hegemony has brought, as unpopular as Britain once was. “No people are so disliked out of their own country,” noted the American traveler Robert Laird Collier of the British during a visit to their homeland in the 1880s. “They assume superiority. As a nation they are intensely selfish and arrogant.”

Collier sounds mild by comparison with the Indian novelist Arunhati Roy, who wrote the following in Britain’s *Guardian* in September 2001: “What is Osama bin Laden? He’s America’s family secret. He is the American president’s dark doppel-

THE PARALLELS ARE CLEAR
BETWEEN THE ROLE OF THE
BRITISH EMPIRE . . . IN THE
19TH CENTURY AND THAT OF
THE UNITED STATES IN THE
LATTER HALF OF THE 20TH.

gänger. The savage twin of all that purports to be beautiful and civilized. He has been sculpted from the spare rib of a world laid to waste by America's foreign policy: its gunboat diplomacy, its nuclear arsenal, its vulgarly stated policy of 'full-spectrum dominance,' its chilling disregard for non-American lives, its barbarous military interventions, its support for despotic and dictatorial regimes, its merciless economic agenda that has munched through the economies of poor countries like a cloud of locusts. Its marauding multinationals who are taking over the air we breathe, the ground we stand on, the water we drink, the thoughts we think."

So the charge of imperialism stumbles forth again, and comes loaded with a wider postmodern meaning, at least on bestseller lists, in universities and among radical groups who regard globalization as the new focus of unjust imperial authority. The success of *Empire* (2001), a sprawling and grandiose book from Harvard University Press about the power structures of the global economy, testifies both to a resurgent concern with imperialism and to the controversial implications of the current extraordinary role of the United States, the sole superpower. The authors of *Empire* are Michael Hardt, a professor of literature at Duke University, and Antonio Negri, an Italian revolutionary theorist and professor at the University of Padua who is serving a prison term on charges of practicing what he preached with the Red Brigades. They attempt to resuscitate Lenin's imploded theory of imperialism as the last resort of capitalism: "What used to be conflict or competition among several imperialist powers has in important respects been replaced by the idea of a single power that overdetermines them all, structures them in a unitary way, and treats them under one common notion of right that is decidedly post-colonial and post-imperialist."

Empire, despite its flaws, deserves to be taken seriously, if only because among the anti-globalization militants who mobilize against World Bank or Group of Eight or World Trade Organization summits, it is hailed as the *Das Kapital* of the 21st century. The book's argument is confused, sometimes suggesting that the United States is the new single empire, and sometimes suggesting that, beyond any petty definitions of nationality, the new dispensation is "empire as system"—though a system highly congenial to American interests. Countries such as Britain, France, and Japan have built vast corporations with a global reach, but they operate within an economic system of which the United States is the financial linchpin and military guarantor.

This free-trading, free-market, American-dominated empire, Hardt and Negri contend, has become an all-encompassing presence, a form of cultural hegemony (to use Antonio Gramsci's phrase) that influences the consciousness of all who live under it. Although the argument is rather subtler than that the empire has developed Disney World and friendly clowns at McDonald's to lure the infant who will become the future consumer, a cardinal feature of this new American predominance is indeed its allure, in addition to its power. Joseph S. Nye, dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, calls this characteristic "soft power," the power to make others want the things America wants. It's a

force much easier to wield than hard, military power. The process is hardly new. Indian schoolboys under the Raj grew up dreaming of playing cricket at Lord's Ground in London, and African and Arab children in the French Empire were brought up with a history textbook that represented their forebears as "our ancestors, the Gauls."

But France and Britain, like Rome before them, lost their empires. And there is no guarantee that America's current superiority will endure. Despite its military dominance, America may not be able to maintain the political will, supply the financial means, and guarantee the technological monopolies to sustain its lonely eminence indefinitely. Regional challengers, ever more likely to be nuclear armed, already have the muscle to perturb and distract—and may someday have the power to deter or even attack—the United States. To manage what is likely to become a turbulent political environment, the United States should look beyond the simplistic image of itself as the modern Rome. Its choices for a sustainable grand strategy in the 21st century might better be defined by two other models from classical times, Athens and Sparta. Which does America wish to be?

Athens would be the more congenial model for a free-trading, self-indulgent democracy with a strong naval tradition and a robust belief in the merits and survivability of its own civilization. But there is much in the American political and military culture that leans to the fortress mentality and uncompromising attitudes of Sparta. America as Sparta would be introspective, defensive, protectionist, and unilateralist. It would prefer clients and satellites to allies that might someday challenge its primacy. It would seek to maintain military superiority at all costs and be suspicious of the erosions of national sovereignty that might result from cooperation with other states. America as Athens would join allies and partners in collaborative ventures with a common purpose, such as global warming treaties and international legal structures. It would be extrovert and open, encourage the growth of democracies and trading partners, and help to build a world where all can enjoy freedom and dream of prosperity.

Put in those terms, the choice for America makes itself. And yet, the choice ultimately may not matter. Athens and Sparta each flourished in its turn and then faded, just as the Roman, British, and Soviet empires did—indeed, as every empire has done. What remains after empires fade is neither their weapons nor their wealth. Rather, they leave behind the ideas and the arts and the sciences that seem to flourish best amid the great stability of empires. We now remember Athens for its gifts of philosophy, mathematics, drama, and democracy, just as we acknowledge the inheritance from Britain of the King James Bible and Shakespeare, a free press and jury trials, and the magnificent defiance that saved the world in 1940. Whatever its fate, America, too, will live on—for its constitution and its movies and its having placed the first man on the moon. Of the Soviet empire we now remember the Gulag, and how difficult it was to find toothpaste. □

New Rome, New Jerusalem

by Andrew J. Bacevich

No longer fodder for accusations and denials, American imperialism has of late become a proposition to be considered on its merits. In leading organs of opinion, such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, the notion that the United States today presides over a global imperium has achieved something like respectability.

This is a highly salutary development. For only by introducing the idea of empire into the mainstream of public discourse does it become possible to address matters far more pressing than mulling over the semantic distinctions between empire and hegemony and “global leadership.” What precisely is the nature of the Pax Americana? What is its purpose? What are the challenges and pitfalls that await the United States in the management of its domain? What are the likely costs of empire, moral as well as material, and who will pay them? These are the questions that are now beginning to find a place on the agenda of U.S. foreign policy.

As befits a nation founded on the conviction of its own uniqueness, the American empire is like no other in history. Indeed, the peculiar American approach to empire offers a striking affirmation of American exceptionalism. For starters, that approach eschews direct rule over subject peoples. Apart from a handful of possessions left over from a brief, anomalous land grab in 1898, we have no colonies. We prefer access and influence to ownership. Ours is an informal empire, composed not of satellites or fiefdoms but of nominally coequal states. In presiding over this empire, we prefer to exercise our authority indirectly, as often as not through intermediary institutions in which the United States enjoys the predominant role but does not wield outright control (e.g., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United Nations Security Council, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank).

Although we enjoy unassailable military supremacy and are by no means averse to using force, we prefer seduction to coercion. Rather than impose our will by the sword, we count on the allure of the “American way of life” to win over doubters and subvert adversaries. In the imperium’s most valued precincts, deference to Washington tends to be rendered voluntarily. Thus, postwar Europe, viewing the United States as both protector and agent of economic revival, actively pursued American dominion, thereby laying the basis for an “empire by invitation” that persists even though European prosperity has long since been restored and threats to Europe’s security have all but disappeared. An analogous situation prevails in the Pacific, where Japan and other states, more than able to defend themselves, willingly conform to an American-ordered security regime.



Wilson's way? A 1917 poster summoning Americans to the Great War struck a theme that still resonates across the political spectrum: America has a transcendent mission in the world.

Imperial powers are all alike in their shared devotion to order. Imperial powers differ from one another in the values they purport to inculcate across their realm. To the extent that the empires of Spain, France, and Great Britain defined their purpose (at least in part) as spreading the benefits of Western civilization, the present-day Pax Americana qualifies as their historical successor. But whereas those earlier imperial ventures specialized in converting pagans or enlightening savages, the ultimate value and the ultimate aspiration of the American imperium is freedom. Per Thomas Jefferson, ours is an “empire of liberty.”

From the outset, Americans self-consciously viewed the United States as an enterprise imbued with a providential significance extending far beyond the nation's boundaries. America was no sooner created than it became, in the words of the poet Philip Freneau, "a New Jerusalem sent down from heaven." But the salvation this earthly Zion promised was freedom, not eternal life. Recall George Washington's first inaugural address, in 1789: "The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty," he declared, had been "intrusted to the hands of the American people." The imperative in Washington's day not to promulgate the sacred fire but simply to keep it from being extinguished

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reflected a realistic appraisal of the young republic's standing among the nations of the world. For the moment, it lacked the capacity to do more than model freedom.

Over the course of the next 200 years, that would change. By the time the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, effectively bringing to a close a century of epic ideological struggle, the New Jerusalem had ascended to a category of its own among

the world's powers. The United States was dominant politically, economically, culturally, and, above all, militarily. In effect, the New Jerusalem had become the New Rome, an identity that did not supplant America's founding purpose but pointed toward its fulfillment—and the fulfillment of history itself. To President Bill Clinton, the moment signified that "the fullness of time" was at hand. Thomas Paine's claim that Americans had it in their power "to begin the world over again" no longer seemed preposterous. Salvation beckoned. In Reinhold Niebuhr's evocative phrase, the United States stood poised to complete its mission of "tutoring mankind on its pilgrimage to perfection."

Early Americans saw the task of tutoring mankind as a directive from on high; later Americans shouldered the burden out of a profound sense of self-interest. Despite the frequent allusions to liberty in describing that pilgrimage's final destination and in justifying the use of American power, the architects of U.S. policy in the 20th century never viewed empire as an exercise in altruism. Rather, at least from the time of Woodrow Wilson, they concluded that only by protecting and promoting the freedom of others could Americans fully guarantee their nation's own well-being. The two were inextricably linked.

>ANDREW J. BACEVICH is a professor of international relations at Boston University. His book *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*, will be published in the fall by Harvard University Press. Copyright © 2002 by Andrew J. Bacevich.

In the eyes of Wilson and his heirs, to distinguish between American ideals (assumed to be universal) and American interests (increasingly global in scope) was to make a distinction without a difference. It was a plain fact that successive crusades to advance those ideals—against German militarism in 1917, fascism and Japanese imperialism in 1941, and communism after World War II—resulted in the United States’ accruing unprecedented power. Once the smoke had cleared, the plain fact defined international politics: One nation with its own particular sense of how the world should operate stood like a colossus astride the globe.

Not surprisingly, Americans viewed the distribution of power as a sort of cosmic judgment, an affirmation that the United States was (in a phrase favored by politicians in the 1990s) on “the right side of history.” American preeminence offered one measure of humanity’s progress toward freedom, democracy, and world peace. Those few who persisted in thinking otherwise—in American parlance, “rogue regimes”—marked themselves not only as enemies of the United States but as enemies of freedom itself.

The barbarous events of September 11 revealed that the pilgrimage to perfection was far from over. But not for a moment did they cause American political leaders to question the project’s feasibility. If anything, September 11 reinforced their determination to complete the journey. In offering his own explanation for the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, George W. Bush refused to countenance even the possibility that an assault on symbols of American economic and military power might have anything to do with how the United States employed its power. He chose instead to frame the issue at hand in terms of freedom. Why do they hate us? “They hate our freedoms,” Bush explained. Thus did the president skillfully deflect attention from the consequences of empire.

September 11 became the occasion for a new war, far wider in scope than any of the piddling military interventions that had kept American soldiers marching hither and yon during the preceding decade. In many quarters, that conflict has been described as the equivalent of another world war. The description is apt. As the multifaceted U.S. military campaign continues to unfold, it has become clear that the Bush administration does not intend simply to punish those who perpetrated the attacks on New York and Washington or to preclude the recurrence of any such incidents. America’s actual war aims are far more ambitious. The United States seeks to root out terror around the globe. It seeks also to render radical Islam and the nations that make up the “axis of evil” incapable of threatening the international order.

But there is more still: The Bush administration has used the war on terror as an occasion for conducting what is, in effect, a referendum on U.S. global primacy. In this cause, as President Bush has emphasized, all must declare their allegiance: Nations either align themselves with the United States or they cast their lot with the terrorists—and, by implication, can expect to share their fate. As a final byproduct of September 11, the administration has seized the opportuni-

ty to promulgate a new Bush Doctrine, incorporating such novel concepts as “anticipatory self-defense” and “preemptive deterrence.” Through the Bush Doctrine, the United States—now combining, in the words of Stanley Hoffmann, the roles of “high-noon sheriff and proselytizing missionary”—lays claim to wider prerogatives for employing force to reorder the world.

In short, the conflict joined after September 11 may well qualify as a war *against* terror and *against* those who “hate our freedoms.” But it is no less genuinely a conflict waged *on behalf of* the American imperium, a war in which, to fulfill its destiny as the New Jerusalem, the United States, as never before, is prepared to exert its authority as the New Rome.

Thus, when the president vowed in December 2001 that “America will lead the world to peace,” he was not simply resurrecting some windy Wilsonian platitude. He was affirming the nation’s fundamental strategic purpose and *modus operandi*. The United States will “lead”—meaning that it will persevere in its efforts to refashion the international order, employing for that purpose the preeminent power it acquired during the century of its ascendancy (which it has no intention of relinquishing in the century just begun). And it will do so with an eye toward achieving lasting “peace”—meaning an orderly world, conducive to American enterprise, friendly to American values, and perpetuating America’s status as sole superpower. This was the aim of U.S. policy prior to September 11; it remains the aim of the Bush administration today.

How widespread is support for this imperial enterprise? Despite the tendency of American statesmen from Wilson’s day to our own to resort to coded language whenever addressing questions of power, the project is not some conspiracy hatched by members of the elite

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and then foisted on an unsuspecting citizenry. The image of the United States leading the world to peace (properly understood) commands broad assent in virtually all segments of American society. A fringe of intellectuals, activists, and self-described radicals might take umbrage at the prospect of a world remade in America’s image and policed by

American power, but out on the hustings the notion plays well—so long, at least, as the required exertions are not too taxing. The fact is that Americans like being number one, and since the end of the Cold War have come to accept that status as their due. Besides, someone has to run the world. Who else can do the job?

What are the empire’s prospects? In some respects, the qualities that have contributed to the nation’s success in other endeavors may serve the United States well in this one. Compared with the citizens of Britain in the

A Humanitarian Empire

Empires are not always planned. The original American colonies began as the unintended byproduct of British religious strife. The British political class was not so sure it wanted to rule India, but commercial interests dragged it in there anyway. The United States today will be an even more reluctant imperialist. But a new imperial moment has arrived, and by virtue of its power America is bound to play the leading role. The question is not whether America will seek to fill the void created by the demise of European empires but whether it will acknowledge that this is what it is doing. Only if Washington acknowledges this task will its response be coherent.

The first obstacle to acknowledgment is the fear that empire is infeasible. True, imposing order on failed states is expensive, difficult, and potentially dangerous. . . . But these expenses need to be set against the cost of fighting wars against terrorists, drug smugglers, and other international criminals. . . .

The second obstacle to facing the imperial challenge is the stale choice between unilateralism and multilateralism. Neither option, as currently understood, provides a robust basis for responding to failed states. Unilateralists rightly argue that weak allies and cumbersome multilateral arrangements undercut international engagement. Yet a purely unilateral imperialism is no more likely to work than the sometimes muddled multilateral efforts assembled in the past. Unilateralists need to accept that chaotic countries are more inclined to accept foreign nation-builders if they have international legitimacy. And U.S. opinion surveys suggest that international legitimacy matters domestically as well. The American public's support for the Persian Gulf War and the Afghan conflict reflected the perception that each operation was led by the United States but backed by the court of world opinion.

The best hope of grappling with failed states lies in institutionalizing this mix of U.S. leadership and international legitimacy. Fortunately, one does not have to look far to see how this could be accomplished. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) already embody the same hybrid formula: Both institutions reflect American thinking and priorities yet are simultaneously multinational. The mixed record of both institutions—notably the World Bank's failure on failed states—should not obscure their organizational strengths: They are more professional and less driven by national patronage than are United Nations agencies.

A new international body with the same governing structure could be set up to deal with nation-building. It would be subject neither to the frustrations of the UN Security Council, with its Chinese and Russian vetoes, nor to those of the UN General Assembly, with its gridlocked one-country–one-vote system. . . . It would assemble nation-building muscle and expertise and could be deployed wherever its American-led board decided, thus replacing the ad hoc begging and arm twisting characteristic of current peacekeeping efforts. Its creation would not amount to an imperial revival. But it would fill the security void that empires left—much as the system of mandates did after World War I ended the Ottoman Empire.

The new fund would need money, troops, and a new kind of commitment from the rich powers and it could be established only with strong U.S. leadership. Summoning such leadership is immensely difficult, but America and its allies have no easy options in confronting failed states. They cannot wish away the problem that chaotic power vacuums can pose. They cannot fix it with international institutions as they currently exist. . . . They must either mold the international machinery to address the problems of their times, as their predecessors did in creating the United Nations, the World Bank, and the IMF after World War II. Or they can muddle along until some future collection of leaders rises to the challenge.

—*Sebastian Mallaby*

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age of Victoria or of Rome during the time of the Caesars, Americans wear their imperial mantle lightly. They go about the business of empire with a singular lack of pretense. Although Washington, D.C. has come to exude the self-importance of an imperial capital, those who live beyond its orbit have, thus far at least, developed only a limited appetite for pomp, privilege, and display. We are unlikely to deplete our treasury erecting pyramids or other monuments to our own ostensible greatness. In matters of taste, American sensibilities tend to be popular rather than aristocratic. Our excesses derive from our enthusiasms—frequently vulgar, typically transitory—rather than from any of the crippling French diseases: exaggerated self-regard, intellectual bloat, cynicism, and envy. All things considered, America’s imperial ethos is pragmatic and without ostentation, evidence, perhaps, that the nation’s rise to great-power status has not yet fully expunged its republican origins. Above all, measured against societies elsewhere in the developed world, American society today seems remarkably vigorous and retains an astonishing capacity to adapt, to recover, and to reinvent itself.

That said, when it comes to sustaining the *Pax Americana*, the United States faces several challenges.

First, no one is really in charge. Ours is an empire without an emperor. Although in times of crisis Americans instinctively look to the top for leadership—a phenomenon that greatly benefited George W. Bush after September 11—the ability of any president to direct the affairs of the American imperium is limited, in both degree and duration. Though he is routinely described as the most powerful man in the world, the president of the United States in fact enjoys limited authority and freedom of action. The system of government codified by the Constitution places a premium on separation and balance among the three branches that vie

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with one another in Washington, but also between the federal government and agencies at the state and local levels. Hardly less significant is the impact of other participants in the political free-for-all—parties, interest groups, lobbies, entrenched bureaucracies, and the media—that on

any given issue can oblige the chief executive to dance to their tune. The notion of an “imperial presidency” is a fiction, and for that Americans can be grateful. But the fact remains that the nation’s political system is not optimally configured for the management of empire.

Second, although popular support for the empire is real, it is, in all likelihood, highly contingent. The heirs of the so-called greatest generation have little stomach for sacrifice. They expect the benefits of empire to outweigh the burdens and responsibilities, and to do so decisively. The gar-



Since 9/11, U.S. troops have been dispatched to about 20 countries, often to train local forces to combat Muslim extremists. This officer joined 1,200 other Americans in the Philippines in January.

den-variety obligations of imperial policing—for example, keeping peace in the Balkans or securing a U.S. foothold in Central Asia—are not causes that inspire average Americans to hurry down to their local recruiter's office. To put it bluntly, such causes are not the kind that large numbers of Americans are willing to die for.

In this sense, the empire's point of greatest vulnerability is not the prospect of China's becoming a rival superpower or of new terrorist networks' supplanting Al Qaeda—those developments we can handle—but rather the questionable willingness of the American people to foot the imperial bill. Sensitive to the limits of popular support—as vividly demonstrated after a single night's action in Mogadishu in 1993—policymakers over the past decade have exerted themselves mightily to pass that bill off to others. In the process, they have devised imaginative techniques for ensuring that when blood spills, it won't be American blood. Hence, the tendency to rely on high-tech weapons launched from beyond the enemy's reach, on proxies to handle any dirty work on the ground, or, as a last resort, on a cadre of elite professional soldiers who are themselves increasingly detached from civilian society.

Over the past decade, this effort to maintain the American empire on the cheap has (with the notable exception of September 11) enjoyed remarkable success. Whether policymakers can sustain this success indefinitely remains an open question, especially when each victory gained with apparent ease—Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan—only rein-

forces popular expectations that the next operation will also be neat, tidy, and virtually fault-free.

The third challenge facing the American imperium concerns freedom itself. For if peace (and U.S. security) requires that the world be free as Americans define freedom, then the specifics of that definition complicate the management of empire in ways that thus far have received inadequate attention.

Here's the catch: As Americans continuously reinvent themselves and their society, they also reinvent—and in so doing, radically transform—what they mean

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by freedom. They mean not just independence, or even democracy and the rule of law. Freedom as Americans understand it today encompasses at least two other broad imperatives: maximizing opportunities for the creation of wealth and removing whatever impediments remain to confine the so-

vereign self. Freedom has come to mean treating the market and market values as sacrosanct (the economic agenda of the Right) and celebrating individual autonomy (the cultural agenda of the Left).

Without question, adherence to the principles of free enterprise offers the most efficient means for generating wealth. Without question, too, organizing society around such principles undermines other sources of authority. And that prospect mobilizes in opposition to the United States those in traditional and, especially, religious societies who are unwilling to abandon the old order.

The implications of shedding the last constraints on the individual loom even larger. The contemporary pursuit of freedom has put into play beliefs, arrangements, and institutions that were once viewed as fundamental and unalterable. Gender, sexuality, identity, the definition of marriage and family, and the origins, meaning, sacredness, and malleability of life—in American society, they are all now being re-examined to accommodate the claims of freedom.

Some view this as an intoxicating prospect. Others see it as the basis for a domestic culture war. In either case, pursuant to their present-day understanding of what freedom entails, Americans have embarked on an effort to reengineer the human person, reorder basic human relationships, and reconstruct human institutions that have existed for millennia.

To render a summary judgment on this project is not yet possible. But surely it is possible to appreciate that some in the world liken it to stepping off a moral precipice and view the New Jerusalem with trepidation. Their fears, and the resistance to which fear gives birth, all but guarantee that the legions of the New Rome will have their hands full for some time to come. □

Toward a Global Society of States

by Michael Lind

Here is an instructive and entertaining exercise for students of American foreign policy. Match the quotation to the appropriate American statesman: Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, or Woodrow Wilson.

The first quotation is this: “Our aim should be from time to time to take such steps as may be possible toward creating something like an organization of the civilized nations, because as the world becomes more highly organized the need for navies and armies will diminish.” Woodrow Wilson, you might think, the naive idealist who dreamed that the League of Nations would put an end to war. But no. The words belong rather to President Theodore Roosevelt, in his 1905 State of the Union address.

Perhaps you’ll have better luck with the second example: “Unhappily for the other three [parts of the world], Europe, by her arms and by her negotiations, by force and by fraud, has in different degrees extended her domination over them all. Africa, Asia and America have successively felt her domination. The superiority she has long maintained has tempted her to plume herself as the mistress of the world, and to consider the rest of mankind as created for her benefit. Men . . . have in direct terms attributed to her inhabitants a physical superiority. . . . Facts have too long supported these arrogant pretensions of the European.” Thomas Jefferson, surely, denouncing European imperialism and racism. No again: Alexander Hamilton, the quintessential realist, in *The Federalist* 11.

Here, in fact, is Jefferson, sounding like the “realist” Hamilton in a letter of 1814: “Surely none of us wish to see Bonaparte conquer Russia, and lay thus at his feet the whole of Europe. This done, England would be but a breakfast. . . . It cannot be to our interest that all Europe should be reduced to a single monarchy.” And here, sounding like his bellicose critic Roosevelt, is Wilson in 1919 describing what it would take for the United States to be an independent great power if the League of Nations did not secure world peace: “We must be physically ready for anything to come. We must have a great standing army. We must see to it that every man in America is trained to arms. We must see to it that there are munitions and guns enough for an army that means a mobilized nation.”

As the quotation game suggests, it’s a mistake to divide the architects of American foreign policy into “realists” and “idealists.” Realpolitik of the Continental kind, with its contempt for international law and its elevation

of the pursuit of national self-interest by brute force, has had little influence in the United States. (It's not surprising that one of the few American proponents of this school, Henry Kissinger, is a German émigré.) American realists such as Hamilton, Theodore Roosevelt, and Henry Cabot Lodge had a healthy respect for the role of military power in foreign affairs, but they also believed in international cooperation—among “civilized” nations, if not among all countries. America's leading “idealists,” for their part, have been willing to use force, particularly when the interests of the United States and the international community have converged. Jefferson waged war on the Barbary pirates, who threatened American shipping and Mediterranean commerce in general. Wilson ruined his presidency and his health in his campaign to persuade the Senate to ratify U.S. membership in the League of Nations, the purpose of which was not to eliminate the role of power in world politics but to replace the “balance of power” with a “community of power.”

If the American tradition of foreign policy, then, is neither militaristic

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realpolitik nor ineffectual pacifism, how should it be described? The mainstream American philosophy of foreign policy, from the 18th century to the 21st, belongs to a broad school of thought that scholars call the “Grotian tradition,” after Hugo Grotius, a 17th-century Dutch theorist of international law. From Grotius and like-minded thinkers

such as Samuel von Pufendorf and Emmerich de Vattel, the Founding Fathers learned that, after the 17th-century Wars of Religion, the Roman empire and medieval Christendom in the West had been replaced by a “society of states,” their number limited initially to the countries of Europe and—by extension—their settler colonies in the Americas. “Europe,” Montesquieu declared, “is a nation composed of many nations.” The British philosopher David Hume similarly viewed Europe and its American and Russian outliers as part of a great commonwealth made up of “a number of neighboring and independent states, connected together by commerce and policy.” “A society of states (or international society),” the 20th-century British scholar Hedley Bull has written, “exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules of their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions.” There is a complex mixture of order and anarchy in the international system, best described perhaps by Alexis de Tocqueville when he wrote of “the society of nations

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Attempting to put a benign spin on America's first major imperial adventure, "New Faces at the Thanksgiving Dinner" (1898) cast the colonies won in the Spanish-American War in an unflattering light.

in which each separate people is, as it were, a citizen—a society always semi-barbarous, even in the most civilized epochs, whatever efforts are made to improve and regulate the relations of those who compose it.”

The greatest threat to the European society of states came from conquerors such as Charles V, Louis XIV, and Napoleon, who sought to replace the system of independent states with a new empire resembling that of Rome. In the 17th century, Pufendorf wrote that all European states were “obliged to oppose with all their power” what he called “the monarchy of Europe, or the universal monopoly, this being the fuel with which the whole world may be put to flame.” Montesquieu argued that modern states should try to avoid being absorbed into a single “universal monarchy” such as the Roman Empire. And Hume, in his essay “Of the Balance of Power,” agreed that states should unite in alliances to prevent any single state from reducing them to the status of mere provinces in a universal empire.

In their attitude toward the Western society of states, the American Founders were conservative. They seceded from the British Empire to join the existing international system, not to overthrow it, as the French Jacobins and Soviet Communists would attempt to do. Even as they hoped that, over time, more states would adopt republican government on the basis of the American example, they adopted the diplomatic institutions and norms previously worked out by the European monarchies and empires. Thus, the great American legal scholar James Kent begins his *Commentaries on American Law* (1826) as follows: “When the United States ceased to be a part of the British empire, and assumed the character of an independent nation, they became subject to that system of rules which reason, morality, and custom had established among the civilized nations of Europe, as their public law.”

Empire without “Overstretch”

It is easy to say that when Osama bin Laden assaulted the world’s remaining superpower, he and his network and those who supported him got their just desserts and appropriate oblivion.

But that conclusion is almost beside the point.

The larger lesson—and one stupefying to the Russian and Chinese military, worrying to the Indians, and disturbing to proponents of a common European defense policy—is that in military terms there is only one player on the field that counts. . . .

To put it another way, while the battle between the United States and international terrorism and rogue states may indeed be asymmetrical, perhaps a far greater asymmetry may be emerging: namely, the one between the United States and the rest of the powers.

How is this to be explained? First, by money. For the past decade and well before that, the United States has been spending more on its defense forces, absolutely and relatively, than any other nation in history. While the European powers chopped their post-Cold War military spending, China held its in check, and Russia’s defense budget collapsed in the 1990s, the U.S. Congress duly obliged the Pentagon with annual budgets ranging from about \$260 billion in the middle of the decade to this year’s \$329 billion.

Everyone knew that, with the Soviet Union’s forces in a state of decrepitude, the United States was in a class of its own. But it is simply staggering to learn that this single country—a democratic republic that claims to despise large government—now spends more each year on the military than the next nine-largest national defense budgets combined. . . .

Nothing has ever existed like this disparity of power; nothing, I have returned to all of the comparative defense spending and military personnel statistics over the past 500 years that I compiled in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, and no other nation comes close. The Pax Britannica was run on the cheap, Britain’s army was much smaller than European armies, and even the Royal Navy was equal only to the next two navies. Right now all the other navies in the world combined could not dent American maritime supremacy.

Charlemagne’s empire was merely western European in its reach. The Roman empire stretched farther afield, but there was another great empire in Persia, and a larger one in China. There is, therefore, no comparison.

But this money has to come from somewhere, primarily from the country’s own economic resources (in long wars, powers often borrow from abroad). Here again is an incomparable source of U.S. strength, and one that has been increasing in the past few years. . . . This steady economic growth, along with the curbing of inflation in the 1990s, produced the delightful result that America’s enormous defense expenditures could be pursued at a far lower relative cost to the country than the military spending of Ronald Reagan’s years.

In 1985, for example, the Pentagon’s budget equaled 6.5 percent of gross domestic product and was seen by many as a cause of U.S. budgetary and economic growth problems. By 1998, defense spending’s share of GDP was down to 3.2 percent, and today it is not much greater.

Being Number One at great cost is one thing; being the world’s single superpower on the cheap is astonishing. . . .

What are the implications, for the world and for America itself?

First, it seems to me there is no point in the Europeans or Chinese wringing

their hands about U.S. predominance, and wishing it would go away. It is as if, among the various inhabitants of the apes and monkeys cage at the London Zoo, one creature had grown bigger and bigger—and bigger—until it became a 500-pound gorilla. It couldn't help becoming that big, and in a certain way America today cannot help being what it is either.

It is interesting to consider the possible implications for world affairs of the existence of such a giant in our midst. For example, what does it mean for other countries, especially those with a great-power past such as Russia and France, or with great-power aspirations such as India and Iran?

Russian president Vladimir Putin's government is faced with the difficult choice of trying to close the enormous power gap, or admitting that would merely overstrain Russia's resources and divert the nation from the more sensible pursuit of domestic peace and prosperity.

French Europeanists need either to recognize that the chances of creating a true equal to American military, diplomatic, and political weight in world affairs are an illusion, or they need to exploit the recent display of Europe's bystander role to make fresh efforts to unify the fractured continent.

Think, also, of the implications for China, perhaps the only country that—should its recent growth rates continue for the next 30 years and internal strife be avoided—might be a serious challenger to U.S. predominance. More immediately, relish the message this mind-boggling display of the American capacity to punish its opponents has sent to those nations who had hoped to change the local status quo in the Korean Peninsula, in the Taiwan Straits, the Middle East—in the not-too-distant future.

As the crew of the *Kitty Hawk* and other vessels of the U.S. Navy take their shore leave, one hears the distant rustle of military plans and feasibility studies by general staffs across the globe being torn up and dropped into the dustbin of history.

Reflect also on the implications for international organizations, especially those involved in Western defense and/or global peace and security. True, some NATO forces played an ancillary role, and European states lent bases to the United States, supplied intelligence, and rounded up suspected terrorists; but the organization's other members may have to face the prospect of being either a hollow shell when the Americans don't play, or an appendage to Washington when they do.

Can one have a reasonably balanced United Nations Security Council when there now exists, in addition to the gap between its five permanent veto members and the nonpermanent members, a tremendous and real gulf in the power and influence of one of the five and the other four? . . .

Will this "unipolar moment," as it was once called, continue for centuries? Surely not.

"If Sparta and Rome perished," Rousseau said, "what state can hope to endure forever?"

It is a fair point. America's present standing very much rests upon a decade of impressive economic growth. But were that growth to dwindle, and budgetary and fiscal problems to multiply over the next quarter of a century, then the threat of overstretch would return. In that event, the main challenge facing the world community could be the possible collapse of U.S. capacities and responsibilities, and the chaos that might ensue from such a scenario.

But from the flight deck of the USS *Enterprise*, that scenario seems a long way off for now.

—Paul Kennedy

Paul Kennedy is a professor of history at Yale University and the author of many books, including The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers (1987). Adapted from an article in The Financial Times (February 2, 2002).

Where Americans have differed from their European counterparts, without rejecting the basic customs and rules of the society of states, is in their deep antagonism toward imperialism, the coercive rule of one ethnic nation over others. (Early American writers who use “empire” in an archaic sense to mean “national territory” should not be interpreted as endorsing colonial rule.) In the past, American support for self-determination was often limited by racism. Southern slaveowners, for example, feared that the establishment in 1804 of a black Haitian republic, independent of France, would inspire slave revolts in the United States; tragically, at the Versailles Conference in 1919, the United States teamed up with the British Empire to block Japan’s proposal that international law ban racial discrimination. (By contrast, antiracism was a basic norm of the international system the United States helped to set up after 1945.)

But there has long been a more generous strain at work in the society. In the early 19th century, for example, the United States welcomed the independence of the Latin American republics from Spain for philosophical as much as for geopolitical reasons. The Monroe Doctrine, which held that the Americas should be an empire-free zone, was violated by France when it took advantage of civil war in the United States to establish a Mexican empire, headed by its puppet, the Hapsburg prince Maximilian. Abraham Lincoln, who had opposed the U.S. war against Mexico (1846–48), supported the republican nationalist Benito Juárez in his battle to free Mexico from France. After Lincoln’s assassination, the threat of U.S. intervention in Mexico led the French to withdraw. Lincoln was a principled anti-imperialist who hoped that the Union victory in the Civil War would inspire liberal republicans throughout the world.

Of course, the United States has at times engaged in old-fashioned territorial imperialism—it annexed northern Mexico; it conquered Spain’s Caribbean and Philippine empire in 1898; it repeatedly sent marines to topple or install governments in the Caribbean and Latin America. But America’s imperialism, despite episodes of brutality, was constrained by republican principles. With the exceptions of Alaska and Hawaii, the geographic expansion of the United States ended with the annexation of the thinly populated northern portion of Mexico. White American statesmen did not want to admit large nonwhite populations in Latin America and the Caribbean to full citizenship, as republican theory required, but they also did not want to rule them without their consent, as republican theory forbade. (Had it not been for 19th-century American racism, much more of Mexico might now be part of the Union.) The few small overseas territories the United States governs today, such as Puerto Rico and Guam, are anomalous exceptions that prove the rule.

Most U.S. interventions in the Caribbean, Central America, and the Philippines occurred to prevent rival great powers—imperial Germany and Japan in the early 20th century, the Soviet Union during the Cold War—from gaining control of crucial strategic assets. The Philippines and Hawaii were valuable chiefly as bases for a U.S. naval presence that kept the European empires and Japan from monopolizing the economic and military resources of China and its surrounding countries. Although some U.S. investors

exploited America's military role for their own purposes, sea power and geopolitical prestige, not profit, were on the minds of American presidents when they sent in the marines. When the evolution of naval and air power made the Panama Canal strategically irrelevant, the United States ceded it to Panama. There is no contradiction between this kind of limited and incidental strategic imperialism, which has permitted the United States to take part in global power struggles by using overseas military bases, and the principled hostility of American leaders to attempts by the European powers and Japan to divide most of the earth's inhabitants and resources among a small number of autarkic empires. Precedents for America's oceanic web of ports, canals, coaling stations, and airfields can be found in the maritime empires created by such older commercial republics as Venice and the Netherlands.

The U.S. protectorate and alliance system during the Cold War, if it was an empire at all, was a temporary empire of defense, not an empire of conquest and exploitation. The presence of U.S. forces in West Germany and Japan allowed those countries to build strong democracies and vibrant economies without being intimidated by the Soviet Union and China. Although the United States supported anticommunist governments in West Germany and Italy in the early years of the Cold War, there was never any possibility that America would invade Western Europe and topple governments, as the Soviet Union did in East Germany (1952), Hungary (1956), and Czechoslovakia (1968). And unlike the Soviet Union, which parasitically exploited its more affluent Eastern European satellites, the United States helped restore Western Europe's economy through the Marshall Plan and encouraged the formation of a powerful economic rival, the European Economic

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It's Time for the U.S. to Ban Landmines.
The World is Waiting.

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VVAFA
Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation

The United States has refused to sign the land mines convention, signed but not ratified the Kyoto Protocol and other pacts, and withdrawn from one major agreement, the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

Community (now the European Union). American proxy wars in Korea, Indochina, Afghanistan, and other countries of no significant economic value were part of the campaign to thwart the Soviet bid for global military and diplomatic hegemony. It does not just distort language to call America's alliance diplomacy and antihegemonic wars against imperial and Nazi Germany and the Soviet bloc "imperialism" and "colonialism"; it obscures the truly innovative nature of what American leaders have sought to do.

From the time the United States emerged as a great power around 1900, most American leaders have shared the vision of a global society of states that would be an alternative to a world divided among closed imperial economic and military blocs. In the world that Americans wanted, applying the principle of self-determination would result in the replacement of large multinational, dynastic empires with dozens or hundreds of new nation-states—preferably, but not necessarily, democratic republics similar to the United States. In the postimperial world order envisioned by leading Americans before 1945, a global market based on free (or perhaps managed) trade would replace the exclusive economic blocs of the British, French, and other empires. This "Open Door" principle was first applied to prevent the carving up of China into imperial economic zones, and it was then generalized to the entire world economy after World War II through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). International organizations—the League of Nations after World War I, the United Nations and other bodies after World War II—were to offer permanent forums for diplomacy; international law and the decrees of international institutions were to be enforced by a global steering committee led by great powers, such as the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

In the early 20th century, variants of this vision were shared by "realists" and "idealists" alike. To enforce international decisions and norms, for example, idealist Woodrow Wilson emphasized collective security actions taken by every nation in concert, while his realist critics Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge favored international policing by a few "civilized" great powers, such as the United States, Britain, and France. But Roosevelt and Lodge shared with Wilson the goals of promoting international organization and arbitration and reciprocally reducing trade barriers.

The broadly shared American vision of a postimperial, global society of states was finally realized by Franklin D. Roosevelt—Theodore's cousin, who had served Wilson as an assistant secretary of the navy. During World War II, Article 3 of the 1941 Atlantic Charter, which declared the "right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they live," was an accurate statement of American policy. When the British argued that Article 3 did not apply to their empire, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles replied in 1942: "If this war is in fact a war for the liberation of peoples, it must assure the sovereign equality of peoples throughout the world, as well as in the world of the Americas. Our victory must bring in its train the liberation of all peoples. Discrimination between peoples because of their race, creed, or color must be abolished. The age of imperialism is ended."

Throughout World War II, FDR sought the peaceful liquidation of the old empires of his British and French allies, even as he joined them in opposing the new empires of Nazi Germany, imperial Japan, and fascist Italy. Although he was willing to make some concessions to them, the American president wanted the British out of India and the French out of Indochina, and he conditioned U.S. help for Britain on the abolition of “imperial preference” in trade and investment and the creation of a truly global economy. An aide’s report of comments made to him at Yalta by FDR reflects how much the president’s anti-imperial idealism was buttressed by realism:

The President said he was concerned about brown people in the East. He said that there are 1,100,000,000 brown people. In many Eastern countries, they are ruled by a handful of whites and they resent it. Our goal must be to help them achieve independence—1,100,000,000 enemies are dangerous. He said he included the 450,000,000 Chinese in that. He then added, Churchill doesn’t understand this.

Adolf Hitler, who had long dreamed of an alliance between Germany and Britain against the United States, ranted that Roosevelt “says he wants to save England but he means he wants to be ruler and heir of the British Empire.” In fact, FDR wanted to do something far more radical than merely create an American empire of a traditional kind. He wanted to create a nonimperial world—a global society of states to replace the old Europe-centered society of states. In return for giving up their exclusive empires, great powers would have a place in the new global system as joint guarantors of peaceful change. FDR’s list of global “policemen” varied; at different times he saw Britain, the Soviet Union, and China as partners of the United States. Whatever their identity, the great powers, rather than exploit their exclusive spheres of influence as predatory empires of the past had done, would act in concert to benefit the overall system, as the great powers of Europe had sometimes done in the 18th and 19th centuries.

FDR mistakenly assumed that the postwar Soviet Union would act as a traditional great power. Instead, after the defeat of Hitler, Joseph Stalin and his successors created an empire in Eastern Europe, helped bring Mao Zedong to power in China, and promoted the expansion of a Moscow-centered communist bloc that included outposts in Korea, Indochina, Cuba, and Africa. The veto power the Soviet Union enjoyed as a permanent member of the UN Security Council kept that body deadlocked from the late 1940s to the 1990s. At the same time, the need to enlist British and French support in the Cold War caused successive U.S. administrations to tolerate a slower pace of decolonization in Asia and Africa than FDR had envisioned.

Although the Grotian ideal of a civilized society of states has been the basis for mainstream American foreign policy, there has always been a concomitant dissenting tradition of American exceptionalism. In this view, the United States is not to be a new Roman Republic or a larger Britain but a new Israel. In 1952 Ronald Reagan, whose Midwestern mother belonged to the Disciples of Christ, echoed this venerable analogy between the United

States and Old Testament Israel: “I believe that God in shedding his grace on this country has always in this divine scheme of things kept an eye on our land and guided it as a promised land.”

The source of this messianic view of America’s role in the world is the Protestant Reformation. New England Protestants feared that the Roman Catholic Church, working through the British monarchy, might strangle the Protestant “saints” in their American refuge. The granting of toleration to Catholics in British Canada by the Quebec Act of 1774 alarmed many Protestants in the American colonies. In the imagination of today’s Protestant evangelicals, the United Nations and “secular humanism” have replaced the British Empire and the Catholic Church as the hubs of international evil, but apocalyptic paranoia remains part of American culture.

American exceptionalism oscillates between isolationism and evangelicalism.

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Virtue must be protected in America from a corrupt world—or imposed by America on a corrupt world. At times (such as the two decades between the First and Second World Wars), American exceptionalists have wanted to create a Fortress America and leave the rest of the world to succumb to decadence, anarchy, and tyranny. In other circumstances,

American exceptionalists have been energized by a millennial fervor for reforming the world. The two impulses have sometimes coexisted. In the 1890s, for example, one fervent Protestant evangelical politician, William Jennings Bryan, denounced American imperialism, and an equally fervent Protestant evangelical preacher, Josiah Strong, argued that it was America’s destiny to Christianize the world by means of an expansive foreign policy.

The isolationist wing and the evangelical wing of American exceptionalism share a dread of alliances: It might be necessary to make immoral concessions to allies to enlarge or maintain a coalition, and the purity of America’s purpose in foreign policy would then be diluted. Even worse, alliances might infect the godly American republic with Old World viruses—autocracy, perhaps, or collectivism. This fear explains why the United States participated in World War I as an associated power, not an ally. It explains, too, why the United States for many years refused to grant diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China; merely to engage in ordinary diplomatic relations with an evil regime is to condone its crimes. American exceptionalism is responsible as well for the frequent use of economic and military sanctions to punish all kinds of transgressions by foreign countries. And its influence can be sensed both in the American Left’s enthusiasm for private disinvestment campaigns against countries with

objectionable governments and in much of the American Right's reflexive unilateralism and suspicion of international organizations and treaties.

During the Cold War, the realist and exceptionalist traditions were both represented among supporters of the successful U.S. strategy of containment of Soviet expansion. Realists sought to check and reduce Soviet imperial power, while exceptionalists viewed the struggle as one for universal human liberty—or against “godless” communism. But long before the end of the Cold War, during the Vietnam era, consensus in U.S. foreign policy had already broken down.

During the 1990s, the Clinton administration pursued what it called “assertive multilateralism”—signing a number of treaties, including the Kyoto Protocol and the treaty to create an international war crimes court, that even some Clinton Democrats had qualms about, and that the succeeding Bush administration unceremoniously dropped. The unilateralist philosophy that initially guided the presidency of George W. Bush in turn proved to be inadequate to dealing with the crisis in the Middle East. Multilateralism and unilateralism are tactics, and the attempt by pundits and policymakers to promote them to the level of strategic “doctrines” is a mistake.

The alternative to both a reflexive multilateralism that subordinates U.S. national interests to a veto by small and weak countries with their own agendas and an arrogant unilateralism that offends important allies is the strategy preferred by both Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, who envisioned a concert of the “civilized” great powers. This approach places responsibility for the management of global peace and progress less on the UN General Assembly than on the permanent members of the UN Security Council—the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and China (all now democracies except for the last). The replacement of the obstructionist Soviet Union by a postimperial Russian nation-state has enabled the Security Council to function at times as its designers had intended—by authorizing joint great-power interventions in Kuwait and the Balkans, for example. The Security Council remains handicapped, however, by the fact that its permanent members do not include great powers such as India, Japan, and Germany.

A great-power concert can also work through institutions outside the UN system. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, for example, was not part of the original UN framework, but since the end of the Cold War it has shown signs of evolving into a regional European/Middle Eastern police force. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Group of Seven (G-7, and later G-8) nations became an informal steering committee for the world economy. It remains to be seen whether the “quartet” of the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations that has coalesced to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be effective. It is worth noting, however, that the “trio” consisting of the United States, the European Union, and Russia controls a majority of both the world's wealth and its military power.

In the long run, new kinds of world order that we cannot now imagine may become possible and desirable. But until that happens, the goal of American strategy ought to remain what it has been for generations: a world in which a handful of great powers sharing basic liberal values cooperate to manage conflict and competition in a global society of sovereign states. □

What's Law Got to Do with It?

by Michael J. Glennon

The Bush administration has come under heavy fire for turning its back on the Kyoto Protocol, the International Criminal Court, and other highly publicized multilateral initiatives. America is abandoning its traditional commitment to the rule of law in international relations, charge critics at home and abroad, and is recklessly bent on “going it alone.” *Unilateralist, hegemonic, imperialist*—barely a day goes by without such indictments being leveled at some new American policy. “We shall pursue our efforts toward a humane and controlled globalization,” French foreign minister Hubert Védrine recently declared, “even if the new high-handed American unilateralism doesn’t help matters.” Some worry that the United States is compromising the majesty of international law and its shining promise of a more peaceful world in the century ahead, while others mutter that the United States is taking on the aspect of an empire—and a few in America gleefully embrace the idea. “We are an attractive empire, the one everyone wants to join,” declares *The Wall Street Journal’s* Max Boot.

As a matter of historical accuracy, the talk of empire is ill-founded. The United States is not an empire, nor could it conceivably become one. The term *empire* implies more than simple cultural dominance or preeminent military power. It applies to states that *use force to occupy and control a group of other states or regions*. The conquered states, robbed of autonomy and political independence, become colonies, provinces, or territories of the imperial power. Taxes are levied, laws are imposed, soldiers are conscripted, governors are installed—all without the consent of the subjugated state. Foreign policy, including all military alliances, trade agreements, and diplomatic relations, is dictated by the imperial capital. Rome was an empire. Napoleonic France, 19th-century Britain, and the Soviet Union were empires. But *empire* simply does not accurately describe America’s relationship with France or Germany or Japan, or even with more dependent states such as Canada, Israel, or Guatemala.

Nor is the United States a hardcore unilateralist. It is a party to more than 10,000 treaties—probably more than any other nation in the world. About a third are multilateral agreements. True, the United States does not pursue its interests by multilateral means alone. But neither do other states. Last year, France rejected the declaration of the Community of



Many Europeans join this German weekly in sniffing at the “lawless” U.S. response to terrorism: “The Bush Warriors: America’s Crusade against Evil,” says the headline.

Democracies in which 106 other countries pledged their cooperative support of democratic institutions in emerging democracies. New Zealand in the mid-1980s unilaterally banned visits from nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed ships. Sweden, Denmark, and Britain, declining thus far to adopt the euro, are prominent—but hardly the only—examples of European nations that unilaterally resist full integration. Norway refuses to join the European Union. Until recently, Switzerland took a pass on membership in the United Nations.

It is true that the United States has been ham-handed in backing out of negotiations without presenting alternatives. But in rhetoric as well as substance, the critics are off the mark. Their vocabulary is overblown, and their logic is distorted. The United States often has been doing what any other nation would do in its circumstances—placing its own national interest before a putative “collective” interest when the two

conflict; it just does it with less hypocrisy and greater success. And if as a result of this new tone in foreign policy some of the weaker, less workable elements of international law are revealed for what they are and discarded, the institution of international law as a whole will likely be strengthened.

Broad labels such as *unilateralist* or *imperialist* have little application to the way the United States and other modern nations actually behave. The contrasting notion that nations act—or should act—to advance interests of other nations is no more useful. In the real world, nations act to advance *their own* interests. They accrue power—sometimes power so great as to qualify as hegemonic (*hegemon* is a Greek word meaning “leader”)—and their power, like their interests, varies according to the realm in which they are acting. No state is unilateralist or multilateralist in every realm.

Henry Kissinger makes a similar point about the importance of different realms in *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* (2001). There is no “international system” to which a single formula can be applied, Kissinger insists, but rather four systems, existing side by side. In the North Atlantic system, democracy and free markets prevail and war is largely unthinkable. In Asia, the United States, China, and other regional powers treat one another as strategic rivals; war is not inconceivable and is kept in check, in part, through a balance of power of the sort that prevailed in 19th-century Europe. In the Middle East, Kissinger’s third system, conflicts are most like those in 17th-century Europe, with roots that are ideological and religious, and are therefore less easily reconcilable. Africa is marked by ethnic conflict, dire health crises, and poverty exacerbated by artificially drawn borders and global isolation. In each of these systems or realms, Kissinger says, the United States, and other countries, must act differently.

Joseph S. Nye conceives of the several realms of the international order in somewhat different terms. He begins *The Paradox of American Power* (2002) with an analogy to three-dimensional chess. In Nye’s view, power is distributed among countries in a complex, three-tiered pattern. On the top chessboard is military power, and there a largely unipolar system prevails, dominated by the United States. The middle board is an international economic system, in which the United States competes with Europe as an approximate equal, while Japan and, increasingly, China exert significant power. The bottom chessboard consists of cross-border transactions—everything from electronic financial transfers to weapons traffic by terrorists—that no government controls. Nye argues that a nation will lose the game if it focuses on only one of the three boards and fails to notice the connections among them. For Nye, as for Kissinger, one label cannot fit all.

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The international legal system is best conceived in much the same way as Kissinger and Nye view the political, economic, and military world—not as a single system but as a web of interrelated subsystems. The treaties and international organizations of the contemporary world occupy different realms, and the United States and other countries have different interests and powers in each. A nation that proceeds unilaterally in one realm may well act multilaterally in another. The use of force, human rights, law enforcement, environmental protection, arms control, trade and finance, intellectual property, migration control, and so forth all present different sets of interests—sometimes unique, sometimes overlapping, but all resistant to an overarching policy that flows from a single, comprehensive algorithm.

Thus, the key question in deciding whether to sign any particular treaty is always the same: Do the proposed restraints serve the state's interests? Do the benefits, in other words, exceed the costs? That is the simple test that every rational state applies when it decides whether to embrace a treaty.

Sometimes what is in a state's national interest is also in some larger common interest, as the NATO Treaty illustrates. And sometimes long-term national interest might argue for acting in the common interest even if a shorter-term view suggests otherwise (which explains why the United States has long supported European

integration even though Europe is an economic competitor). In fields where unilateral action is less likely to be successful, such as law enforcement and environmental protection, treaty agreements may make sense. Some things simply cannot be done without the full cooperation of others.

But acting for a perceived common interest—be it the Western alliance or the brotherhood of man—over a greater and conflicting national interest is irrational. No sensible state does so, and there is no reason why the United States should. Still, contrary to what some of the more “hardheaded” foreign-policy “realists” argue, this does not rule out carefully targeted altruism—such as sending U.S. troops into harm's way in Somalia, an action that saved thousands of people from starvation. Self-image is an important part of a nation's make-up; it derives in part from fidelity to historical ideals, from a willingness to sacrifice occasionally to be true to the national character. A nation whose ideals include humanitarian goals is perfectly justified in pursuing them. But in an international system where life is still nasty, brutish, and short, regularly placing a supposed collective interest over a concrete, competing national interest would only encourage unilateral “free riders” —

ACTING FOR A PERCEIVED
COMMON INTEREST—BE IT
THE WESTERN ALLIANCE OR
THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN—
OVER A GREATER AND
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INTEREST IS IRRATIONAL.

states that are able to reap the benefits without footing the costs—and discourage multilateral solutions that demand fair contributions from all.

For this reason, it is sometimes irrational for the powerful to subject themselves to legalistic constraints created by a community to advance common interests, a point long recognized by political thinkers, including the framers of the U.S. Constitution. In trying to overcome this obstacle to union, James Madison argued that an assessment of *future* power would induce the currently powerful to submit to law. “The uncertainty of their condition,” he wrote in *The Federalist*, prompts the strong to submit to government. The strong “wish for a government which will protect all parties, the weaker as well as the more powerful,” he wrote, because the strong fear that they may some day be weak. But if the strong are not prompted by that fear—if they believe their power will last indefinitely—then they have no reason to accept legalistic restraints. The United States finds itself in much the same position today in a number of realms. John Ikenberry, a leading academic advocate of multilateralism, reflects this insight in his book *After Victory* (2000): “In general, a leading state will want to bind weaker and secondary states to a set of rules and institutions of post-war order—locking in states to acceptable patterns of behavior—but remain unbound itself, free of institutional restraints and obligations.”

In deciding how to act in each of the subsystems of international law, the United States must weigh at least five factors: (1) Is it able to work its will alone, and for how long will it be able to do so? (2) Does an authentic rule of law actually exist in the subsystem, or is its development possible? (3) Is the United States able and willing to bear the long-term burden of being the hegemonic power in that subsystem? (4) Are the benefits of hegemony likely to outweigh the costs if legal constraints within that subsystem are weakened? (5) Is “contagion” likely? That is, would weakening unwanted legalistic constraints in one area undermine constraints in another where they may be more desirable?

Hegemony, as these tests suggest, is in tension with the international rule of law—unless law is seen only as a club for keeping the rest of the world in line. The United States thus needs to determine what measure of discretion it will want to retain in each realm in the distant future and then work backward to devise a strategy to achieve that goal. So it makes perfect sense for American policymakers to think twice before committing the United States to long-term legalistic restraints. Proposed treaties are not holy writ; signing on is not some sort of moral imperative. The United States, like any other state, should approach any treaty offer with strict scrutiny, as if it were being presented by a crowd of carnival pitchmen. Reasonable people may disagree about the merits of a particular treaty, but merit must always be weighed in a tough-minded assessment of national interest.

American decision makers need to be farsighted in recognizing how international norms originate. Rarely do such norms appear suddenly in a treaty cut from whole cloth. More often,

they gestate over a period of years and evolve from informal practices into formal norms, from “soft” law into hard. An example is the UN Security Council. The Council did not emerge spontaneously from San Francisco in 1945. It descended from the Concert of Europe, the informal coalition of great powers that came together at the Congress of Vienna in 1814 to restore order to Continental affairs after the Napoleonic wars. Seemingly ad hoc coalitions such as the Concert can evolve into formally integrated institutions when states’ expectations evolve along with those coalitions, as they did in 1919 with the formation of the League of Nations. So the United States must be circumspect in improvising “coalitions of the willing,” and join only if it can accept the possibility that the “temporary” coalition might eventually take on the status of a more formal multilateral institution, capable of further circumscribing the discretion of members. Coalitions formed to fight wars—as in the Persian Gulf, Kosovo, and Afghanistan—all run the risk of setting precedents that, for better or worse, could congeal into future international institutions.

At the same time, American leaders must be wary of the seductive notion that the United States, with its vast military superiority, economic might, and cultural preeminence, has discovered a Fountain of Perpetual National Power. No doubt it was easy for the leaders of 19th-century Britain or imperial Rome to convince themselves that their dominion would last forever; the Romans did have a run measured in centuries. The United States so far has seemed immune to the perils of “overstretch,” and it has not provoked other states to form the kind of adversarial alliances that have doomed many past superpowers. There is little reason today to fear that American power will wane significantly in the decades immediately ahead. But no one can know. Superpowers come and go, as Mikhail Gorbachev can testify.

The United States should manage its military, political, and economic power as an investor manages assets. Today it is sitting on a stash of power unparalleled in human history. Tomorrow that stash may begin to shrink—or perhaps grow larger. The United States always has the option to “cash out” and lock in its power by accepting legalistic constraints at a time when it can exert maximum leverage. That would be a shrewd move if the geopolitical future looked bleak—if the United States appeared less likely to be able to protect its interests unilaterally. But there is less justification for shackling the nation with multilateral chains in an area where the United States will be able in the future to advance its interests by acting alone. The use of force may be such an area.

During the armistice negotiations at the end of World War I, a hawkish U.S. senator pressed President Woodrow Wilson to justify his support for granting Germany a generous peace. “I am now playing for 100 years hence,” Wilson replied. America’s leaders today must think in the same terms. In some realms, America’s future interests will be better advanced by law; in others, by power. The test of American statesmanship in the 21st century will lie in its ability to discern which is which. □

The Imperial Republic after 9/11

by Robert S. Litwak

America's global dominance prompts popular references to a latter-day Roman Empire. Transcending the Cold War rubric "superpower," "hyperpower" has entered our political lexicon to convey the magnitude of the United States' paramount international status. But though American power has never been greater, there has never been greater confusion about what to do with it.

The current U.S. foreign-policy debate—typically framed across a broad range of issues as the choice between unilateralism ("going it alone") and multilateralism (working in concert with others states)—is a reflection, not the source, of this confusion. The roots of the confusion lie rather in the persisting tension between America's twin identities, a duality aptly characterized by French political theorist Raymond Aron in *The Imperial Republic* (1973). The United States is an "imperial" power dominating and maintaining an international order whose key institutions and governing norms bear an indelibly American stamp. At the same time, it's a "republic"—that is to say, a sovereign state existing within a system of sovereign states equal under international law. The tension created by the two identities, which American policymakers can manage but not totally resolve, has important practical consequences. For example, should the United States act to uphold the global norm against genocide in a conflict region where its national interests are not tangibly at stake? Or, again, should it use unilateral force to prevent a "rogue state" from acquiring weapons of mass destruction?

The clash of identities now plays out in the transformed political environment of the post-9/11 world. After the unprecedented attacks on New York and Washington by Osama bin Laden's Qaeda terrorist network, Leon Fuerth, who had been national security adviser to Vice President Al Gore, commented that September 11, 2001, would henceforth be a demarcation point as stark as B.C. and A.D. in U.S. foreign policy. The occurrence of a mass-casualty attack on American soil by perpetrators originating from Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, half a world away, augured a sea change in U.S. policies, both foreign and domestic. Some political observers viewed the magnitude of the change as comparable to that of the readjustment of the early Cold War era. As Secretary of State Colin Powell observed after September 11, "Not only is the Cold War over, the post-Cold War period is also over." The latter era, ushered in by the collapse of the Soviet empire and the 1991 Gulf War, lasted a decade. It's testimony to what Henry Kissinger called "the infinite complexity" of international relations during the decade

that policy practitioners and scholars could characterize the period only through reference to the preceding Cold War era.

Yet the post-9/11 conventional wisdom that “everything has changed” and “the world will never be the same” requires qualification. In terms of its enduring impact on the American psyche, that horrific day is rightfully grouped with Pearl Harbor and the Kennedy assassination. The 9/11 attacks ushered in a new age of American vulnerability and exposed the dark side of globalization. A radical Islamic group whose idealized conception of society is rooted in the seventh century turned the hallmarks of our 21st-century networked world—the Internet, satellite phones, and commercial jets—into weapons. The increased proliferation of dangerous technologies and the existence of terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda that would not hesitate to use weapons of mass destruction raise the specter of a potentially worse mass-casualty attack in the future. There has been a chilling new conjunction of capabilities and intentions. As American society and societies worldwide adopt counterterrorism measures for our new age of vulnerability, 9/11 has an unshakable psychological and practical impact. And yet, for all the talk of change, the events of that day did not alter the structure of international relations. Indeed, the attacks led not to a transformation of the pre-9/11 international order but to its resounding *affirmation*, evidenced, most notably, by the emergence of a broad international coalition against terrorism. The explanation for this lies in the nature of the international order that was created after World War II.

American diplomatic history shows two contending approaches to international order, realism and liberalism. Each school of thought has its own long history and deep philosophical roots, and each offers a different answer to the most fundamental



The view from the axis of evil: To Iranian cartoonist Touka Neyestani America's response to 9/11 looks like just another exercise of oppression.

question in international relations: How is international peace to be achieved?

To liberal thinkers and practitioners, from Immanuel Kant to Woodrow Wilson, the key determinant is the internal organization of states. That gives rise to the notion that international peace can be secured through the global proliferation of democratic political systems; in the words of President Bill Clinton, “Democracies don’t attack each other.” In contrast, realists from Thucydides to Kissinger have argued that peace derives not from the domestic structures of states but from a stable distribution of power among states. The competing pulls of realism and liberalism are evidenced in the pendular swings of U.S. foreign policy. Thus, for example, during the period of superpower détente in the early 1970s, President Richard Nixon and national security adviser (and later secretary of state) Kissinger could not sustain U.S. domestic support for a realpolitik foreign policy divorced from core American values that promote democracy and human rights. Jimmy Carter subsequently encountered the opposite problem, when liberal idealism ran up against the power realities of an increasingly assertive Soviet Union.

The international institutional structure built after World War II reflected the influence of both schools of thought. Through the Bretton Woods economic agreements and the Marshall Plan, America envisaged an extended geographic zone of democratic, free-market states whose core would be North America, Western Europe, and Japan. The new institutions in the system, firmly grounded in a liberal conception of international order, became the keystone of our modern, connected world. They were complemented by an equally important security-alliance system that began with the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The institutions in the security alliance were built in the realist tradition to address the paramount challenge of the postwar era: containing an expansionist Soviet Union. Writing under the pseudonym X, American diplomat George Kennan elaborated the containment doctrine in a classic article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947. He viewed the West’s efforts to balance Soviet power as essentially a long-term holding operation until the internal contradictions of the communist society led to its “break-up” or “mellowing.” As the Cold War unfolded, successive American administrations defined U.S. interests beyond Europe and Japan (and most significantly in the Third World) in terms of a global competition with the Soviet Union.

“An imperial state,” wrote foreign-policy specialist Robert Tucker in *Nation or Empire?* (1968), “must have as its purpose the creation and maintenance of order.” By that definition, the United States, through its unique institution-building role after World War II, certainly was an “imperial” power. But that American “empire” was unlike any before. Looking to the United States for protection and economic assistance, the recovering European states outside the Soviet sphere willingly joined the multilateral institutions forged through American leadership. The consensual basis of these states’ association gave the postwar international order its unique character—and led Norwegian historian Geir Lundestad to characterize the U.S.-led Western system as an “empire by invitation.” By contrast, only the coercive presence of the Red Army held together the Soviet bloc—that “evil empire,” in President Ronald Reagan’s famous words.

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In 1989, George Kennan's prophetic analysis came to fruition. An aggressive and revolutionary Soviet state became a traditional great power that accepted the legitimacy of the international order. That transformation, which ended a decade of intensified superpower competition after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, required both Reagan's revitalized containment strategy *externally* and Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev's commitment to political reform *internally*. With the demise of the Soviet threat, the chief characteristic of the post-Cold War era became the absence of a significant risk of conflict between great powers. The United States emerged from the Cold War as a "hyperpower," and the economic and military gap between it and the other leading powers—the European Union, Japan, China, and Russia—increased still further in the 1990s. The main residual challenge to international order stemmed from so-called rogue states, relatively marginal international actors such as North Korea, Iran, Iraq, and Libya that employed terrorism as an instrument of state policy and were pursuing weapons-of-mass-destruction capabilities.

As striking as the advent of America's unrivaled international position was the response to it. Against the prediction of classic realist theory, no overt countercoalition of major powers emerged to balance American hyperpower in the aftermath of the Cold War. Political scientist John Ikenberry argues in *After Victory* (2000) that the explanation for this historic departure can be traced to the unprecedented character of the post-World War II international order, which encompasses a web of multilateral economic and security institutions in which American power is embedded and through which it is channeled. That unique quality of the "empire by invitation" has made American power more acceptable and less threatening to other states in the international system. The multilateral institutions and their underlying norms, codified in international law, constitute the core of what liberal internationalists refer to as an emerging system of "global governance."

The enduring tension between the realist and liberal approaches was evident in the major foreign-policy debates of the 1990s, though on the contentious issue of NATO expansion, the two schools promoted the same policy recommendation: New Central European members should be admitted. The Clinton administration regarded their admission as wholly consistent with its neo-Wilsonian "strategy of engagement and enlargement," which emphasized the global extension of democratic political systems and market economics. In addition, NATO's expansion furthered the administration's long-term goal of enlarging the U.S.-led community of democracies, an evolutionary process that did not exclude even the possibility of Russian integration. Realists such as Kissinger, operating from diametrically opposite assumptions, also supported NATO enlargement—to move the alliance's forward line eastward as a hedge against Russia's possible re-emergence as an adversary were that nation's democratization process to fail.

This liberal-realist cleavage also framed the post-Cold War debate on the crucial issue of humanitarian intervention to prevent ethnic and sectarian conflict within states. In keeping with the liberal orientation of its strategy of engagement and enlargement, the Clinton administration was increasingly willing to intervene in internal conflicts, as in Somalia and Haiti, to preserve or reconstitute domes-

tic order. Political scientist Michael Mandelbaum, writing in *Foreign Affairs* in 1996, offered a powerful realist critique of the administration's policy on humanitarian intervention, which he characterized as a form of "social work" that focused on "peripheral" areas not of vital interest to the United States.

The debate on humanitarian intervention was emblematic of the broader confusion about the purposes of American power after the Cold War. To Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, the United States was "the indispensable nation," whose engagement and leadership were essential to the resolution of any major international issue. But the nation's activism ran up against a more economical definition of U.S. interests in a world no longer focused on the global East-West competition. Indeed, in the absence of a galvanizing Soviet threat, policymakers in the 1990s faced a significant challenge in mobilizing domestic support for an activist United States. The title of a 1993 book by Richard Haass, *The Reluctant Sheriff*, captured the nation's ambivalent attitude toward its role in international affairs.

During the 1990s, the tension between U.S. indispensability and U.S. reluctance played out across a range of policy issues involving the use of force to uphold global norms. Robert Tucker's persistent question—nation or empire?—was recast in the altered international environment. With respect to the dilemmas of humanitarian intervention, the central issue became whether America would perform the *imperial* function of preventing conflict and maintaining order even when its *national* interests were not tangibly at stake in a particular country.

In 2000, presidential candidate George W. Bush campaigned on a realist foreign-policy platform of returning to "a focus on power relationships and great-power politics," as distinct from the Clinton administration's perceived emphasis on soft transnational issues. The new Bush administration came to office concerned about the potential rise of a great-power challenge from an increasingly assertive China and hostile to the notion of domestic engineering encapsulated in the term *nation-building*. America's allies bridled at Washington's unilateral rejection of pending international treaties, such as the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Embedding American power in international institutions may have made it less threatening to other states, but the Bush administration saw that arrangement as a potential constraint on the sovereign exercise of power in accord with U.S. national interests.

After 9/11, the Bush administration, whose statements reflected a conflicted attitude toward international organizations and treaties, rediscovered the utility of multilateralism. The terrorist attacks were directed not just at the United States but at the global system itself, which the perpetrators recognized as American dominated. Yet the horrific assault had precisely the opposite effect of what the terrorists may have intended: It strengthened and revitalized support for the global system. America's European allies responded with the first invocation ever of the NATO treaty's collective security provision. Even more significantly, the common perception of the threat posed by terrorism to their own societies and to the global economy pushed the United States, Russia, and China toward their closest relationship since World War II. In effect, the Bush administration

dropped its pre-9/11 ambivalence toward Russia and China. In an April 2002 speech that recalled the Clinton administration's strategy of engagement and enlargement, Richard Haass, now a State Department official, characterized the overarching concept guiding American foreign policy in the 21st century as "integration." China's accession to the World Trade Organization and the creation of a formal NATO-Russia Council were tangible symbols of the integration process. This shift in great-power relations, the long-term durability of which is questioned by foreign-policy realists, underscores the extent to which the 9/11 terrorism reinforced the existing structure of international relations.

But despite the essential continuities of the post-9/11 world, the attacks have recast the foreign-policy debate on two issues critical to America's dual identity as an "imperial republic": nation-building and the use of force. Although presidential candidate Bush expressed his opposition to nation-building and humanitarian intervention, the 9/11 attacks and the ensuing war on terrorism have blurred or called into question the pre-9/11 analytical categories. Afghanistan, where the Taliban regime was supported by Osama bin Laden's subventions, elided the distinction that had been drawn previously between rogue states and failed states. Afghanistan, in legal scholar Michael Glennon's nice play on State Department terminology, had become "a terrorist-

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sponsored state." The autumn 2001 war there, capped by the overthrow of the Taliban regime, has ushered in an era that emphasizes peacekeeping and stabilization.

The long-term role of the United States in what now amounts to a humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan by the international community is unclear. Some "mission creep" from counterterrorism to nation-building is likely. But what's broadly evident is that the United States cannot afford to be indifferent to the "failed state" problem, even in a region not considered of vital *national* interest. The notion that America should eschew nation-building in regions of "strategic irrelevance," as conservative commentator Charles Krauthammer has argued, is of limited operational guidance when *any* failed state can provide fertile ground for terrorists groups with a global reach. Although the United States cannot do everything everywhere to reconstitute failed and failing states, it continues to perform an essential imperial function in the maintenance of international order. Indeed, taking imperial action of this kind to forestall the creation of another Afghanistan may be a particularly effective means of tending to the national interest.

The attacks of September 11 have also changed the terms of debate over the use of force, the most consequential and contentious foreign-policy issue facing the United States. The focus on "exit strategies" that marked the post-Vietnam era has shifted as the United States wages a global war of unspecified duration against

an elusive terrorist enemy. This new war highlights the central theme of political scientist Joseph Nye's recent book *The Paradox of American Power* (2002). On the one hand, the Afghan operation revealed the extraordinary ability of the U.S. military to operate virtually alone. The military instruments employed in the conflict—from long-range transport aircraft and heavy bombers with precision-guided munitions to aircraft carriers and armed drones—exposed the gap, not to say chasm, in military capabilities that exists between the United States and other countries, including its closest NATO allies. On the other hand, to wage an effective counterterrorism campaign against a Qaeda organization that's operating in more than 60 countries requires unprecedentedly close multilateral cooperation, most notably in the area of intelligence. Such multilateralism offers an effective means of attaining American objectives, and, equally important, it provides political legitimacy for American actions.

American policymakers must weigh the tradeoffs between the utility and the constraints of multilateralism. As John Ikenberry observes, “Cooperative strategies that reinforce norms of international conduct do constrain the ways in which the U.S. uses military force, but they also make other states more willing to join the coalition.” Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has baldly stated that in the war against terrorism “the mission determines the coalition,” not the other way around. That determination of the Bush administration to maintain flexibility of action was reflected in its decision not to seek explicit UN Security Council authorization for the war in Afghanistan and in its apparently reluctant acceptance of military units from allied countries.

The imperative of preventing another mass-casualty attack on America, the warnings of which are issued almost weekly by U.S. government officials, has transformed the debate about the geographic scope of the war on terrorism and the preemptive use of force. Proponents of American unilateralism argue that pre-9/11 constraints, such as the international legal prohibition against “anticipatory self-defense,” are nonsensical in an age when Osama bin Laden has said that obtaining nuclear weapons is a moral duty—and when he certainly has no compunction about using them against America. In his 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush identified Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as an “axis of evil” and stated that his administration “will not stand by, as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons.” In short, the president argues, to protect American society, which is uniquely threatened by Al Qaeda, the United States may be required by the exigencies of the new era to take action without the legitimizing cloak of multilateralism. Critics of this unilateralist approach respond that the pursuit of what is perceived as an American *national* agenda will erode international support for what the Bush administration has cast as a *global* war on terrorism.

In the post-9/11 world, America remains the indispensable superpower. But global terrorism no longer permits it to be a reluctant sheriff. As the Bush administration assesses the calculus of risk of various courses of action, including a possible war against Iraq, its greatest challenge is to forge a strategy for this new era that will reconcile the policy tensions endemic to an imperial republic. □

THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

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Drawing a Bead on Terrorism

A Survey of Recent Articles

With America's proclaimed war against terrorism almost one year old, questions still remain about the scope of the conflict and the definition of the enemy—and also, for some, about the “root causes” of the terror visited upon the United States last September 11.

For Noam Chomsky, author of the best-selling *9-11*, and other leftists of “a certain kind,” the search for root causes rapidly turned into yet another opportunity to assail American imperialism, observes writer Benjamin Ross in *Dissent* (Spring 2002). “Overlooking the perpetrators’ frank expressions of a thoroughly medieval worldview, they quickly conclude that terrorism must result from poverty and oppression. . . . Engineering students living in Europe on checks from home must have been the wretched of the earth. Their yearning for theocracy was really a hunger for bread and freedom.”

But Chomsky-esque leftists were hardly the only prominent figures to find empty pocketbooks the underlying problem. “Fight Terrorism by Ending Poverty,” declares the headline over an essay in *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Spring 2002) by James D. Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank. In the same issue there is this from Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, president

of the Philippines: “To eliminate terrorism we must also eliminate poverty.”

Third World poverty may often be a contributing factor in terrorism, but it is neither a necessary nor a sufficient cause, argues Richard K. Betts, director of the Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University, writing in *Political Science Quarterly* (Spring 2002). Fifteen of the 19 hijackers in the 9/11 attacks, he notes, were from Saudi Arabia, “one of the most affluent of Muslim countries.” The worst anti-American terrorist threats, he says, “grow out of a few regions and are concentrated overwhelmingly in a few religiously motivated groups. . . . Economic development in an area where the political and religious impulses remain unresolved could serve to improve the resource base for terrorism rather than undercut it.”

Donald Kagan, a professor of classics and history at Yale University, observes with alarm that, since 9/11, many academics and intellectuals “have urged us to consider the killers’ anger and resentment, provoked by their poverty in a world dominated by American wealth, by their understandable hatred of American power and influence throughout the world, by their appropriate dismay at the alleged

errors or wickedness of American policies, whether political, economic, military, or environmental.” These thinkers, he argues in the *Intercollegiate Review* (Spring 2002), would in effect turn the attackers into the real victims.

The overwhelming majority of Americans have little difficulty recognizing Osama bin Laden or Al Qaeda and closely allied groups as their mortal enemies, but the larger “terrorism” with which the United States is avowedly at war is not as easy to define.

Terrorism is neither an ideology nor a political program or project but a tactic, observes Robert V. Keeley, former U.S. ambassador to Mauritius, Zimbabwe, and Greece, writing in *Middle East Policy* (Mar. 2002). “Terrorism is the indiscriminate use of violence against—generally the killing of—civilian non-combatants in pursuit of a political aim.” But by that definition, he notes, it would include, for example, the mass bombing of cities by both sides during World War II. Were the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki instances of terrorism? The question sparks heated debate.

The U.S. State Department limits terrorism to acts committed by “subnational groups or clandestine agents,” but that still may be too inclusive. As Betts notes, “most people can think of some ‘good’ political cause” that would turn particular “terrorists” into “freedom fighters.” “Israelis who call the Khobar Towers bombers of 1996 terrorists might reject that characterization for the Irgun, which did the same thing to the King David Hotel in 1946.” Betts himself finesses the difficulty by defining terrorism as “the illegitimate, deliberate killing of civilians for purposes of punishment or coercion,” thus leaving open the possibility that such killing may sometimes be legitimate.

Definitional problems aside, terrorism does have a history, etymological and bloody. The word was coined during France’s Reign of Terror of 1793–94, according to www.terrorismsanswers.com, a website sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations. “Originally, the leaders

of this systematized attempt to weed out ‘traitors’ among the revolutionary ranks praised terror as the best way to defend liberty, but as the French Revolution soured, the word soon took on grim echoes of state violence and guillotines.”

Narodnaya Volya (People’s Will), an antitsarist group in late-19th-century Russia, was an early example of terrorism in a recognizably modern form. The assassination of Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Serb extremist in 1914, which helped trigger World War I, stands out as a particularly significant instance of terrorism. Another historical landmark: the first terrorist hijacking of a commercial airplane—in 1968, by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The real enemy today is not the generalized abstraction “terrorism” but “militant Islam,” argues Norman Podhoretz, editor at large of *Commentary* (Feb. 2002). He envisions the United States, having overturned the Taliban in Afghanistan, now moving on “to topple five or six or seven more tyrannies in the Islamic world,” including Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq and Yasir Arafat’s Palestinian Authority. The Islamic countries, as well as the rest of the world, would be better off, and eventually “the long-delayed reform and modernization of Islam” might occur.

But in *Ethics & International Affairs* (2002: No. 1), Richard Falk, a prominent dove during the Vietnam War who backed the U.S. war in Afghanistan, argues against suspending “normal inhibitions on the use of force and respect for territorial sovereignty” in post-Afghanistan operations. Continuing efforts to identify and destroy Al Qaeda cells and allied political organizations, says Falk, who is a visiting professor in the global studies program at the University of California, Santa Barbara, should be limited to “the nonmilitary domains of intelligence operations, cooperative law enforcement, diplomatic leverage, and financial interdiction.” Extending the war to Iraq, Falk warns, would “awaken suspicions in the Islamic world that an intercivilizational war was under way despite the reassurances of American leaders to the contrary.”

What Did the Declaration Mean?

“The Declaration of Independence and International Law” by David Armitage, in *The William and Mary Quarterly* (Jan. 2002), Box 8781, Williamsburg, Va. 23187–8781.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident. . . .” That line from the Declaration of Independence, with its bold enunciation of natural rights, rings in the American memory like no other. Yet in truth, contends Armitage, a historian at Columbia University, it wasn’t really what the Declaration was all about.

As many scholars have pointed out, the national veneration of the Declaration did not begin until the early 19th century, “when a civil religion of national patriotism sanctified it as ‘American Scripture,’” writes Armitage. (He is one of the new “Atlanticist” historians, who aim to purge early American history of what they see as exaggerated notions of American “exceptionalism.”) To understand what the Declaration was really about, just look at its first line: “When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another. . . .” The Declaration was needed to solve a problem in the developing realm of international law: how to transform America’s struggle with Britain from a civil war into a clash between states, and thus to gain recognition in the world. As Thomas Paine argued in *Common Sense* (1776), “The custom of all Courts is against us, and will be so, until by an Independence,

we take rank with other Nations.” When France did finally agree to an alliance with the Americans in February 1778, the treaty committed it to “maintain effectually” the sovereignty of “said united States.”

Armitage notes that the Declaration was written at a transitional period in the rise of international law. Indeed, the term *international law* was coined only in 1780 by the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham (who was a harsh critic of the Declaration). Until that time, relations among nations were thought to be governed by the “law of nations,” which was grounded in natural law. But Bentham and Immanuel Kant advanced the new idea of positive law, which held that moral and political norms arose exclusively from “the acts of particular legislators or the contractual agreements of peoples and sovereigns,” Armitage explains. That’s why the Declaration (which had one foot in each of the two schools), along with the Franco-American treaty of 1778 and Britain’s subsequent recognition of American independence in the 1783 Treaty of Paris, was so important: They made American statehood real in the eyes of the world. It was only later that the Declaration came to be seen as a tool of *nationhood*, “a talisman in a specifically national mythology.”

Aghast at the Left

“Can There Be a Decent Left?” by Michael Walzer, in *Dissent* (Spring 2002), 310 Riverside Dr., No. 1201, New York, N.Y. 10025.

Was 9/11 “blowback” for American misdeeds abroad? Obviously, shouted Noam Chomsky, Susan Sontag, and many like-minded others. The U.S. war in Afghanistan? An imperialist adventure, most declared. Such responses have led Walzer, coeditor of the socialist journal *Dissent* and an *éminence grise* of the

American Left, to an anguished inquiry into the current “indecent” on that side of the spectrum.

“Maybe the guilt produced by living in [the sole superpower] and enjoying its privileges makes it impossible to sustain a decent (intelligent, responsible, morally nuanced) politics,” he writes. “Maybe fes-

tering resentment, ingrown anger, and self-hate are the inevitable result of the long years spent in fruitless opposition to the global reach of American power. Certainly, all those emotions were plain to see in the Left's reaction to September 11, in the failure to register the horror of the attack or to acknowledge the human pain it caused, in the . . . barely concealed glee that the imperial state had finally gotten what it deserved." Although many leftists subsequently "recovered their moral balance," Walzer says, "many more" did not.

The Left long ago "lost its bearings," Walzer says. Its critique of U.S. foreign policy—"most clearly, I think, from the Vietnam years forward (from the time of 'Amerika,' Viet Cong flags, and breathless trips to North Vietnam)—has been stupid, overwrought, grossly inaccurate."

As a result, leftists made a fetish of alienation, "refusing to identify with their fellow citizens, regarding any hint of patriotic feeling as a surrender to jingoism. That's why many leftists had such difficulty responding emotionally to the attacks of September 11 or

joining in the expressions of solidarity that followed"—and why they backed ineffective proposals such as turning the problem over to the United Nations.

Clinging to a "ragtag Marxism," many of Walzer's ideological confreres are blind to the immense power of religion. "Whenever writers on the left say that the 'root cause' of terror is global inequality or human poverty, the assertion is in fact a denial that religious motives really count." Minimizing the importance of Islamic radicalism, many have simply assumed that "any group that attacks the imperial power must be a representative of the oppressed, and its agenda must be the agenda of the Left."

Opting for the "moral purism of blaming America first," many leftists cannot bring themselves to criticize the "oppressed" elsewhere. Yet even the oppressed are morally obliged "not to murder innocent people, not to make terrorism their politics." What the American Left must do now, Walzer says, is to "begin again" by putting "decency first."

How to Get Government Moving

"Our Tottering Confirmation Process" by Paul C. Light, in *The Public Interest* (Spring 2002), 1112 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

When George W. Bush took office in January 2001, he had some 500 cabinet and subcabinet positions requiring Senate confirmation to fill. A year later, about one-third of the posts remained vacant. The problem? An appointments process that includes too many nominees and subjects them to too much screening, contends Light, director of governmental studies at the Brookings Institution.

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt made do with 51 Senate-confirmed appointees: 10 cabinet secretaries, three under secretaries, and 38 assistant secre-

taries. Bush's 500 include 14 cabinet secretaries, 23 deputy secretaries, 41 under secretaries, 212 assistant secretaries, and



"Days or even weeks" are needed to fill out some of the disclosure forms required of presidential appointees.

some 200 others. “Presidents seem to have embraced the notion that more leaders equals more leadership,” Light quips.

Extensive Federal Bureau of Investigation background investigations have added to the delays. Seeking to avoid embarrassment, the White House does early “preventive screening” that further bogs down the process. The ordeal puts off many talented recruits.

Failure is built in. To process 500 nominees at the average pace of 10 to 15 per week requires about 40 legislative weeks. “With recesses and vacations, the transition cannot be completed until a year into the

new term.” Frustrated cabinet secretaries have added new high-level staff positions such as chief of staff as a way of getting around the process, thus diluting the accountability that is the whole point of confirmation.

“Perhaps it is time,” Light says, “to ask whether we need so many layers of government.” Disclosure requirements, screening, and background checks could be scaled back. Some nominees could be spared Senate hearings. Does the nation really need the nominee for assistant secretary for public affairs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development to tell all?

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Transforming the Pentagon

“A Tale of Two Secretaries” by Eliot A. Cohen, in *Foreign Affairs* (May–June 2002),
58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Will 9/11 finally compel the defense establishment to abandon its love affair with the heavy weapons and conventional doctrines of the Cold War?

The forces that stymied Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s plans for “defense transformation” before the war on terrorism are still in place, notes Cohen, a professor of strategic studies at John Hopkins University’s Nitze School of Advanced International Studies: entrenched services, recalcitrant bureaucracies, the many interests with a stake in the production of costly traditional weapons. Yet he sees some reasons for optimism. Buried in the Pentagon’s \$300 billion plus budget are funds for innovative weapons such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), not to mention the routine purchases of routers, servers, and global positioning systems that laid “the base for the networked war that U.S. forces ended up waging in Afghanistan.” (Military logisticians were shamed into embracing the latter by the stellar efficiencies of companies such as Wal-Mart and Federal Express.) Younger officers—now majors and lieutenant colonels, even sergeants—are eager for change, and the strong American cultural predilection

for innovation and experimentation inevitably affects the military over the long term.

Still, the old battles will have to be refought. For example, because the Pentagon would rather spend money on new “platforms” than on ammunition, U.S. forces ran short of satellite-guided bombs during the war in Afghanistan. And even as the Predator UAV was pressed into service in Afghanistan last fall with great success, the Pentagon’s perfection-oriented office of testing and evaluation was declaring it not “operationally effective or suitable.” Next year, the Pentagon will spend just over \$1 billion on UAVs—and \$7.5 billion on conventional fighter jets.

In this new era, the United States will need to be prepared to station troops in many places—it currently has forces in Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Sinai Peninsula, for example. It will need forces that are highly mobile, often without relying on local bases or prepositioned supplies. This calls for things such as “arsenal ships” and a new bomber, Cohen believes. The Pentagon will have to get better at mobilization for sudden conflicts and find new ways to make use of regular personnel,

reservists, and private contractors. “Above all, the 21st-century U.S. military will require an officer corps of unprecedented versatility and intelligence.” A key requirement: more emphasis on officer education in the social sciences and humanities

rather than technical disciplines.

For centuries, war was waged chiefly by states with roughly comparable armies and familiar purposes. But war itself is changing, Cohen argues, and so must the Pentagon.

The New Mercenaries

“Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry and Its Ramifications for International Security” by P. W. Singer, in *International Security* (Winter 2001–02), MIT Press Journals, 5 Cambridge Ctr., 4th fl., Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

Need a commando unit? A fighter wing? A new breed of corporate mercenaries stands ready to provide them. Private military firms (PMFs) are in the business of selling the specialized services needed to fight today’s high-tech wars, from military training and logistical support to combat forces. “The emergence of PMFs,” declares Singer, a Brookings Institution researcher, “challenges one of the basic premises of international security: that states possess a monopoly over the use of force.”

The mercenary profession is as old as warfare itself—the Thirty Years’ War of 1618–48 was fought largely by hired hands—but with the rise of the modern state in the last century or so, hired guns slipped into the shadows. Now for-profit fighters are back, though better organized and disciplined than they were before. Much of the work is done far from the front lines. Firms such as MPRI, Armor-Group, and Vinnell are hierarchical, registered businesses that “compete openly on the international market” and even advertise on the World Wide Web. (“The greatest corporate assemblage of military expertise in the world,” is how MPRI describes itself.) Other firms, such as DynCorp., are “military oriented.”

PMFs do contract work in communications and computers at Cheyenne Mountain, the nerve center of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, and they provide Saudi Arabia with everything from air defense to naval training. Every major U.S. military operation in the post-Cold War era has involved significant PMF support, Singer notes.

The firms have been “determinate actors” in conflicts in Angola, Croatia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone.

The technology-oriented “revolution in military affairs” and large-scale demilitarization since the end of the Cold War have fed today’s rapid PMF growth. In the 1990s alone the world’s armies shrank by more than six million, creating a large pool of well-trained labor. Some former elite military units, such as the South African 32nd Reconnaissance Battalion, have simply opened up shop as companies. It is estimated that 70 percent of the KGB found work with PMFs once the Soviet spy agency went belly-up. At the same time, technological change in the world’s militaries has created strong demand for highly skilled people, even if they don’t wear uniforms.

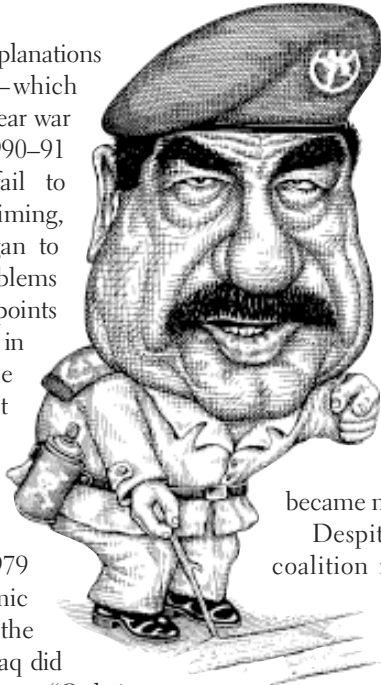
The rise of PMFs has tremendous implications for international security, Singer argues. By providing sophisticated off-the-shelf military muscle, PMFs can empower weak states and “non-state actors,” such as guerilla and terrorist groups. Employed by civilian regimes in Third World states, they may help stave off military coups. By lowering the cost of obtaining sophisticated military force, they may increase the overall likelihood of war; by enabling weak states to buy a potent defense on the open market, they may diminish it. Ultimately, Singer speculates, we may be on the road back to the environment of old Europe, “where wealth and military capability went hand in hand: *Pecunia nervus belli* (Money nourishes war).”

The Devil Made Him Do It

“Iraq’s Decisions to Go to War, 1980 and 1990” by F. Gregory Gause III, in *The Middle East Journal* (Winter 2002), 1761 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-2882.

Why did Saddam Hussein decide in 1980 to attack Iran and then, 10 years later, to invade Kuwait? The usual answer is that the Iraqi dictator mistakenly thought they’d be easy pickings. But Gause, a political scientist at the University of Vermont, contends that Saddam in both instances sought mainly to counter what he perceived as foreign efforts to undermine his grip on power at home.

The conventional explanations for Saddam’s actions—which led to the costly eight-year war with Iraq and the 1990–91 Persian Gulf War—fail to account for their timing, Gause says. “Iran began to experience internal problems as early as 1977,” he points out. “While the Shah was in power the Iraqi regime not only did not exploit his weakness, but sought to support his rule.” Even after Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi fell in early 1979 and the new Islamic Republic devastated the Iranian officer corps, Iraq did not move to take advantage. “Only in September 1980,” Gause writes, “after numerous statements by the new Iranian leaders encouraging revolt in Iraq, tangible efforts by Iran to encourage such revolt, and serious evidence of domestic discontent by Iraqi Shi’ites did Iraq go to war.”



As for the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Baghdad had long claimed the country as part of Iraq and had long enjoyed decisive military superiority. Indeed, had Saddam just waited a year or two, he would have possessed a small arsenal of nuclear weapons. So the timing made no sense. But Saddam felt under immense pressure to act as a result of what he believed to be “an international conspiracy” against Iraq. He blamed Iraq’s economic woes in the wake of the war with Iran on “lower oil prices, which were in turn blamed on the ‘overproduction’ of Kuwait and the [United Arab Emirates], clients of the United States.” Saddam saw other signs of U.S. hostility toward Iraq and also feared a new Israeli strike against his nascent nuclear establishment. “As he began to perceive that the future could hold serious challenges for his rule,” says Gause, “his foreign policy became more aggressive.”

Despite the buildup of American and coalition forces after Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait on August 2, Saddam continued to believe he could avoid defeat. Even after the air war started in January 1991 he still refused to withdraw from Kuwait and seek a diplomatic solution. Why? Because, says Gause, the dictator did not believe that withdrawal would end the perceived “international conspiracy” to weaken Iraq and destabilize his regime.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Engulf and Devour?

“Are Giant Companies Taking Over the U.S. Economy?” by Lawrence J. White, in *The Milken Institute Review* (Second Quarter 2002), 1250 Fourth St., 2nd fl., Santa Monica, Calif. 90401-1353.

The American merger and acquisition binge of the 1990s revived the old specter of an economy dominated by a relative handful of titanic corporations. Last year, the \$181.6 billion AOL-Time Warner merger suggested that the creep-

ing giantism is continuing.

Not to worry, says White, an economist at New York University’s Stern School of Business. Whether you look at the biggest 100, 500, or 1,000 U.S. corporations, the result is the same: They

have been growing “a bit more slowly” than the economy as a whole since the 1980s.

It is surprisingly difficult to get a true picture of what is going on. Data are fragmentary, and it is not at all clear how to measure corporate “bigness”: sales? profits? payroll? Two key sources diverge markedly even on the number of mergers in recent decades, though both show that the number roughly quadrupled, to about eight million, during the 1990s.

White relies on two seldom-used indicators that he says have fewer flaws than others. *Forbes*’s surveys show that the 500 largest corporations measured in terms of profits and in terms of employment claimed a shrinking share of the total

in each area between 1980 and 2000. Their share of profits, for example, decreased from more than 70 percent to less than 60 percent.

U.S. Census Bureau data confirm this trend. They show, for example, that the 1,000 biggest employers claimed virtually the same share of total employment (about 27 percent) in 1998 as they had 10 years earlier. (Firms with fewer than 500 employees saw their share shrink, which means that those in the middle recorded gains.)

The explanation? As fast as big corporations grow, White argues, the U.S. economy grows even faster. The 10 years covered by the Census Bureau study brought a net gain of a half-million new companies.

EXCERPT

Receding Recessions



The U.S. economy has endured many blows in its 225 years—wars with foreign powers, our own Civil War, the Great Depression, the assassination of four presidents, stock market crashes, racial strife, and more. Nonetheless, the country has survived, learned, and emerged stronger. Our stability is reflected in the economy, which today takes more steps forward and fewer steps back than at any time in history. A 25-year moving average of expansion versus contraction shows that for nearly a century—until the 1940s—the economy was in recession 40 to 50 percent of the time, taking one step back for nearly every step forward. From 1940 to 1982, our performance improved, and the frequency of recessions fell to an average of about 15 percent. More recently, the economy has shown even more stability, marching forward up to 90 percent of the time.

—From *Taking Stock in America*, the 2001 annual report of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas

The States Matter

“Welfare Reform: The Institutional Dimension” by Lawrence M. Mead, in *Focus* (special issue, 2002), 1180 Observatory Dr., 3412 Social Science Bldg., Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wis. 53706.

When the 1996 welfare reform law turned over to the states much of the responsibility for figuring out how to assist the needy and get them into jobs, it was only to be expected that the states would vary in how well they did. Among states closely studied so far, Mead, a professor of politics at New York University, sees a larger pattern, reflecting the states’ diverse political cultures.

Political scientist Daniel Elazar offered a useful picture of those cultures in his 1966 book *American Federalism: A View from the States*. In predominantly “moralistic” states, there was a high-minded emphasis on the public interest and strong government. “This culture prevailed in northern New England, the upper Midwest, and parts of the West and Northwest.” In predominantly “individualistic” states, in the Mid-Atlantic states and the lower Midwest, government was viewed as an instrument for “advancing the private interests of groups and citizens,” with policy determined through compromise. In “traditionalistic” states, found mainly in the South and Southwest, “government played a more limited role, chiefly to defend society against fundamental changes.”

Recent studies of welfare reform in the states roughly bear out Elazar’s analysis, Mead contends. He puts eight—Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Kansas, Utah, Oregon, Washington, and Tennessee—in the high-achieving, generally “moralistic,” category. All took “more or less” the same approach. Wisconsin, whose reform efforts

began in the mid-1980s, led the way. Democratic legislators in the Badger State gave up the notion of welfare as an entitlement based on need alone, Mead notes, while Republicans agreed to “massive expansions of the bureaucracy and [child care and other] support services.” The full-blown “Wisconsin Works” program “combines the most severe work tests [for receiving aid] in the nation with unusually generous support services for the entire working poor population. The combination has driven the cash welfare rolls down by about 90 percent and work levels up from already high levels”—to 65 percent in 1998.

In New York and five other generally “individualistic” states—California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Ohio—changes were made to comply with federal requirements, but consensus was lacking for “fundamental” reform.

Six “traditionalistic” southern states—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Texas—never before “had to frame a serious welfare policy.” They simply kept benefit levels low. Since 1996 they have begun—but only slowly—to encourage work within welfare.

Though the states’ diverse political cultures have deep roots in the ethnic and religious characteristics of their original settlers, Mead, like Elazar before him, believes that the “moralistic” approach is favored in the long run, thanks to rising education levels and other factors. Among those other factors today: welfare reform itself.

Share the Wealth!

“America’s Lost Egalitarian Tradition” by Sean Wilentz, in *Daedalus* (Winter 2002), Norton’s Woods, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Equality in America comes in many flavors—equality of opportunity, equality of races, equality of sexes, to name just three. But one variety seldom mentioned these

days is equality of wealth, laments Wilentz, a historian at Princeton University.

When the nation was founded, Americans disagreed about many things,

but not, in general, he says, about what Thomas Jefferson called the “numberless instances of wretchedness” that stemmed from gross inequalities of property. As Noah Webster, the staunch Connecticut Federalist, said in support of the Constitution in 1787, “a general and tolerably equal distribution of landed property is the whole basis of national freedom” and “the very soul of a republic.”

The actual distribution of property then did not live up to that egalitarian ideal, of course. On the eve of the Revolution, by one recent analysis, the richest one percent of Americans held more than 10 percent of the nation’s total wealth. Even so, the inequality of wealth in that era was much less than it was in Great Britain and Europe—and much less than it would be in later periods in the United States.

“Because the vast preponderance of American wealth came from the land, because American land was plentiful, and because ownership of the land was widely distributed” (compared with the Old World), observes Wilentz, Americans then could imagine their country as a kind of utopia. All wealth was created by human labor, they believed, and, while perfect equality would always be beyond reach, great disparities of wealth could be avoided as long as government did not interfere.

“Though not unchallenged, and though open to conflicting interpretations,” Wilentz writes, “the conceptual basics of the egalitarian tradition lasted for a century after the Revolution.” In the latter decades of the 19th century, however, large new business corporations and trusts emerged, along with “an all-too-conspicuous American plutocracy,” and economic thinking changed. The labor theory of value was inadequate as a basis for understanding the corporate economy. By the 1920s, many Americans had come to regard not only the huge corporations but gross inequality of wealth as “a perfectly natural result of market forces.”

Yet, Wilentz says, “the American egalitarian impulse” survived, albeit in dramatically different form: “Now government became the instrument, and not the enemy, of equality.” And the Progressives, New Dealers, and Great Society liberals showed that this “reinvented proactive egalitarianism” could work to reverse the trends toward gross inequality of wealth. “After 1940,” he says, “economic inequality abated, to the point where, by 1980, [it] was roughly the same as it had been in the 1770s.” But then came Ronald Reagan and the conservatives, throwing latter-day egalitarians on the defensive. “By the early 1990s . . . inequality of wealth distribution returned to the levels of the 1920s.”

Slavery’s Long Shadow

“Slavery and the Black Family” by James Q. Wilson, in *The Public Interest*,
1112 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Did slavery weaken the black family? W. E. B. Du Bois, author of *The Negro American Family* (1908), was sure that it did, and so was E. Franklin Frazier, author of *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939). After all, slavery denied slaves the right to marry, denied them the fruits of their own labor, and casually put family members on the auction block. But when Daniel Patrick Moynihan summarized such arguments in his famous 1965 paper, “The Negro Family: A Case for National Action,” the “roof fell in on him, and a

revisionist historical movement began,” notes Wilson, the distinguished political scientist now teaching at Pepperdine University.

In the eyes of the revisionists, slavery was not to blame for the high rate of single-parent families among blacks; contemporary racism and joblessness were. In *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (1976), historian Herbert Gutman, relying largely on genealogies he had constructed, argued that the black family emerged from slavery in good

shape, with two parents the norm.

But genealogy is not the same as family, Wilson argues. Every child has two parents; not every child lives in a two-parent family. Yet many scholars embraced Gutman's work as foundational. In *Fatherhood in America: A History* (1993), Robert Griswold claims that the black family remained intact until the 20th century, when blacks migrated in large numbers to big cities, where the lack of jobs forced fathers "to leave their families to find work."

"Recent research shows this argument to be wrong," says Wilson. "Based on a careful analysis of census data, historian Steven Ruggles concluded that single parenthood was two to three times more common among African Americans than among whites in 1880 [before the "great migration"]. The gap widened after 1960, but it was only a widening, not a new event." While urban life probably did encourage family breakdown, Wilson says, it was not the main factor. Analyzing cen-

sus data from 1910, University of Pennsylvania scholars have shown that black children in rural areas were roughly twice as likely as their white counterparts to be raised by a single mother.

The impact of patterns of family life further back in time, in Africa, is very difficult to gauge. In Africa, kinship networks were and are more important than marriage, and the strong extended family left a smaller role for fathers in child rearing. One anthropologist observes that in West Africa the question has been not so much "Are you married?" as "Do you have any children?" Slavery hardly encouraged black men to build nuclear families.

It is important to note, writes Wilson, that about half of all black families today are middle class and, as a group, have overcome "the legacy of slavery, at least with respect to income and family structure." Nevertheless, that pernicious legacy persists. In 1997, nearly 70 percent of children born to African American women had unwed mothers.

Batter Up!

"Bearing Witness to Blackball: Buck O'Neil, the Negro Leagues, and the Politics of the Past" by Daniel A. Nathan in *Journal of American Studies* (Vol. 35, No. 3), Cambridge Univ. Press, Edinburgh Bldg., Shaftesbury Rd., Cambridge, England CB2 2RU.

Thanks to documentaries such as Ken Burns's 1994 *Baseball*, and nostalgic tributes to legends such as Josh Gibson and James "Cool Papa" Bell, the Negro Leagues may be more celebrated now than at any time since they disappeared in the late 1950s. Nathan, a professor of American studies and history at Finland's University of Tampere, senses something fishy. He thinks the current nostalgic interest in the Negro Leagues is an attempt to rewrite history.

Some of the first professional baseball teams after the Civil War were integrated, and even the all-black teams of the time routinely played against all-white teams. But segregation started early. The National Association of Base Ball Players voted in 1867 to bar "any club which may be composed of one or more colored persons," and the National League, organized in 1876, "tacitly agreed to the same prohibition." All

was not lost, but "by the beginning of the 20th century there were no African Americans in the Major Leagues."

In 1920, Andrew "Rube" Foster formed the first successful all-black league, the Negro National League, but it was done in by the depression. A new Negro National League sprang up in 1933, followed four years later by the Negro American League. The Negro League all-star game often surpassed its Major League counterpart in attendance and profits, Nathan reports.

Until Jackie Robinson was signed to the Brooklyn Dodgers by Branch Rickey in 1947, breaking baseball's color barrier, Negro League players were excluded from the Major Leagues, and many great black players missed their chance for the kind of immortality achieved by the likes of Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb. Some who made it to the majors, such as Satchel Paige, arrived only in



Reputed to be the fastest player ever to play in the Negro Leagues, outfielder James “Cool Papa” Bell once stole two bases on a single pitch.

the autumn of their careers.

Nathan credits much of the current interest in the Negro Leagues to the tireless efforts of

Buck O’Neil, a “smooth-fielding first baseman” for the champion Kansas City Monarchs who won the Negro American League batting title in 1946 with a .350 batting average, and whom some may recognize as the folksy interlocutor in Burns’s *Baseball*. Many observers are amazed at O’Neil’s lack of anger over the injustices he and others suffered. Nathan believes that there is more to the story than that. Making a hero of O’Neil, deserved though that status may be, is a way of recasting history as a story of individual struggle and minimizing “a national disgrace.” There’s a bit of an edge even to O’Neil’s niceness. At Satchel Paige’s funeral, in 1982, O’Neil remarked that “everyone was saying, ‘isn’t it a shame Satchel didn’t play with all the great athletes of the major leagues?’ But who’s to say he wasn’t, playing with us?”

The Higher Circles

“The Prep-School PC Plague” by Heather Mac Donald, in *City Journal* (Spring 2002), Manhattan Inst., 52 Vanderbilt Ave., 2nd fl., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Within the ivy-covered halls of America’s elite prep schools, such as Exeter and Andover, instructors once instilled in their young charges the high-minded WASP principles of citizenship and patriotism. But now—says Mac Donald, a fellow at the Manhattan Institute and a *City Journal* contributing editor—the emphasis, both in and out of the classroom, is on diversity. All of the top schools employ diversity professionals who specialize in what she calls “multicultural consciousness-raising,” the kind of race- and gender-based teaching that used to be confined to the universities. In the view of Mac Donald, this new prep-

school obsession is “a grievous missed opportunity to create an integrated, color-indifferent society,” and, far from enlightening students about multicultural issues, succeeds only in “creating race-consciousness where none exists.”

This education in differences proceeds whether the students want it or not. Diversity professionals such as Bobby Edwards, dean for community and multicultural development at Andover (also known as Phillips Academy), is incredulous when even “students of color” profess their lives free from racial injustice. Instead of accepting the students’ reported experience,

says Mac Donald, “Edwards chides them: ‘Are you looking at the people following you around in the store?’”

Likewise at Exeter, according to college counselor and dorm adviser Cary Einhaus, “Diversity is absolutely explicit. We talk about it at the dining-room table, at faculty meetings. It’s part of our common language here.” Or, as Mac Donald puts it: “Young people quickly learn that their teachers see an awareness of difference, not commonality, as the highest civic good.” An Indian student at Phillips Academy recounted in the school newspaper how back home in Texas “I was never made to feel that I was any different [from the white students] and the kids never found the need or desire to speak about race relations.”

But at Phillips, her classmates “tend to classify the community into its various racial groups.” All to the good, in the new atmosphere of Phillips: “I have never felt more Indian,” she wrote.

All of the top prep schools actively recruit minorities, despite the fact that black and Hispanic admission test scores

are often lower than those of white and Asian American students. Attempting to empower these students by emphasizing their racial differences is wrong-headed, Mac Donald argues: “A student who is failing trigonometry will be helped by tutoring and hard work,” not by reading books on racial identity.

The race and gender agenda also tends to crowd out traditional learning, Mac Donald says. One English teacher at Exeter told her that “most Exeter graduates have no idea whether Chaucer preceded Yeats.” Literature courses are fractured into “identities,” such as “Gay Voices and Themes in Literature and Film” or “The Voices of Women Writers.”

The private preparatory schools, says Mac Donald, once pulled talented youth “from all classes and all parts of the nation—whom they could fashion into a cadre of informed, public-spirited leaders.” Today, they are in danger of squandering an “unprecedented opportunity: to create an integrated ruling class that will carry us beyond our self-lacerating obsessions with race.”

PRESS & MEDIA

Friendly Fire

“The Civilian Casualty Conundrum” by Lucinda Fleeson, in *American Journalism Review* (Apr. 2002), Univ. of Maryland, 1117 Journalism Bldg., College Park, Md. 20742-7111.

How many civilians did U.S. forces inadvertently kill in the war in Afghanistan? Critics, many eager to show that the number was large—more perhaps than the thousands of Americans killed on September 11—complained that the U.S. news media soft-pedaled civilian deaths and were too slow coming up with a total. Fleeson, a former reporter for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, is having none of it.

“Obtaining accurate accounts of civilian deaths is one of the most difficult challenges of war reporting,” she writes. “Journalists must weigh conflicting information, exaggerations and lies as they constantly debate: How many sources do we need? How reliable are eyewitnesses, who might be in shock or have political agendas? What good are second-hand accounts?” Compounding the usual

difficulties were Afghanistan’s terrain and “near Stone Age conditions.” Correspondents had to travel in armed convoys and risk encounters with “bandits, warring tribes, land mines and stray bombs.”

Unfazed by the absence of hard data, some American academics used the Internet to gather news accounts from around the world and came up with their own estimates of civilian deaths: 3,767 as of last December 6, said Marc W. Herold, an economist at the University of New Hampshire, Durham. But the studies depended entirely on others’ accounts, including ones that uncritically accepted second-hand reports. Herold, for example, relied on an opinion piece that merely asserted that 400 civilians had been slaughtered and on other reports that repeated unconfirmed Taliban claims. The foreign

press, which displayed reports of civilian casualties more prominently than the U.S. news media did, gave more credence to such Taliban claims.

In January the Associated Press did a painstaking on-the-scene reconstruction. Laura King, an AP special correspondent, poured over hospital records, visited bomb-

ing sites, interviewed eyewitnesses and officials, and coordinated reports from fellow AP reporters elsewhere in Afghanistan. Cautioning that the figure King arrived at still was not definitive, Fleeson writes that “the February 11 story concluded that the civilian death toll probably ranged from 500 to 600.”

Misreading the Arab ‘Street’

“Media Coverage of the Gallup Poll of ‘The Islamic World’” (Mar. 6, 2002), National Council on Public Polls’ Polling Review Board, www.ncpp.org/islamic_world.htm; “The Poll That Didn’t Add Up” by Richard Morin and Claudia Deane, *The Washington Post* (Mar. 23, 2002), 1150 15th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20071.

“In poll, Islamic world says Arabs not involved in 9/11.” That was the shocking headline on the front page of *USA Today* on February 27. Reporting on a Gallup poll of residents in nine predominantly Muslim countries, the article noted (as did reports from other news organizations) that 53 percent of the respondents viewed the United States unfavorably and that only 18 percent in the six countries that let Gallup ask the question believed that Arabs carried out the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Shocking proof that the Muslim world hates America? Hardly.

The National Council on Public Polls, a leading professional watchdog organization, called the Gallup study “important and fascinating,” but faulted *USA Today* and Cable Network News (CNN) for making it seem (as did other news organizations) to be a study of “the Muslim world.” Only about 40 percent of the world’s Muslim population lives in the nine surveyed countries (Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia, Turkey, Lebanon, Morocco,

EXCERPT

Who Needs the Evening News?

Defenders of evening-news broadcasts tend to describe them as a redoubt of sobriety and responsibility in a “news environment” dominated by loudmouthed punditry (think Chris Matthews and Bill O’Reilly) and gross sensationalism. And in a sense, critics say much the same thing: that the problem with the nightly news is that it’s too dull and dowdy to compete.

*Having recently spent three weeks as one of the 25 million or so Americans who watch the networks’ flagship broadcasts (a habit that, like many millions of other Americans, I gave up long ago), I have a news flash for both sides: If the network news divisions think they are producing an evening broadcast so noble that it deserves to be defended from the corporate huns, they’re kidding themselves. And if the evening news isn’t dramatic enough for those corporate honchos, it’s not for lack of trying. It’s not just the much-noted increase in “soft” news features that now eats up a large portion of each broadcast; even the hard news now comes with a hard sell in which emotional impact trumps intellectual content with appalling consistency. The evening anchors may still look and talk like paragons of wisdom and integrity right out of our nostalgia-clouded memory of *The Good Old Days*, but their broadcasts are something else.*

—Rob Walker, a columnist for *Slate*, in *The New Republic* (May 20, 2002)

Kuwait, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia). Not all of the 10,000 respondents were Muslims, or even citizens of the countries in which they were residing. Four excluded countries (India, Bangladesh, Egypt, and Nigeria) each have more Muslim residents than many of the countries included.

The dismaying overall figures cited by the news media, the council points out, were the averages for the countries without regard to the size of their Muslim populations. Thus, Kuwait, with fewer than two million Muslims, was treated the same as Indonesia, with more than 200 million. Yet 36 percent

of those interviewed in Kuwait regarded the September 11 terrorist attacks as morally justified, while only four percent of Indonesians did.

Though the council spanked only *USA Today* and CNN, it “could just as easily” have given a whack or two to the Gallup Organization, observe Morin and Deane, director and assistant director, respectively, of polling at *The Washington Post*. “As Gallup now acknowledges, it initially provided reporters with the sensational [overall figures] that were the primary target of [the council’s] criticism.”

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Hitler’s Faith

“Totalitarianism: Between Religion and Science” by Tzvetan Todorov, in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* (Summer 2001), Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., Crown House, 47 Chase Side, London N14 5BP, England.

What keeps utopian dreamers dreaming (and scheming) is their certain belief that perfection can be attained in this world. Alas, it is this conviction that led in the past century to the enslavement and slaughter of millions upon millions, and to misery for countless others.

The totalitarianism of Hitler, Lenin, and others, writes Todorov, the research director of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris, is a species of utopianism. “When seen in the perspective of European history, utopianism is in turn revealed as an atheistic millennialism.”

The Christian millennial movements that sprang up beginning in the 13th century held, contrary to traditional Christian teaching, that the Messiah would appear imminently to establish his kingdom on earth and that believers would achieve salvation in this world. The totalitarian “isms” were millennial movements that replaced God with the doctrine of scientism—an “excrescence on the body of science” whose origins Todorov traces to René Descartes (1596–1650). “Scientism takes as its point of departure a hypothesis about the structure of the world—that it is entirely coherent. Thus, as though the world were transparent, it can be known by human reason. . . . No part of the world—material, spiritual, animate, or inanimate—can escape the grasp of science.”

Scientism, explains Todorov, “rests on the existence of science, but it is not in itself scientific. Its underlying assumption, the total transparency of reality, cannot be proved or disproved. . . . At both its foundations and its summit, scientism demands an act of faith. . . . This is why totalitarian regimes can adopt scientism without necessarily encouraging scientific research. They have good reason not to since this would require submission solely to the quest for truth rather than to dogma.”

One of the first thinkers to see the implications of scientism was the French philologist Ernst Renan. In his remarkable *Philosophical Dialogue* (1871), he envisioned a world ruled by “positivist tyrants,” endowed by reason and science with the power to divine the rules of nature and extend them over all of society. “The being who possesses science puts limitless terror into the service of truth,” Renan declared. Leaders should have at their disposal men who were “obedient machines, indifferent to moral repugnance and capable of every type of ferocity.”

The allure of such visions is that they promise to give meaning and purpose to human life, Todorov observes. “Democracy does not fulfill the need for salvation or for the absolute; it cannot, on the other hand, afford to disregard its existence.”



Adam and Eve (1999), by Natasha Turovsky

Shame on Us

“The Genesis of Shame” by J. David Velleman, in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (Winter 2001), Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, Journals Publishing Division, P.O. Box 19966, Baltimore, Md. 21211.

It may be the oldest story of shame: Boy meets girl, girl offers boy a bite of an apple, and then—as it says in Genesis 3:7—“the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.” But even though the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge was supposed to make Adam and Eve “like God, knowing good and evil,” it was not their nakedness itself that caused them to feel shame, says Velleman, a philosophy professor at the University of Michigan, nor was it their sudden apprehension of the sexual possibilities of their situation, an interpretation that echoes St. Augustine.

Rather, Velleman proposes, the first couple’s disobedience of God’s prohibition against eating the fruit revealed to them that they now had *choices*—to obey or disobey, or to “be fruitful and multiply” or decide not to procreate. This “ability to choose in opposition to inclination,” in other

words, gave Adam and Eve private selves, able to make personal choices. Their naked bodies caused them shame because of their “realization that their bodies might obey their instincts instead” of their newfound will, thus betraying their private selves.

Velleman believes that this new interpretation of the Genesis story has something to tell us about “the shamelessness of our culture.” In his view, much of the shame humans feel is caused by a perceived loss of privacy. Everyone creates for themselves a public image, a persona necessary for any social interaction, and necessarily different from the private self. This performing self is vitally important to each individual’s social life; it is what makes one a candidate for “conversation, cooperation, or even competition and conflict.” When something occurs that undermines this created image—a personal bankruptcy, for

The Real Meaning of Jihad

Jihad is perhaps the most loaded word in the lexicon of Islam's relations with the West. Over the last 20 years, it has been invoked by a succession of Muslim movements to justify their violence. Terrorist groups, some of them infamous for suicide bombings, have even named themselves "Islamic Jihad." And Osama bin Ladin described his terror campaign as a jihad. After September 11, America looked expectantly to its "experts" to explain what jihad means for those who invoke it.

They . . . were told that Osama had it all wrong: Jihad has nothing to do with war or violence. As one listened to the academics, jihad began to sound like a traditional self-help technique—perhaps an Islamic version of controlled breathing.

Consider, for example, a New York Times op-ed written by Roy Mottahedeh, the Gurney Professor of History at Harvard. Mottahedeh began by citing Muslim clerics who had condemned September 11 as a violation of Islamic law. Indeed, some did condemn it. But then he made a leap. "Some politicians and imperfectly educated Muslim clerics have used the word jihad loosely in the sense of armed struggle," he complained. But "this meaning is rejected by most modern Muslim scholars, who say it properly refers to the struggle against the distortion of Islam." According to Mottahedeh, "a majority of learned Muslim thinkers, drawing on impeccable scholarship, insist that jihad must be understood as a struggle without arms."

Jihad—unarmed struggle? How so? Barbara Stowasser, professor of Arabic at Georgetown University, elaborated at a forum held on her campus in October. "Jihad," she stated, "is a serious personal commitment to the faith," a struggle against "evil intentions," and a "working toward the moral betterment of society." Only at the very end of the Qur'an is it used to denote armed struggle, and even then, she added, Muslims are enjoined only to engage in defensive war. In Stowasser's view, al-Qaeda "goes against the majority of Islam and against most of Islamic legal theory." They were a group that "picks and chooses in its approach to the Qur'an."

Well, of course they do, but so do the American scholars who have picked and chosen their way through the Qur'an and Islamic legal theory, in a deliberate effort to demilitarize both, or even to turn Islam into a pacifist faith—a kind of oriental Quakerism. This interpretation is as tendentious as al-Qaeda's. Emile Tyan, author of the article on jihad in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, described this approach as "wholly apologetic." "Jihad consists of military action with the object of the expansion of Islam," he determined; presenting it as peaceful persuasion or self-defense "disregard[s] entirely the previous doctrine and historical tradition, as well as the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunna." In fact, someone has to be "imperfectly educated" to argue that jihad must be understood as a struggle without arms. As Rudolph Peters wrote in his book on the doctrine of jihad, it is the idea of pacifist or defensive jihad that is new; Islamists (like bin Ladin) are much closer to classical doctrine. And that doctrine has enjoyed an obvious revival over the past 20 years. . . .

The problem with the Islam "experts" is that they are so enamored of their subject that they feel compelled to shore up its defenses, to the point of posing as Islam's reformers. It's a professional deformation with a long history in Islamic studies. One might question whether the reform of Islam is the proper job of American university professors, who are paid to explain. But they prefer to plead and apologize, and who can stop them? If only real Islam did conform to the Islam of the American academy. Even New York's skyline would attest to it.

—Martin Kramer, the author of *Arab Awakening & Islamic Revival: The Politics of Ideas in the Middle East* (1996), is the editor of *The Middle East Quarterly*, where this essay appeared (Spring 2002).

instance—the individual suffers a “failure of privacy” and, says Velleman, feels shame. Blushing, the physiological response to shame, can lead to even more feelings of shame since, again, the blush exposes the private self.

Velleman thinks that the much discussed “de-moralization” of society is more easily understood through his conception of shame. Someone who poses nude in a magazine or reveals kinky secrets on a talk show will likely *not* feel shame, in his view. Why not? Because the exposure is a personal choice that now becomes part of the individual’s public face. It is intentional. But a person caught changing clothes at the beach

would likely still feel shame, because the exposure was unintended.

Velleman agrees with those who argue that American society is far gone in shamelessness, but he doesn’t think the solution is to “rescandalize” things such as births out of wedlock. The problem is that the public self has gotten out of control: “People now think that not to express inclinations or impulses is in effect to claim that one doesn’t have them, and that honesty therefore requires one to express whatever inclinations or impulses one has.” There is no quick fix. What’s needed, according to Velleman, is a larger sense of privacy, a renewed understanding that people are not all they appear to be.

The Aura of Celibacy

“The Scourge of Celibacy” by Garry Wills, in *The Boston Globe Magazine* (Mar. 24, 2002),
P. O. Box 2378, Boston, Mass. 02107–2378.

Conservative Catholics insist that priestly celibacy has nothing to do with the pedophilia scandals that have rocked the church. On the contrary, it has *something* to do with the pedophilia, and *everything* to do with the cover-ups, argues Wills, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and the author of *Papal Sin* (2000).

“The ‘grace’ (charisma) of celibacy, a thing now suspect, was the source of a priest’s high standing, of the special aura that set him apart,” Wills says. That aura may not cause pedophilia, but it does “foster and protect it,” giving clerical pedophiles unmatched “ease of access” to young prey. Unlike Boy Scout leaders, teachers, and others in professions that run special risks of harboring pedophiles, priests were “presumed to be disciplined by [their] code of sexual abstinence.” Unlike the coach or the teacher, the priest “had the whole care of the child’s soul as his province” and could range far and wide in the lives of children. Trusting Catholic parents were reluctant, even after their children were abused, to damage the aura that priests enjoy.

Catholic bishops and other hierarchical superiors have been even more hesitant to impair the aura, Wills notes. “They can see that a wrong has been done to a few children, but they feel that the souls of all children depend on their receiving the truths of the faith with respect for the carrier of that good news. This

is the higher good next to which bishops have weighed too lightly the harm done to the abused.” (As for the reassignment of pedophile priests, the bishops accepted “the faulty assurances given them by therapists in the past” that the men were “cured.”)

Conservative Catholics have pointed out that, despite the “pedophile priest” headlines, most of the youths involved in the recent scandals were not young children but teenage boys. The need, they say, is to screen out not only pedophiles but actively gay aspirants to the priesthood. Wills has a different take: “Though being gay has nothing to do with pedophilia, the claim of celibacy is obviously being hollowed out by sexual activity, whether heterosexual or homosexual, whether with consenting adults or with abused minors. The protection of the aura of celibacy demands the coverup of a whole range of activities.”

Celibacy was not always demanded of priests. Not until the fourth century did it begin to become the norm, arising as “ascetics of the desert became so famed for their heroic abstinence that people began to consult them and to look down on priests as insufficiently holy to be given the kind of reverence that hermits had earned.” The priests embraced celibacy as a countermeasure. Today, however, celibacy has lost its original justification. The time has come, in Wills’s view, for the church to start phasing out mandatory celibacy.

Replacement Parts

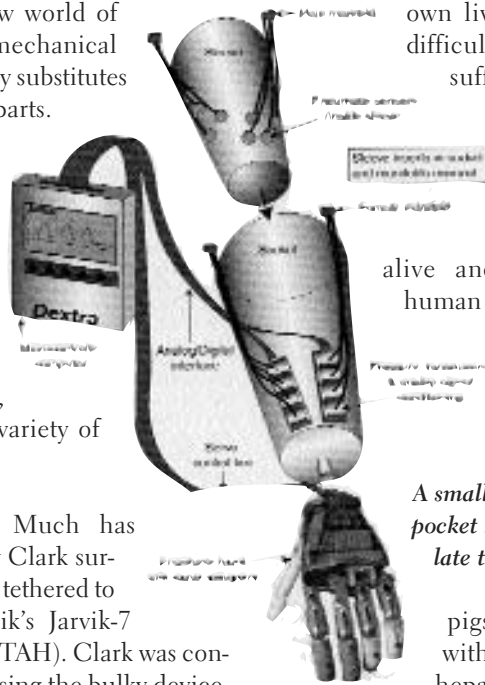
A Survey of Recent Articles

“We can rebuild him. We have the technology. We have the capability to make the world’s first bionic man. Better than he was before. Better, stronger, faster.” The mantra of television’s old *Six Million Dollar Man* series voices the long-held dream to replace failed human parts with mechanical or bioengineered devices. Aside from some ingenious prosthetic devices, such as artificial limbs, the reality has fallen short of the dream. But that may be about to change. Spurred by a steadily aging population—and a scarcity of donor organs for transplants—medical science is exploring a brave new world of bionics in which mechanical devices are not the only substitutes for failed human parts. Controversial stem cell research figures in some, but not all, of this work. Seventeen articles on the new research in *Science* (Feb. 8, 2002) reveal a tantalizing mix of achievement, promise, and frustration on a variety of fronts:

Artificial organs. Much has changed since Barney Clark survived 112 days in 1982 tethered to inventor Robert Jarvik’s Jarvik-7 Total Artificial Heart (TAH). Clark was confined to the room housing the bulky device. Today’s TAH devices have shrunk remarkably. The need for them is tremendous. Two thousand patients per year with end-stage heart failure get transplants, yet an additional 30,000 to 100,000 could benefit from them. Jarvik himself is among those pursuing alternatives, such as the Ventricular Assist Device, designed to ease the pumping strain on a patient’s heart while giving it a chance to heal itself. “Removing the natural heart is an obsolete approach,” Jarvik says. He is developing a thumb-sized device that can

be sewn into (and eventually removed from) the left ventricle.

Other organs, such as the liver, are even more problematic. As Alastair Strain and James Neuberger, both affiliated with the medical school at Britain’s University of Birmingham, point out, “many patients with acute liver failure die while waiting for a transplant, and those with chronic disease often deteriorate so much that their survival rate after transplantation is low.” A viable bioartificial liver could prolong the lives of patients awaiting donor organs or, in some cases, allow the patient’s own liver to regenerate. The difficulty comes in securing a sufficient supply of hepatocytes, the liver cells responsible for most critical liver functions, and keeping them alive and viable outside the human body. The most promising recent research involves using “hepatocytes from other species, particularly



A small computer that fits in the pocket helps the user to manipulate the Dextra artificial hand.

pigs,” possibly combined with genetically engineered hepatic cell lines.

Restoring lost senses. Pop music icon Stevie Wonder made headlines in 1999 when he declared that, thanks to research being done at Johns Hopkins University on artificial retinas, he might one day be able to see. He was referring to the type of work engaged in by ophthalmologist Mark Humayun, developer of an artificial retina—essentially a silicon chip laced with photovoltaic light sensors. “It’s basically just hype,” says Alan Chow, at the Chicago-based

Optobionics Corporation, who has the only clinical trial of an implanted retinal device under way. Wonder, who became blind shortly after birth, likely has substantial damage to his retinas and would not be a good candidate for the experimental devices. People who are losing vision because of hereditary degenerative diseases or because of macular degeneration, a common age-related disease, are better candidates. Researchers are exploring several promising devices, including one that converts light into electrical signals. But they still must clear the substantial hurdle of having the brain interpret those electrical impulses into an image. When will that breakthrough come? Says one researcher, "That's like someone asking us when will we arrive at the moon when we've just begun to build a rocket."

Similar struggles beset attempts to counteract profound deafness. While listening aids allow many hearing-impaired people to function in daily life, many others cannot be helped. One option, at least for those with an intact auditory nerve, is the cochlear implant, an array of micro-electrodes that directly stimulate the auditory nerve. Some 40,000 people worldwide can converse on the telephone with the aid of such devices, and younger recipients can participate in mainstream education. For those without an intact auditory nerve, the situation is much more complex. Researchers are trying to develop electronic brain-stem implants that will allow sound impulses to bypass the non-working sections of the ear. This is much like replacing a retina: The challenge is finding a way to create signals the brain can interpret. The implants have already been used on animal subjects, with the first human trials set for later this year. They may significantly improve speech recognition, but even if the trials fail they may still yield valuable clues as to how profoundly deaf persons might retrain their brains to utilize these new devices.

Restoring mobility. Linking man and machine is a staple of science fiction, from *Robocop* to *Star Trek's* Borg, but "limb replacement as depicted by Hollywood will likely remain a fantasy," says William Craelius, a bio-

medical engineer at Rutgers University. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has developed a robotic hand capable of moving 22 joints independently, but building a mechanical hand that can be attached and controlled by humans has been an elusive challenge. That may be changing. The Dextra prosthetic hand, for instance, uses a small computer (that fits in the user's pocket) to register neural signals passing from the muscles into a special sleeve. Responding to these impulses, the hand can flex and extend all five digits. Miniaturization of such devices could allow much of this technology to be permanently attached, with computer components implanted beneath the skin. One hurdle: protecting the implanted components from corrosion by the body's fluids and ensuring long-term functionality. Kevin Warwick, a cybernetics professor at Britain's University of Reading, recently turned himself into an experimental cyborg, connecting nerves in his arm to wires leading to a small microprocessor. The nerve impulses generated by his movements will be transmitted to a remote computer. Warwick's wife will soon be fitted with a similar device to test whether he can learn to remotely control *her* hand with *his* arm motions.

Other researchers look to biological rather than mechanical fixes. Thomas Koob, a biochemist at Shriners Hospital for Children in Tampa, Florida, believes that the collagen-like material of skate egg cases (small black pouches, popularly known as mermaid's purses, that often wash up on Atlantic beaches) may be the key to successful human tendon repairs. Other scientists plumb the latest discoveries in cell regeneration and gene therapy in hopes of repairing spinal cord injuries.

As scientists learn more about ways to prolong life, will we reach the point at which the body simply ages beyond hope of rejuvenation? What are the ultimate limits of the human life span?

S. Jay Olshansky, a biodemographer at the University of Illinois, thinks "anything past 130 is ridiculous." But William Haseltine, the chair and CEO of the Maryland-based Human Genome Sciences Corporation, thinks that stem cells may eventually offer a route to virtual immortality. He predicts that it will one day be

possible to “reseed the body with our own cells that are made more potent and younger.”

The question can't be resolved today, *Science* writer Constance Holden points out, because there is no reliable “biomarker” in the body—some change that occurs in all

humans regardless of environment—that would allow researchers to compare aging rates in different individuals, and thus reliably predict how long people might plausibly live. “At this point,” says Holden, “the most reliable biomarker for aging is death.”

The Last Guru?

“The Cult of Castells” by James Crabtree, in *Prospect* (Feb. 2002), 4 Bedford Sq., London WC1B 3RD, England.

The first years of the new century haven't been kind to the late 20th century's bumper crop of cybergurus. One of the few still standing is also one of the most unlikely: the 57-year-old Spanish-born, French-educated, ex-Marxist professor of sociology and planning at the University of California, Berkeley, Manuel Castells.

A pile of thick, jargon-clotted books attests to Castells's great industry. His 1,200-page information age trilogy (1996–98) is regarded in some academic circles as a masterwork on a par with those of Karl Marx and Max Weber. Castells has been called the “Voltaire of the Information Age.” In a new book, *The Internet Galaxy*, he is reaching for a wider audience.

Crabtree, a researcher at Britain's Industrial Society, is respectfully skeptical. He explains that just as Marx put the state at the heart of the social order and Weber put bureaucracy, Castells puts networks, such as the Internet. They are the “prime organizational form” of the information age. Electronic communications networks, along with the social and cultural revolutions that began in the 1960s and the global economic restructuring that started in the 1980s, are the driving forces in modern society. The decline of stable organizations and fixed values creates far-reach-

ing change. As Crabtree puts it: “The network citizens, stripped of certainty and security while cocooned in networks they cannot control or comprehend, become dominated by the search for personal or collective identity. Some adapt well, while others react aggressively.”

Crabtree sees a lot of flaws in Castells's thought. His work is full of jargon—“timeless time,” “the space of flows”—and it often sacrifices precision and careful definition of ideas for the sweeping assertion. There's not much evidence that Castells's ideas have a great deal of explanatory or predictive value. And very often Castells seems to “shoe-horn” into his grand theory things that don't fit. He tries to incorporate the Qaeda terrorists into his model of “networked dissent,” but Crabtree observes that the group in some ways is the antithesis of a network. For example, it “deploys autonomous cells defined by their *not* being in constant contact with the whole group.”

For all that, Crabtree concludes that Castells's reputation is largely justified. His network society is “an imperfect roadmap, perhaps no more than a useful metaphor.” Yet it is the most useful roadmap we have. If it now seems somewhat commonplace, it is only because Castells's ideas have carried the day.

Glowing with Optimism

“The Changing Climate for Nuclear Power in the United States” by Richard Meserve, in *Bulletin* (Winter 2002), American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

“The demise of the nuclear power industry was widely expected only a few years ago” writes Meserve, chair of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. But things may be changing.

While the number of nuclear plants has dropped from 111 to 103 since 1990, the amount of electricity these plants produce has increased by nearly 40 percent. Although that 750 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of

electricity represents just 20 percent of U.S. consumption (countries such as France and Lithuania, by comparison, get over 70 percent of their electricity from nuclear plants), Meserve says the U.S. nuclear industry “is by far the largest commercial nuclear power program in the world.” About one-quarter of the world’s nuclear plants are in the United States.

Meserve thinks the United States may be ready to move away from its reliance on coal and natural gas for electricity in favor of nuclear power. One compelling factor is cost: The average production cost of electricity from nuclear plants was about 1.71 cents per kWh in 1999. That is less than the cost of electricity from either coal or natural gas, both finite fuel sources that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Price deregulation of electricity, along with the fact that the high capital costs of many older plants have now been largely repaid, has helped make nuclear competitive. But the plants have also become much more efficient. One reason: Operating capacity grew from 60 percent to 90 percent during the 1990s. Since most plants need to be shut down for refueling every few years, says Meserve, this capacity figure “is only slightly less than the practical maximum.” New

plants might be even more efficient. Researchers are working on three basic designs, all smaller and employing different approaches. Some, for example, are cooled by helium rather than water.

The main cloud hanging over all this optimism is the continuing problem of nuclear waste. Right now, spent fuel is kept in giant casks at each plant site, cooled by air convection. Meserve pronounces this storage system safe, but plants are running out of waste storage space. The Department of Energy has selected Nevada’s Yucca Mountain as the nation’s repository for nuclear waste, a choice endorsed by President George Bush and supported by a recent resolution in the House of Representatives. And even though Nevada’s state officials declare that they intend “to litigate at every available opportunity” to block the project, there seems little chance they can succeed.

Concerns over waste and lingering public nervousness after Three Mile Island and Chernobyl still color the public image of the nuclear power industry. But ultimately, as older plants near the end of their useful lives, the United States will have to decide whether it wants to capitalize on the advantages of nuclear power.

ARTS & LETTERS

Lost in the Corridors

“The Future in Your Bones: C. P. Snow (1905–80)” by George Watson, in *The Hudson Review* (Winter 2002), 684 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021.

British scientist-turned-novelist C. P. Snow (1905–80) is still remembered for his division of the intellectual world into “two cultures,” the scientific and the literary, and for his phrase “corridors of power,” which became a cliché even before his 1964 novel of that title was published. Snow fervently believed that scientists—and he himself—had, in another favorite phrase, “the future in their bones.” But he was quite wrong about that, writes Watson, a Fellow of St. John’s College, Cambridge University.

Born in Leicester, in the English Midlands, the son of a clerk in a shoe factory, Snow earned a doctorate in physics at

Cambridge in 1930. But his early research on infrared spectroscopy went awry. The failed scientist turned to college administration at Cambridge and to novel writing. In 1939 he began a career in public life, joining a Royal Society group organized to harness British science to the war effort. The next year, his novel *Strangers and Brothers* appeared, and its title became the name for his long series of novels about the administration of power in contemporary Britain.

“The novels sold,” Watson notes, “and probably achieved something of their didactic intention, which was to inform the world about how power interacts with personality,

even among the elite—with foibles, private hates and love. It was a very Trollopian vision of the world, as Snow knew: he was rewriting [Anthony] Trollope's Palliser novels a century on." Like Trollope (and unlike most novelists), Snow wrote about the world of work. But he lacked the great 19th-century novelist's ear for dialogue, and his prose did not sing.

Snow also "loved to strike" his un-Trollopian note about the future, Watson observes. "Like [H. G.] Wells and Aldous Huxley, he foresaw a brave new world: a planned economy directed by scientists, technicians, and planners, along with those

who had learned how to listen to them." Although a kind man himself, says Watson, the novelist saw life as "a power-game" and was "ideologically ruthless." Snow was "a highly conservative Communist," who believed in the necessity of a one-party state to control "the infinite forces of communication and production about to be unleashed by technology. The free market, for Snow, was not even an option. Nor was democracy."

As it turned out, observes Watson, the bones of "Lord Corridor of Power" (as one wag called him when he was made a peer in 1964) held not the future but the past.

Two Elements of Style

"From *Letters to a Young Novelist*" by Mario Vargas Llosa, in *Partisan Review* (No. 2, 2002), 236 Bay State Rd., Boston, Mass. 02215.

To succeed, a novelist must create a fiction that "liberates itself from its creator and real life, and impresses itself on the reader as an autonomous reality." And how does one accomplish that? In significant part through that mysterious thing called style, writes Vargas Llosa, the Peruvian novelist and one-time presidential candidate.

A writer's style must, in Vargas Llosa's view, have two elements: "internal coherence" and "essentiality." Molly Bloom's famous monologue at the end of *Ulysses*, for example, is incoherent. James Joyce's "power to bewitch derives from a prose that is seemingly ragged and fragmented, but beneath its unruly and anarchic surface retains a rigorous coherence, a structural consistency that follows a model or original system of rules and principles from which it never deviates."

A style need not be pleasant in order to succeed. Vargas Llosa is irritated by Louis-Ferdinand Céline's "short, stuttering little sentences, plagued with ellipses and packed with exclamations and slang," but novels such as *Voyage to the End of the Night* are finally hypnotic. Alejo Carpentier, "one of the greatest novelists of the Spanish language," writes in an entirely different style, rife with "stiffness" and "bookish mannerisms," yet his prose has a saving coherence. "His style has a conviction that makes readers feel that

he tells the story the only way it could be told: in *these* words, phrases, and rhythms."

"Essentiality," the second element of style, is much harder for Vargas Llosa to define. It is easier to describe its opposite: a style that makes us "conscious of reading something alien, not experiencing the story alongside its characters and sharing it with them." It creates "a fissure that exposes all the artifice and arbitrariness that fiction depends on." Readers "realize that the same stories, told in a different way or in other words, would be better (which in literary terms simply means more persuasive.)"

Jorge Luis Borges, for example, has an unmistakable style, cold, elegant, almost intellectual, which has exerted a great, and to Vargas Llosa's mind unfortunate, influence on his many epigones. In their hands, Borges's style fails to ring true. "Precisely because it is essential, Borges's style is inimitable." Gabriel García Márquez writes in a very different but no less essential style, bringing almost as many imitators to grief.

The paradox is that Vargas Llosa thinks writers can develop a style only by endlessly reading other novelists, by seeing William Faulkner develop his own style between his maiden novel *Mosquitoes* and his subsequent *Flags in the Dust*. Then they must put all this aside and search for their own voice.

OTHER NATIONS

The Rock

“Nation-Making in Gibraltar: From Fortress Colony to Finance Centre” by David Alvarez, in *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* (Nos. 1–2, 2001), University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada C1A 4P3.

Call it the mouse that didn't roar. Tiny Gibraltar, the one-square-mile “Rock” at the southern tip of the Iberian peninsula, has been a more or less happy colony of Great Britain for nearly 300 years. It's only because Britain withdrew troops and slashed subsidies in the 1970s and '80s that the Rock's 30,000 inhabitants are now thinking of loosening ties to the mother country.

“Mother country” is something of a misnomer. The native Spanish inhabitants fled after Britain took control in 1704 during the War of the Spanish Succession, and they were replaced by new arrivals from Britain and from all over the Mediterranean. The local culture was largely Catholic and Spanish-speaking.

During World War II, the British evacuated nearly the entire civilian population from the strategic enclave, notes Alvarez, who teaches at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan. The experience deepened the Gibraltarians' loyalty to the Crown—many of them wound up in Britain—even as the jarring reminder of the Rock's precarious position fostered interest in independence.

About one thing most Gibraltarians have been united: They want as little as possible to do with Spain. After his victory in the Spanish Civil War, dictator Francisco Franco tried to rally his countrymen by campaigning for the restoration of Gibraltar. Spain's poverty, belligerence, and backward

EXCERPT

The Uzbek Nexus

The Islamist rebels have defined Uzbekistan as the prize in the regional competition for hearts and minds. It is Uzbekistan that they have repeatedly attacked, for as the home to Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand, they see it as the key to Central Asia. Their choice of targets is not accidental.

The Uzbeks have a distinctive political culture, very different from that of their Kazakh, Kyrgyz, or Tajik cousins. Traditions of tribal democracy and inter-tribal confederation were strong among the nomadic peoples of the mountains and the plains but not in the sedentary culture of Uzbekistan. Its leaders have always celebrated traditions of hierarchy and authoritarianism. Among the nomadic peoples of Central Asia's plains and mountains, it is considered gracious to discuss and deliberate, whereas among the oasis peoples of Uzbekistan, it is considered gracious to obey, impolite to disagree, treachery to oppose. The Uzbek government has met treachery with ruthlessness, impoliteness with subtle manipulation. In the early 1990s [Uzbek leader Islam] Karimov succeeded in co-opting many proponents of the nascent opposition, the pre-independence nationalist Birlík (Unity) movement, isolating and hounding its leaders while simultaneously inviting talented young activists into his Soviet-based, but cosmetically reconstituted, “nationalist Uzbek” government. Guerrilla warfare is, above all, a competition based on skill at deception. Karimov will be a formidable competitor in this realm. So far he has succeeded in outmaneuvering his nationalist opponents. The difference now is that the groups carrying the banner of revolution are less nationalist than internationalist, and less movements than organized obsessions.

—Gregory Gleason, a political scientist at the University of New Mexico, in *Problems of Post-Communism* (March/April 2002)



Its geographical position is as solid as ever, but Gibraltar's political future remains uncertain.

politics were not attractive. In a 1967 referendum, only 44 Gibraltarians voted for union with Spain. In 1969 Franco closed the border, and though it was reopened in 1985, controls remain strict.

Gibraltar has steadily gained greater self-government and, especially in the last few decades, a stronger sense of national identity. Nationalists today are proud of *Yanito*—the widely used local version of “Spanglish”—and speak of their people as *los Yanitos*. A festive National Day holiday was inaugurated in

1993. Ongoing negotiations among Britain, Spain, and Gibraltar point toward some sort of de facto independence under British (or Spanish or European Union) sovereignty. But Alvarez is not so sure. Gibraltarians are forging new ties with Spaniards just over the border. To both groups, London and Madrid look far away. “Perhaps Gibraltarians and their . . . neighbours will eventually conclude that they have more in common with one another than they do with the nation-states of which they are now peripheral fragments.”

Mañana Never Comes

“Fox’s Mexico: Same as It Ever Was?” by Pamela K. Starr, in *Current History* (Feb. 2002), 4225 Main St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19127.

Hopes were high in December 2000 when Vicente Fox was sworn in as the first president of Mexico in more than 70 years who had no affiliation with the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). But the Fox government has been a disappointment and Mexico seems “stuck in neutral,” according to Starr, a professor of international relations at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México in Mexico City.

Fox’s government has been plagued by confusion, indecision, and repeated missteps, Starr

says. And his National Action Party (PAN) and the PRI have been unable “to adjust their behavior to the new democratic political environment.” Political bickering substitutes for action, as “Mexicans of all stripes remain steeped in an authoritarian culture.”

Attempting to run Mexico as one would a private business, Fox has delegated much authority to his cabinet ministers, who have extensive experience in the private sector but little in politics. They “have regularly ruffled congres-

sional feathers,” Starr says, and have so often voiced contradictory opinions that they have been dubbed “the Montessori cabinet.”

The Fox administration has had “little legislatively to crow about.” Its top priority in its first year was a bill to increase the autonomy of indigenous people, intended to bring the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas to the peace table. Opposed by Fox’s own party and festooned with amendments, the law failed to achieve its underlying purpose.

The relationship between Fox and his own party’s leaders has never been easy. As a candidate he built his own campaign organization, appealed to voters directly, and forced his candidacy on the party. As president, he “named a

cabinet virtually devoid of traditional PAN politicians.”

The long-ruling PRI holds a majority in the Senate, the largest plurality in the Chamber of Deputies, and more than half the nation’s governorships. Although the party “lost its bearings” when it lost the presidency, Fox needed the PRI’s help to do much legislatively. But the opposition party was in no shape to negotiate—at least not until Roberto Madrazo was elected president of the party this year.

The PRI remains intent upon regaining power, and Starr sees “a growing likelihood” that the still largely unreconstructed party will succeed, retaking full control of the national legislature next year and the presidency in 2006.

India’s New Federalism

“New Dimensions of Indian Democracy” by Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, and “India’s Multiple Revolutions” by Sumit Ganguly, in *Journal of Democracy* (Jan. 2002), 1101 15th St., N.W., Ste. 800, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Despite violent flare-ups of religious intolerance and political corruption scandals, the world’s largest democracy has lately proven resilient, these authors point out. India is becoming a more “federal” republic, as political and economic power shifts from the national government to regions and the 28 states.

Ever since 1989, when the long-ruling Indian National Congress party lost its parliamentary majority, India has been ruled by coalition governments, a trend that is likely to continue, says Ganguly, a professor of Asian studies and government at the University of Texas at Austin. “A national party—typically Congress or the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]—is at the core, with regional parties acting as crucial makeweights in a fragile multilateral marriage of political convenience.”

In the case of the BJP, which is the core of the current coalition, the necessity of relying on smaller, regional, caste-based and interest-based parties has forced it to curb its extremism, note the Rudolphs, who are political scientists at the University of Chicago. “Key coalition partners, especially secular state parties from south India, care little for anti-Muslim ‘communalism.’”

Accentuating that moderating trend is the veritable social revolution of recent decades.

Lower-caste Indians, acutely distrustful of the BJP and its Hindu nationalist agenda, have discovered the power of the ballot box. “Political power in the states, and to a significant extent at the center,” write the Rudolphs, “has moved from the hands of the so-called twice-born upper castes into the hands of lower-caste groups,” who make up about two-thirds of the population.

Indeed, the lower castes’ rise in status has been so rapid that it “seems to have palliated much discontent with the relatively slow pace of economic growth,” they observe.

The antistatist economic reforms begun in the early 1990s under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh now appear irreversible, says Ganguly. The Indian economy, which enjoyed an average annual growth rate of six percent over the last 10 years, is “far more competitive today.” And poverty has decreased.

A decade after the turn toward economic liberalization, note the Rudolphs, newspapers and magazines in India focus not on the bureaucrats and experts of the command economy and “permit-license raj” of yore, but on the chief ministers of various states who “are traveling the world to meet with business leaders, woo investors, and [talk up the prospects] of Kerala, Karnataka, or Tamil Nadu.”

CURRENT BOOKS

Reviews of new and noteworthy nonfiction

A Holocaust Fantasy

THE WILKOMIRSKI AFFAIR:

A Study in Biographical Truth.

By Stefan Maechler. Schocken. 496 pp. \$16.95

A LIFE IN PIECES:

The Making and Unmaking of Benjamin Wilkomirski.

By Blake Eskin. Norton. 251 pp. \$25.95

Reviewed by Paul Maliszewski

In 1995 Benjamin Wilkomirski published *Fragments*, a memoir of his experience as a child survivor of the Holocaust. A clarinetist and instrument maker then living in Switzerland, Wilkomirski related his fractured

memories of World War II in simple, mostly unaffected language: seeing his father gunned down in Riga's ghetto, hiding out in a farmhouse in Krakow, surviving internment at two German concentration camps, fending off



Child survivors of Auschwitz, shortly after the camp was liberated in January 1945.

Current Books

rats, wading through excrement, and, once freed, coping with postwar life in Switzerland, where hardly anybody allowed him to speak of his experiences. Wilkomirski was three years old when the war broke out, or perhaps four; it's difficult for him to say for sure, because he received a new name (Bruno Grosjean) and a new religion (Christianity) upon entering his new country as an orphan.

Fragments earned widespread critical admiration and a number of awards. *The Boston Globe* praised it for taking readers "into the mind of a little boy." Writing for *The Nation*, Jonathan Kozol wondered whether, in light of what he identified as the book's qualities (austere writing, moral importance, and lack of artifice), "I even have the right to try to offer praise."

Although the memoir never became a best-seller, it did make Wilkomirski a prominent, revered figure in the survivor community. He visited the United States to address conferences on the Holocaust and on the memories of children who experience trauma, and went on a speaking tour to help raise money for the U.S. Holocaust Museum. At such events, Wilkomirski appeared on stage—often wearing a yarmulke, a medallion in the shape of the Hebrew letters for "life," and a scarf draped over his shoulders like a prayer shawl—and credited the therapists who had helped him unlock his long-suppressed memories. He expounded on his theory that therapy married to historical research can match the most fragmented memories to events. A child's fuzzy memory of a Nazi uniform can, Wilkomirski reasoned, imply some association with World War II. Further memories, slowly elicited, can suggest connections to more specific events. He often played his clarinet. If someone read passages from his book, he wept openly.

F*ragments* reveals its story in small pieces. It is as if something whole was shattered, and left that way. In the first chapter, Wilkomirski writes that he decided to stay true to his memories by allowing the "rubble field of isolated images and events" to remain a "chaotic jumble, with very little chronological fit." Vowing to "give up on the ordering logic of grown-ups," he constructs a puzzle of images seen through a child's mental fog, without details or historical context. When a "gray

black monster with a round lid" arrives suddenly at the Polish farmhouse, the reader must think "tank."

Before the book was published, Wilkomirski's agent and publisher learned of inconsistencies between *Fragments* and the documentary record. Production halted while they undertook an investigation. In the end, they accepted Wilkomirski's account of a Swiss-imposed identity, a fantastic and byzantine explanation that involves officials switching his name with that of a Swiss-born Christian child and then refusing, even today, to own up to their deception.

In 1998 Daniel Ganzfried, a Swiss writer who published a novel about the Holocaust the same year that *Fragments* came out, publicly questioned the book's veracity. Other journalists soon concluded that Wilkomirski was not who he claimed to be. He was an orphan, yes, but he had been born in Switzerland in 1941, not in Latvia in 1939. He was not Jewish. And, most damning of all, he had never been to concentration camps except as a tourist.

Blake Eskin and Stefan Maechler are the two latest authors to write about the mysterious Swiss musician, and their books cover similar ground in very different fashions. Eskin, an editor at *The Forward* and a contributor to public radio's *This American Life*, was the first American journalist to break the Wilkomirski story. His interest in the author of *Fragments* had its origins in genealogy; his mother's family, the Wilburs, trace their ancestors back to a family of Wilkomirskis living in Latvia. His book mixes his personal search for European ancestors (Could this Benjamin be our long-lost relative?) with Wilkomirski's rise and fall, and includes tangents into, among other things, the history of anti-Semitism in Switzerland.

Maechler is a Swiss historian who was hired by Wilkomirski's agent to conduct a second, fuller investigation after the book's public discrediting. The agent, Eva Koralnik, had represented a number of Jewish authors, shepherded many books about the war into print, and overseen the Anne Frank estate. Unearthing the truth about the author of *Fragments*, however belatedly, would help safeguard her reputation. Therefore, Maechler was given access to all records and received the cooperation of all parties, includ-

ing Wilkomirski and his family and friends. Maechler's capable and exhaustive, but occasionally exhausting, accounting, published with a complete text of the memoir, reads like a mystery novel crossed with the Warren Commission Report.

Why did *Fragments* take in so many readers and critics? While there is no easy explanation, it is possible to suggest several possibilities. To start with, the Holocaust as a subject renders critical faculties, if not completely silent, then at the very least extremely deferential. Critics approach books about the Holocaust with soft gloves, gentle smiles, and downcast eyes—witness Kozol's diffidence about his "right" to offer praise. To be sure, Holocaust books can't be reviewed the way other books are, for the simple reason that the Holocaust stands apart from other subjects, posed at an extreme of human understanding and experience. At the same time, the effect of this critical reticence shouldn't be overlooked: It led many of those who doubted the memoir's historical accuracy to keep their reservations to themselves.

In addition, *Fragments* is a story that many people, guilty of nothing worse than being optimistic and hopeful, want very much to believe. The book promises that a young child, all alone in the world, could survive the Holocaust and live to tell what happened. Though the events it describes are harrowing, the memoir delivers comfort.

Books like *Fragments*, ones that provide readers this much comfort so readily, are works of sentimental melodrama. At one point, a German woman promises young Benjamin that he will soon be playing and having fun, and then dispatches him to his first concentration camp, Majdanek. The narrator concludes, and the chapter ends, with the stunningly obvious and, I'm sorry, cloyingly poignant line, "Majdanek is no playground." Elsewhere, a German guard kicks a wooden ball back and forth with several children in the camp. Benjamin lets his defenses down and, in spite of himself, begins to feel something like joy. "Then," Wilkomirski writes, "I see the huge, thick arm lifting itself even higher in the air with the ball, I see the arm swung back, I see bull-neck's face suddenly grimace, then I see the arm come hurtling down in a huge

swing." The guard strikes a child with the heavy ball, and the child dies. Later, Benjamin sees a woman on top of a pile of bodies. She seems to be pregnant, and it looks as if the baby is alive, still kicking, inside her. When the boy draws near, hoping against hope, he discovers a bellyful of rats.

Such scenes, like many in *Fragments*, unfold with the calm-precedes-shock pattern that has become a staple of horror movies. Works of melodrama succeed because they go down easily, rendering what is impossible to swallow more palatable, flattening complex experiences into a series of recognizable emotional highs (disarming calms) and lows (jolt-ing shocks), and washing it all down with a lachrymose moral: Life for the children of the camps was no playground.

The real Wilkomirski's life, as revealed not in the pages of his own memoir but through the investigations of Eskin and especially Maechler, was probably no playground either. His living situation was sometimes chaotic, and his relations with others were fraught with tension and distrust. That said, having to endure a hot-tempered, depressive foster mother is not, by any stretch, Auschwitz.

Which raises an ultimately unanswerable question: Why would an author take genuine memories of the farmhouse he lived in with a moody foster mother and set them several years earlier in war-torn Krakow? Fiction writers, of course, do this sort of thing all the time, but when Wilkomirski packed up his Swiss memories, shipped them across the border, and moved the farmhouse and all its inhabitants, he called the result autobiography.

When asked for an explanation or corroborating evidence, Wilkomirski stacks his fragmented memories of a war he never saw and pain he did not experience against rigorous historical accounts, and judges his memories more accurate. Wilkomirski seems less like a con artist, someone who has set out to deceive others, than like a man who has done a good job of deceiving himself. He has, to date, admitted nothing. The most he has said is that he doesn't care whether readers think his memoir is true or not. One has the distinct impression that he will always have his memories.

>PAUL MALISZEWSKI's writing has appeared recently in Harper's and the Pushcart Prize anthology.

Nature of State

THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES:
War, Peace, and the Course of History.
By Philip Bobbitt. Knopf. 919 pp. \$40

Reviewed by Sunil Khilnani

With seasonal regularity, a book appears that bids to be the one weighing down the briefcases carried in and out of government agencies and corporate headquarters. Invariably, the book contains a stark thesis, an easy fluency with history, and a set of prescriptions addressing future threats and opportunities. Philip Bobbitt's book might be seen as the latest such bid, but it's actually a considerably more nuanced, sophisticated, and in parts powerful avatar than this lineage often generates.

The spur to Bobbitt's book is a question that dominated international policy debates during the 1990s, especially in America: "Why is it so difficult for contemporary leaders to determine when to use force in international affairs?" Reflecting no doubt on the convulsive foreign-policy record of the Clinton era—with its characteristic swings between hyperactivity and quiescence—Bobbitt claims that difficulties crowd in because contemporary states find themselves in the midst of "a transitional period following the end of an epochal war." Caught in a strategic no-man's land, leaders are without any self-evident calculus by which to assess the costs of military actions.

Bobbitt is a professor of law at the University of Texas, a former National Security Council official, and the author of works on constitutional theory and nuclear strategy (an unusual combination of competences in the current academic division of labor). His new book, in marshaling this accumulated expertise, promises to offer a compass to point readers through the present political and moral morass. The great strength of this long, sometimes overinvolved, and occasionally preening study is its unswerving effort to stay focused on the

modern state: to examine its origins, vicissitudes, and, more uncertainly, its possible futures. In Bobbitt's view, we are living through a deep change in the character of the state as we pass from the era of the nation-state to that of the "market-state."

The modern state—which began to emerge in the Italian city-states of the early Renaissance, was described most fulsomely and powerfully by Thomas Hobbes, and achieved its greatest practical form in the 20th century—is perhaps not the most glorious idea produced by the tradition of Western political thought, but it has proved the most well-traveled, resilient, and adaptable one. The modern state is at once the highest concentration of human lethal force and the most effective device so far invented for enabling what we judge to be a decent human existence. The only fate worse than having to live under the authority of a modern state is not being able to do so: woe to the stateless person, the *sans papiers* of the world.

As Bobbitt puts it, the modern state links together strategy and the constitutional order. Put more abstractly, the modern state represents the most enduring human effort to connect the two core dimensions of politics: power and value, the moral calculus by which to determine power's use. From an analytical viewpoint, if not from a practical one, this makes for an entity that is subject to profound instability. The precise nature of the relationship between power and value, and the particular balance between them at any given time, is a murky matter, requiring sharp observation and clearheaded judgment. It is a subject about which one can hope to be wiser in retrospect than in relation to the present or future—as Bobbitt's book bears out.

The book follows the path set down by some of the most trenchant analysts of the relation between war and the emergence of the modern state, above all the traditions of Otto Hintze and German *staatsraison*. Bobbitt shares some of these analysts' inclinations: a central causal role granted to conflict, a commitment to an implicitly evolutionary schema of state development, and a determination to relate the internal evolution of the modern state to the international order.

The core thought that drives the sprawling argument of *The Shield of Achilles* is roughly this: War is crucial in shaping the constitutional order of a state, and so the study of war is central to the history of the state; and the constitutional order of states, the study of their law, "must be at the center of the history of the society of states" in the international order. International law, Bobbitt claims, is derived from the constitutional order of particular states. By directing the causal chain in this way, he is able to maintain his focus on the state. He insists that "contemporary developments in limiting sovereignty are a consequence of the change in the constitutional order to a market-state"; they are not the direct effect of international developments, nor are they "imposed by international law, however flattering this may be to those who administer international institutions."

In the bulk of the book, Bobbitt identifies the nature of the current "transitional period" (which necessarily involves saying something about what went before and what might be expected to follow) and outlines the newly emerging form of the state and its effects upon the international order. We are blinking and disoriented, he argues, because we have just exited the "fifth epochal war in modern history," the period between 1914 and 1990, which he terms the "Long War." All five of these great wars concerned the constitutional order, the legitimate form the state should take, and out of each one emerged a particular state form: the princely and kingly state, the territorial state, the state-nation, the nation-state, and—from the Long War between fascism, communism, and parliamentarism—the

emerging market-state.

Each successive form has augmented the state's responsibilities, to the point where today's nation-state is manifestly unable to fulfill its putative duties. Bobbitt offers a familiar catalogue of developments undermining the practical efficacy of the sovereign territorial state: the spreading recognition of universal human rights, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (which serve to alter the geography of defense by making physical borders ineffectual), and the increased transnational flows of environmental effects, populations, and capital.

Bobbitt is quite right to stress that today's difficulties afflict a particular form of the state—the nation-state—and not the state itself. Indeed, he argues, the evident fallibility and faltering of the nation-state already is provoking an adaptive response on the part of the state: the emergence and eventual consolidation of the market-state. In his description, this emerging state form is less fastidious about sovereignty. It finds ways to survive—and even to thrive upon—the caprice of international capital markets; it is willing to weaken institutions of representative democracy in favor of quasi-referenda such as opinion polls (the focus group replaces the debating chamber); and it is happy to shed welfare responsibilities. The market-state "exists to maximize the opportunities enjoyed by all members of society"—a far vaguer objective than the austere but tangible pledge of the Hobbesian state: security.

According to Bobbitt, leaders of the evolving market-state must decide whether to pursue what he terms entrepreneurial, managerial, or mercantile policies. These alternatives have given rise to three possible types of the market-state: the Washington, Berlin, and Tokyo models. The first, libertarian variant, tends toward minimal state intervention confined to infrastructure, and leaves the rest to private enterprise. The more consensual Tokyo model seeks to protect domestic industry and maintain sovereign control over capital. The Berlin model, social democratic in inclination, aspires to social and economic equality, employs the stakeholder idea, and gives more thought to future generations. Each model aims to

maximize opportunity in a particular fashion, and each claims to be the definitive expression of the market-state—just as, according to Bobbitt, parliamentarism, fascism, and communism each once claimed to be the ultimate expression of the nation-state.

Given Bobbitt's views about the dynamics of historical change, it follows that the three models of the market-state will struggle for supremacy in the next epochal conflict. The form that survives will be the one best able to adapt to the challenges now confronting the modern state—challenges that are themselves residues of strategic innovations that helped win the Long War: weapons of mass destruction, the globalization of communications, and the international integration of trade and finance.

The concluding part of Bobbitt's study examines the emergence of the society of states and the international order. It traces in brief what he sees as moments of "epochal peace" that have set the terms of the international order—from the Treaty of Augsburg in 1555 to the "Peace of Paris" of 1990, which recognized a reunified Germany. Each state form has necessitated its own corresponding society of states, and so the rise of the market-state will transform the international order. The market-state is moving away from the territorial fixations of the nation-state, as it recognizes that many of the threats facing it are nonterritorial—for example, an attack on its computer or communications infrastructure. New strategies to deal with such threats often will make cooperative relations between states imperative, so the international society of states will come also to reflect a less territorial view of the state.

The weakening of territorial sovereignty should not, however, be interpreted as presaging the demise of the state. On the contrary, the fact that nonstate actors can now devastate modern states encourages a still closer merging, or even fusion, of law and strategy: War will appear increasingly as crime. Instead of relying on retaliatory and threat-based strategies, modern states must move toward defensive, vulnerability-based strategies. But it will remain a condition of

success that these new strategies be devised and executed by a state.

The difficulties with Bobbitt's timely analysis lie in at least three directions. First, he dwells too little on the role of human belief and identification. Every state has taken as a strategic axiom that it can command people to die in its defense. Nationalism has proved one of the most powerful tools for sustaining such identification under modern conditions. As the market-state disburses itself and its responsibilities, it can expect lesser, and less intense, obligations from its members.

Second, for all its intellectual cosmopolitanism, *The Shield of Achilles* is, in its political tastes and hopes, a decidedly American book. Bobbitt declares that the United States—"culturally indifferent," militarily and economically mighty—is best placed to become the exemplary market-state. As so often before, it turns out that the purpose of all previous human history has been to yield up the American state of the particular moment. Library shelves testify that such perspectives do not weather very well.

Third, and most profound, there is a deep instability in Bobbitt's coupling of markets and states—of which he is certainly aware, but about which he is perhaps too insouciant. States and markets define the existing or strongly desired political habitat of most people on the planet today, but they do not constitute a harmonious pair. States seek to concert and concentrate intentions; markets seek to diffuse and disperse these intentions. Ever since the days of David Hume and Adam Smith, much of our politics has been bound up with the task of reconciling the authority that states claim with the utility that markets promise—a Sisyphean rather than a Herculean labor.

>SUNIL KHLNANI, a Wilson Center fellow, is professor of politics and director of South Asia studies at Johns Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. Formerly a professor of politics at Birkbeck College, the University of London, he is the author of *Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France* (1993) and *The Idea of India* (1998), and the coeditor of *Civil Society: History and Possibilities* (2001). He is currently writing a biography of Jawaharlal Nehru.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

APOLLO: The Epic Journey to the Moon.

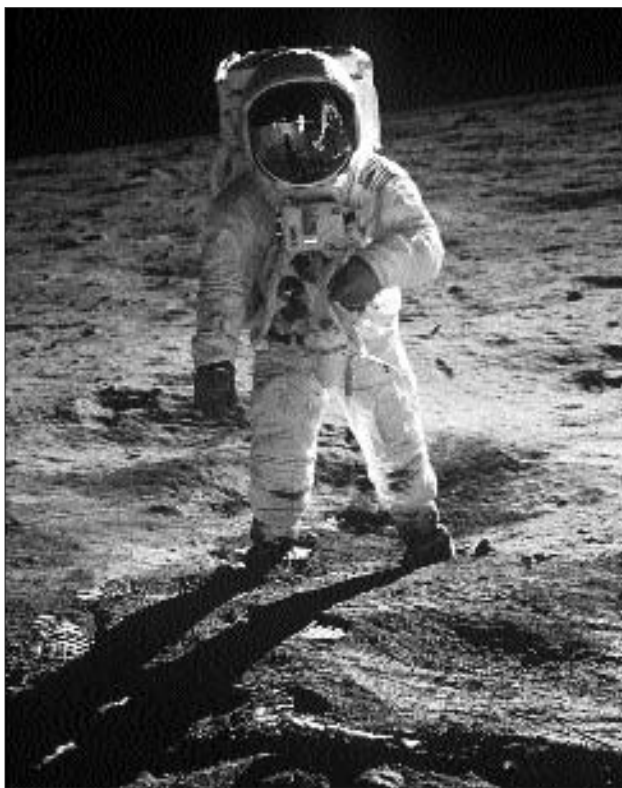
By David West Reynolds. Harcourt. 272 pp. \$35

Late this year, a sad little anniversary will likely pass without much notice. On December 14, 1972, Eugene Cernan took one last look around the dark lava plains of the Taurus Mountains, near the Littrow Crater. The golf-cart-like lunar rover stood 500 feet away, ready to send Earth live television images of his departure. He gazed down at the plaque on the spider-legged lunar excursion module, which, like the rover, would be left behind: "Here Man completed his first exploration of the Moon/December 1972 A.D./May the spirit of peace in which we came be reflected in the lives of all mankind." Cernan boarded the Command Service Module and, with fellow astronaut Harrison Schmitt, lifted off to begin the journey home. No one has been back since.

If you get a little teary eyed over that vignette, with its simultaneous evocation of enormous achievement (the U.S. space program of 30 years ago) and enormous disappointment (the U.S. space program of today), then you will take a bittersweet pleasure in *Apollo: The Epic Journey to the Moon*. Reynolds describes the Apollo program, which put 12 men on the moon from 1969 to 1972, as "an unprecedented new kind of project for our culture. We must look to the pyramids of Egypt or the cathedrals of Europe to find parallels." Despite the current stagnation—circling the Earth in a shuttle or space station hardly counts as progress—he believes the best is yet to come: "One day, the achievements of Apollo will inspire us to find our astonishing strengths again."

Alongside hundreds of photographs, Reynolds recounts the history of the Apollo project, from the tragic Apollo 1, which caught fire during premission testing in 1967, killing the three astronauts inside, through the successful Apollo-Soyuz Earth-orbiting collaboration of 1975. He provides a fascinating back story, too, including a reputation-burnishing account of Wernher von Braun, the rocket boy turned Nazi munitions maker turned American NASA-meister. The book lovingly reproduces von Braun's sketches for rockets from the 1920s to the 1960s, as well as the see-the-future-now paintings that, in his postwar incarnation as public-relations whiz, he inspired in *Collier's* and other popular magazines.

The author of five books on the *Star Wars* movies, Reynolds naturally emphasizes the fantastical origins of the space program. In *From Earth to the Moon* (1865), Jules Verne posited Florida as a launch site; the pioneering French science-fiction writer knew



Astronaut Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr., on the lunar surface, July 20, 1969.

that Earth's faster rotation near the equator would help a rocket achieve escape velocity. Reynolds rescues from obscurity Fritz Lang's 1929 silent movie *Frau im Mond* (Woman in the moon), which benefited from the technical advice of rocketeering visionary Hermann Oberth. "In some major ways," Reynolds observes, "the look and feel of Apollo began with Fritz Lang and *Frau im Mond*."

The *Star Wars* movies are perhaps the best portal for kids who might grow up to take humanity beyond Apollo, but when the young and curious are ready to move from fiction to fact, they should pick up this book. For everyone else, *Apollo* will make a handsome, informative addition to the coffee table.

—JAMES PINKERTON

TUXEDO PARK:

A Wall Street Tycoon and the Secret Palace of Science That Changed the Course of World War II.

By Jennet Conant. Simon & Schuster. 330 pp. \$26

They don't make rich nerds like they used to. Look at Bill Gates, frittering his life away in trench warfare with the Justice Department instead of using his gazillions to, say, colonize and air-condition Mars. Compare him to Alfred Loomis (1887–1975). Having made a fortune of Gatesian proportions in the electric utilities boom of the 1920s, Loomis got out just before the stock-market crash. He retreated to a castle in the cloistered New York village of Tuxedo Park to pursue his youthful passion for physics. Patron to the finest scientific minds of his generation, he assembled teams of researchers who would help win World War II by developing first radar and then the atomic bomb. And he managed to do it all without attracting the notice of journalists or historians.

Until now. Conant, a former *Newsweek* reporter whose grandfather and great-uncle were Loomis cronies, weaves a skillful account drawn from family correspondence and interviews with the aging remnants of the tycoon's networks. She pierces the protective curtain the publicity-shy Loomis hung about himself, and in the process manages to make him a sympathetic character. Not easy,

considering that she is writing about an investment-banker-turned-physicist, two species popularly supposed to rank with reptiles on the warmth-and-kindness scale.

Certainly Loomis's wife found him chilly. Horrified that he refused to intervene when their three teenage sons announced plans to, variously, cross the Atlantic in a 35-foot boat and scale remote peaks in India, Ellen Loomis stormed at her husband: "Will you still believe in your theories about children if all three of them get killed this summer?" Replied Loomis: "Three is not a sufficient number to prove any scientific theory."

If Loomis's paternal skills were uncertain, there could be no doubting his passion for physics. He spent countless millions of dollars following his whims, often with spectacular results. Fascinated by reports of a French submarine-detection device that killed any fish that swam across its beam, Loomis built a 50,000-watt oscillator and fathered the science of ultrasonics. Puttering around the lab, he designed the nation's first working electroencephalograph, to measure and record a brain's electrical activity.

Nothing, however, surpassed his work with the relatively new fields of microwave technology and small-particle physics. An army weapons researcher during World War I, Loomis understood the military implications well ahead of most scientists (or military men, for that matter). At a time when little government money went into scientific research, Loomis poured his own cash into the work and marshaled additional support from universities and philanthropists. Many of the key men in the development of the atomic bomb—Niels Bohr, Ernest O. Lawrence, Enrico Fermi, Arthur Compton, Vannevar Bush—were members of the Tuxedo Park team of the 1930s. And his research on microwaves was so advanced that in 1940, with London tormented by Nazi bombers and the Roosevelt administration finally awakening to the danger, Loomis was put in charge of the new government radar lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

For all the significance of Loomis's later work, Conant especially enjoys herself when describing the early years of his Tuxedo Park lab. Like benign Dr. Franksteins, the emi-

ment scientists in Loomis's castle would stay up all night boiling frogs with high-frequency beams, transplanting beating turtle hearts into petri dishes, poisoning themselves with experimental bathtub gin, and furling one

another's wives. And, like Frankenstein, they occasionally ran disastrously amok: The bastards invented the first radar gun. Some things really are better *not* known to man.

—GLENN GARVIN

ARTS & LETTERS

H. L. MENCKEN ON AMERICAN LITERATURE.

Edited by S. T. Joshi. Ohio Univ. Press.
298 pp. \$44.95

Nowadays most people think of H. L. Mencken (1880–1956) as the scourge of the middle-class philistines he dubbed the “booboisie,” but in his own day he was at least as well known as a literary critic. Over the noisy course of a 15-year run as book reviewer for *The Smart Set*, the magazine he coedited with George Jean Nathan, Mencken reviewed, by his own reckoning, some 2,000 novels, most of them, also by his own reckoning, the work of “100 percent dunderheads.” Few things date faster than a cruel review of a bad book, but Mencken was no mere hit man: He was largely responsible for bringing Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis to the attention of American readers, and he helped put F. Scott Fitzgerald, Willa Cather, Ring Lardner, and

Sherwood Anderson on the map of letters. As if that weren't enough, he was one of the first critics anywhere to recognize *Huckleberry Finn* as a major novel—and to say so, loudly and repeatedly, until his colleagues got the message.

All these achievements and more can be sampled in *H. L. Mencken on American Literature*, the first new anthology of Mencken's literary criticism published in decades. Joshi, the editor, is a Mencken buff who knows his way around his hero's monstrous output (Mencken plausibly claimed to have published well in excess of five million words), and though his selection overlaps rather more than it should with William H. Nolte's indispensable *H. L. Mencken's Smart Set Criticism* (1968), still in print, it also includes a number of previously uncollected pieces, not a few of which are both significant and readable.

Among them is a wickedly funny review of



H. L. Mencken in 1927 at his Baltimore home.

Death in the Afternoon in which Mencken contrives simultaneously to praise Ernest Hemingway and skewer his all-time favorite target, the American South: "Not many current books unearth so much unfamiliar stuff, or present it so effectively. I emerge cherishing a hope that bullfighting will be introduced at Harvard and Yale, or, if not at Harvard and Yale, then at least in the Lynching Belt of the South, where it would offer stiff and perhaps ruinous competition to the frying of poor blackamoors. Imagine the moral stimulation in rural Georgia if an evangelist came to town offering to fight the local bulls by day and baptize the local damned by night!"

Joshi also supplies extensive and useful annotations that clarify a good many otherwise impenetrable period references, as well as an enthusiastic introduction in which he claims that Mencken "could almost be said to have invented a new genre, that of the satirical review." That is coming it a bit high, as Mencken buffs are wont to do, but Joshi is squarely on the mark when he says that Mencken "played his part—and it was a significant part—in establishing the American literary canon." Best of all, he did it with a smile.

—TERRY TEACHOUT

AN AMERICAN FAMILY:

A Televised Life.

By Jeffrey Ruoff. Univ. of Minnesota Press. 184 pp. \$19.95

Of all the phenomena that *An American Family*, Craig Gilbert's 1973 documentary series on the life of the upper-middle-class Loud clan of Santa Barbara, California, did *not* seek to promote, one was surely the law of unintended consequences. Yet, as *An American Family: A Televised Life* makes clear, that law reigned supreme. Not the least of those consequences was the first instance of the hall-of-mirrors effect that has become so achingly familiar in the age of O. J. and Monica, the remarkable way in which people and concepts ricochet back and forth between unbearable earnestness and self-parody, in which folks who've been on TV programs about themselves then turn up on other TV shows and write books to defend or explain themselves, after which

the whole process repeats till exhaustion. Published at the same time as the death of the first openly gay TV personality, Lance Loud, a member of the eponymous American family, this book can be regarded as perhaps the last faint note of that extended symphony of reverberation.

Among those echoes, I feel constrained to disclose, were two of the earliest mock-documentary feature films, both of which I helped create: *Real Life* (1979) and *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984). In the case of *Real Life*, cowriters Albert Brooks, Monica Johnson, and I were consciously reacting to Gilbert's 12-part series. We were comedically making the point, stressed by many reviewers of the show, that having a camera crew around the house inherently taints the "reality" one is trying to depict. In our film, a documentary maker's cameras so distract a veterinarian, played by Charles Grodin, that he botches an operation and kills a horse.

In this thorough and largely readable history and analysis of *An American Family*, film scholar Ruoff suggests that such Heisenbergian critiques are just as applicable to other shows. Who, after all, thinks the camera doesn't affect an interviewee on *60 Minutes*? Yet Gilbert, who devised the series, chose the family, hired the crew, and supervised the editing, was drawing on the tradition of observational documentary to present at least the illusion of something less constructed than a network newsmagazine feature.

As Ruoff points out, it *was* in large part an illusion. Though he dispensed with narrators, voice-overs, and interviews, Gilbert still felt the need to impose storyline, suspense, focus, even music, on the raw footage of reality. His colleagues in public television went further, offering in the publicity materials a series of analyses, comparisons, and conclusions that, though disavowed by Gilbert, provided the substance for a great deal of what reviewers and commentators eventually wrote about the broadcast. Ruoff is at his best here, exposing the umbilical cord that runs between cleverly devised publicity and the ensuing coverage and criticism.

Some of this material seems downright quaint now. The critics, wondering whether the Louds were a unique breed of idiots for

letting a crew film their life for the better part of a year, hadn't experienced the intervening period in which, thanks to Jenny Jones and Jerry Springer and *Fear Factor*, it has become grotesquely obvious that many Americans will do *anything* to be on television. And what seemed such sensational TV in 1973—the dissolution of an apparently ideal marriage, the efflorescence of a gay teenager—seems commonplace now. What remain goofily interesting are some of the details: how, for example, some years after the broadcast, the Los Angeles public television station offered, as a pledge-drive premium, a weekend with the splintered Loud family.

I look forward to talk-show appearances in which I can explain what I really mean in this review, and subsequently, one can only hope, a documentary on the making of one of those shows.

—HARRY SHEARER

THE REAL NICK AND NORA:
Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett,
Writers of Stage and Screen Classics.

By David L. Goodrich. Southern Illinois Univ. Press. 304 pp. \$30

Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, the urbane married couple who were as expert at writing for the stage as for the screen, once assigned themselves the cable address GOOD HACKS. This lighthearted bit of self-deprecation was characteristic of the wit and modesty they brought to a high-polish collaboration that glittered from 1928 to 1962 and, along the way, earned them four Oscar nominations, one Pulitzer Prize, and a Writers Guild Laurel Award for Lifetime Achievement. Goodrich and Hackett wrote films that continue to please today, including *The Thin Man* (1934) and its first two sequels, *Easter Parade* (1948), *Father of the Bride* (1950) and its sequel, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954), and Frank Capra's Christmas perennial *It's a*



Thin Man stars Myrna Loy and William Powell mirrored their creators, Goodrich and Hackett.

Wonderful Life (1946)—which they didn't like—as well as the stage adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1955), for which they won their Pulitzer and are probably best remembered today.

In this engaging and spirited biography—the title alludes to *The Thin Man*, of course: the duo were so charming and amusing that William Powell and Myrna Loy needed only to imitate them—David Goodrich, a nephew, reveals that the scriptwriters were much more than “good hacks,” and a very lucky thing for the rest of us, too, not to mention the stars they wrote for. They were eclectic craftsmen with the swank of Bel Air and the work ethic of dray horses. “We shouldn't take so much trouble,” Frances admitted, “but it is only to satisfy ourselves.” A friend likened their work to “fine cabinet-making.” They were “professionals whose name on a script [was] a guarantee of its excellence,” though assuring top quality involved many drafts, a willingness to “criticize freely,” and screaming matches that bystanders compared to “being near a bear pit.”

It was another world, the so-called Golden Age of Movies that began with talkies in the late 1920s and died when the studios did in the 1960s. It depended on a much-derided factory system that, as the author expertly details, nonetheless elicited memorable work from Goodrich and Hackett and their friends—Ben Hecht, Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder, Dorothy Parker, Philip Dunne, Samson Raphaelson, Lillian Hellman, Robert Benchley, and many others—who came west to pick up some easy money and stayed long enough to inject wit, character, and style into what had been a barely literate popular art.

Writers have always been third-class citizens in Hollywood, even when highly paid, and being marginalized may—paradoxically—have saved Goodrich and Hackett. It gave them perspective, so that when “we started throwing up and crying into our type-

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writers” over misbegotten projects or moronic producers, they could pack up their Smith-Coronas and go back to the theater, as they did with *The Diary of Anne Frank*. And when the entire system began crashing around their heads, they simply said, “Let’s get out of here.” And did.

The system denigrated writers and depended on them, and it will continue to do so as long as movies tell stories. The value of “hacks”—the good and even the bad—was defined by one of Hollywood’s legendary talent users and abusers, Irving Thalberg, the boy genius of MGM, who called writers like Goodrich and Hackett “the most important people in film”—and then added, mogul that he was, “and we must do everything to keep them from finding out.”

—STEVEN BACH

*A BOLT FROM THE BLUE:
And Other Essays.*

By Mary McCarthy. Edited by
A. O. Scott. New York Review Books.
443 pp. \$24.95

Introducing this selection of Mary McCarthy’s occasional writings from the 1930s to the 1980s, *New York Times* critic A. O. Scott writes that “one of the ambitions of this book . . . is to make a somewhat paradoxical case for [McCarthy’s] importance as a novelist—one of a handful of indispensable American writers of realist fiction in the immediate postwar era.” The collection succeeds in this ambition, though by a path different from the one Scott likely had in mind. The occasional staleness of McCarthy’s quintessentially midcentury voice as an essayist—its political fierceness, its axiomatic contempt for the tastes of the middle class—serves to point up the contrast with her novels, which remain fresh and even topical, particularly such masterpieces of social observation as *The Company She Keeps* (1942) and *The Group* (1963).

Those books, as it happens, also splendidly demonstrate the theories of the novel that McCarthy (1912–89) puts forth in the sturdiest of these essays, “The Fact in Fiction” (1960) and “Ideas and the Novel” (1980).

Novels, she notes, are first and foremost repositories of *news*: The great 19th-century novels “carried the news—of crime, high society, politics, industry, finance, and low life.” By the mid-20th century, it seemed that such realities as war, Auschwitz, and the bomb had made fictional depictions of “reality” incomprehensible or irrelevant, and realism’s effectiveness as a literary technique began to weaken. But such developments came too late to hurt McCarthy’s own novels, which, if not exactly “realist,” are crammed with documentary miniatures. *The Company She Keeps* records the precise progress of an adultery in a certain literary set, while *The Group* features an exact account of the procedure by which an unmarried woman got fitted for a pessary, or diaphragm, in 1933.

All this immediacy flags when McCarthy casts her observations in the mold of general cultural criticism, perhaps because her vocabulary takes on a palpable residue of the 1930s sectarian political wars that shaped her. Though her perceptions remain firm and scintillating when she talks of Tolstoy or Salinger, her declarations about “Americans” can descend into meaningless political posturing. “What the foreigner finds most objectionable in American life is its lack of basic comfort,” she wrote in 1947—at a time when Europe still lay in ruins. It does not help to be told a paragraph later that “the immigrant or the poor native American bought a bathtub, not because he wanted to take a bath, but because he wanted to be in a *position* to do so.”

McCarthy’s lasting allure comes partly from her personas, literary and otherwise—on the one hand the authorial voice, sharp, sure, sensuous, and on the other the beauty, the many marriages, and the lurid, abuse-filled childhood detailed in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (1946). The memoir and novels hold up best, followed by the wry, perspicacious theater and literary criticism. With so much of McCarthy’s work still in print, this collection necessarily has the feel of odds and ends. Still, if it sends readers in search of the rest of the corpus, that may be success enough.

—AMY E. SCHWARTZ

HISTORY

SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC AND THE DESTRUCTION OF YUGOSLAVIA.

By Louis Sell. Duke Univ. Press. 412 pp. \$34.95

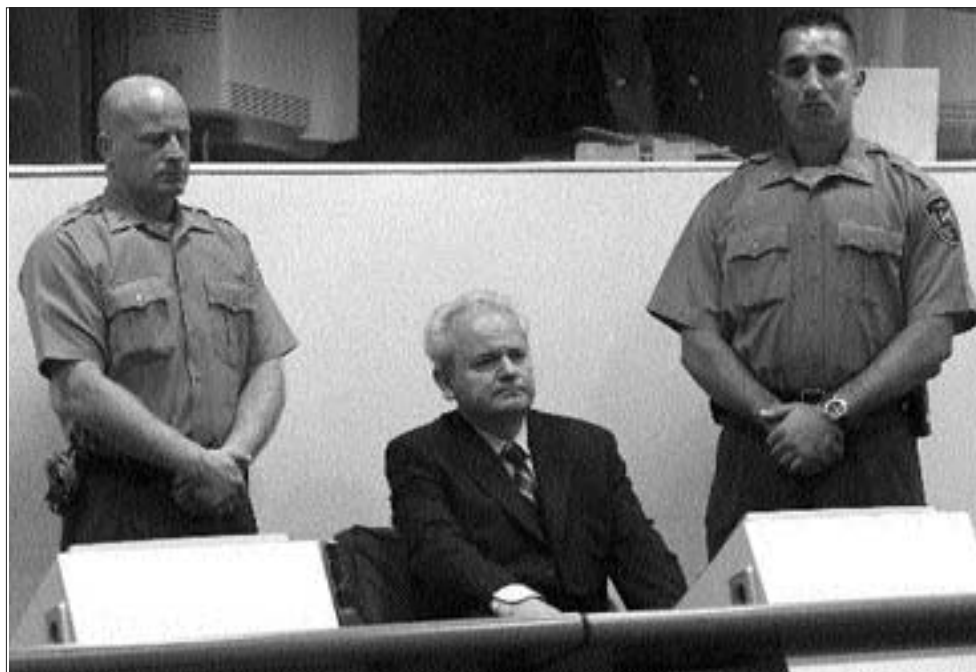
It has been inordinately difficult for anyone following the trial of Slobodan Milosevic to avoid reference to the old standby concerning the banality of evil. Once, this man had uniformed forces at his command, from the border of Austria to the northern frontier of Greece, and could call upon unofficial and deniable auxiliaries to spread hectic fear through driven and scattered populations. Now he sits in a dock and makes sarcastic interjections, while the multinational state he once dominated has been reduced to a bankrupt, dishonored province. Meanwhile, steady forensic work continues to exhume and identify the numberless bodies of his victims in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Serbia.

Sell, a former U.S. foreign service officer with many years of service in the Balkans, maintains the detached, objective style that has become appropriate for the anatomization of a criminal. There are moving volumes on the shelf about the outrages committed by the

perp, many of them written while the blood was still hot upon the pavements, but this book is more a cleanup. And it is the better for being written by someone with an educated sympathy for both the Serbs and, as they were once known, the Yugoslavs.

Milosevic's awful banality consists in precisely this: For most of his mediocre career he was a dull and dutiful party man, schooled in dogmatic platitudes and gifted only as an apparatchik. And then, on a more or less bureaucratic and routine trip to Kosovo in 1988, he abruptly realized that the grievances of the majority—the Serbo-Montenegrin alliance at the core of the country—could be conscripted for demagogic purposes.

From quasi-Stalinism to national socialism was not, in this context, a very daring leap, and Sell argues persuasively and with evidence that it was little more than a callous maneuver. When the Serbian minority in Krajina was finally purged and expelled by the Croats, Milosevic showed no more emotion than he had registered when Sarajevo was being pounded to ash. Nor did he manifest any genuine feeling when his Serbian compatriots in Kosovo were overtaken by the calami-



Slobodan Milosevic in a characteristic pose at his war crimes trial in the Hague.

ty his policies had prepared for them. His outbursts and tantrums, at least one of them witnessed by Sell, occurred only when his own amour-propre was challenged. Normally I distrust psychoprofiles, but the picture of a psychopathic personality as adumbrated here is convincing, and consistent with all the observable facts.

The self-pity of the majority population (the historic seedbed of fascistic ideas) has been angrily criticized by many previous students of this conflict, from whom Sell distinguishes himself by showing some empathy. The Serbs had historical reasons to fear for their diaspora within the old country, and there were other virulent nationalists on the scene, as well as many self-centered separatists. These points are true and necessary for our understanding. However, Sell slightly understates the way in which Milosevic deliberately sought to condition and encourage the same elements in other parties that he incited in his own. The textbook case is his covert agreement with Franjo Tudjman of Croatia to partition Bosnia between them in a late-blooming version of the Stalin-Hitler pact.

Surveying the Milosevic-Tudjman pact in sanguinary operation in Mostar and Sarajevo in the mid-1990s, I thought that if I could know about it, then so could the noble Lords Carrington and Owen, and maybe even Messrs. Vance and Baker and Christopher. A strikingly useful aspect of this book is the detail it gives, often at first hand, about the shameful vacillations—to put it no higher—of the Western mediators. Milosevic became so arrogant and exorbitant because he could not believe his luck in starting at least three wars and then being hastily invited to be a partner in peace, as he was at Dayton. Banal is hardly the word for the statesmen who could not recognize evil when it stared them in the face.

—CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

**INTELLECTUALS AND THE
AMERICAN PRESIDENCY:
*Philosophers, Jesters, or Technicians?***
By Tevi Troy. Rowman & Littlefield.
255 pp. \$27.95

Troy declares himself early and clearly: “As the stories of the past eight administrations

show, the interrelation of intellectuals and presidents has developed into a crucial factor in determining presidential success.” Beginning with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., President John F. Kennedy’s “ambassador” to the intellectual community, Troy attempts to support that premise. It proves, in my view, a bit too heavy a burden.

A former Labor Department official who is now on President George W. Bush’s domestic policy staff, Troy draws on journalism, White House memoirs, and presidential archives for this portrait of how intellectuals and presidents have used, misused, and abused each other. He is especially valuable in underscoring the role of Martin Anderson of Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, one of Ronald Reagan’s earliest, most consistent, and most valuable supporters, who worked to ensure that the White House and federal agencies were staffed with men and women who believed in Reagan’s ideas.

Other tales are engaging if familiar, such as Princeton University historian Eric F. Goldman’s labors as President Lyndon Johnson’s liaison to a wary world of intellectuals. The high—or low—point of Goldman’s tenure was the White House Festival of the Arts in 1965. Declining to attend the festival, poet Robert Lowell denounced the administration’s Vietnam policy. Another 20 writers, organized by Robert Silvers of *The New York Review of Books*, publicly endorsed Lowell’s position. Plunged into the kind of public controversy any White House abhors, the festival underscored the steady souring of relations between Johnson and the intellectual community.

The book’s virtues, alas, do not compensate for its shortcomings. Troy ignores Henry Kissinger because, unlike Schlesinger under JFK and Daniel Patrick Moynihan under President Richard M. Nixon, he was chosen “exclusively as his foreign-policy adviser, not as a broad-based intellectual adviser.” In overlooking Kissinger, the author brushes aside some of the most intriguing questions about the interplay between intellectual thought and public policy: Did Kissinger’s worldview help shape Nixon’s strategic vision? How much did it persuade Nixon to open the door to China, or shape his conduct in Vietnam? A look at Kissinger might also demonstrate, as Richard

Reeves does in his masterly book *President Nixon: Alone in the White House* (2001), that intellectuals yield to no class of political insiders in their empire building, paranoia, and duplicity. All those tenure fights must pay off.

The most serious flaw in this work is the premise itself: that the relationship between presidents and intellectuals is “crucial.” Indeed, Troy himself provides some of the best refutations of that notion. He argues that the first President Bush was doomed because he lacked the sort of “single, unifying vision” that an intellectual adviser might have supplied. Yet, as Troy also notes, Bush proclaimed that “I’m not much for the airy and abstract—I like what works.” No intellectual ambassador could

have made a difference. Bush, by personality and character, was the kind of custodial president destined to be reelected in good times and defeated in gloomy times. Similarly, the mutual contempt between Johnson and the intellectual community had nowhere near the political import of a divisive war in Vietnam and racial and generational upheaval at home.

Troy’s book ends with a crisp, two-page “guidebook” on how to deal with intellectuals. Some samples: “Don’t ignore intellectuals.” “Don’t be an intellectual.” I commend this section to time-pressed presidents. They can probably skim the rest of the book while awaiting the latest poll data from Illinois.

—JEFF GREENFIELD

CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

LEADERSHIP ON THE LINE:

Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading.

By Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky. Harvard Business School Press. 252 pp. \$27.50

“A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good.” So said Niccolò Machiavelli in his incomparable guide to leadership, *The Prince* (1513). He felt compelled to add that in order to survive, a prince must “learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge and not use it, according to the necessity of the case.”

Machiavelli is long dead, but the challenges of leadership live on, even in a time and place that idealizes a very different model of authority. Thus we have *Leadership on the Line*, an earnest guide to leadership in the therapeutic age. Heifetz and Linsky are thoughtful and widely experienced authors who teach at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, but they come across at times as Alan Alda with an MBA.

There is a certain aptness in this. Their audience is not, after all, securing a hostile Italian city-state but trying to get something done in the land of computers and cubicles. And as business books go, this one is a

model of clarity. Much of what the authors say is obviously right, and their combined experience and reading give real depth to their advice, even if it is occasionally couched in some awful dialect of consultant-speak, as in “Hennie Both and Ruud Koedijk maintained high energy within the holding environment of the task force structure.”

What’s more, they’ve tackled the right subject. It’s clear from the torrent of management books published every year, to say nothing of the fortune spent on “organizational development” and other such consulting, that people in business have a deep hunger for help in this arena. Heifetz and Linsky obligingly flesh out their work with a great many anecdotes about famous leaders, including corporate chieftains, presidents, and other luminaries.

But in doing so, the authors beg a big question: Why are people in business reading books like this one when they could simply read Machiavelli? Every corporate chieftain lives by at least some of his rules. It was Machiavelli who said that “in taking a state, the conqueror must arrange to commit all his cruelties at once,” after which he can dole out soothing kindnesses. And who can dispute that “there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle,

than to initiate a new order of things?"

The Prince is the ultimate self-help book for big shots, but literature, too, is full of books that deal in dramatic fashion with problems of leadership. Consider Joseph Conrad's *Typhoon* (1903), Theodore Dreiser's *The Financier* (1912), or F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon* (1941). Better yet, pick one of Shakespeare's tragedies at random. Or how about what the leaders themselves have to say? Surely Ulysses S. Grant's *Personal Memoirs* (1885) can teach us more, and more effectively, than yet

another book by a management guru. Alfred P. Sloan's *My Years with General Motors* (1964) is a classic that remains in print, and even Jack Welch's *Jack: Straight from the Gut* (2001) has many interesting things to say about leadership.

The fundamental question, of course, is whether this sort of thing can be learned at all. Machiavelli knew about that problem too. "It is an infallible rule," he wrote, "that a prince who is not wise himself cannot be well-advised."

—DANIEL AKST

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

ROBERT NOZICK.

By A. R. Lacey. Princeton Univ. Press.
248 pp. \$17.95

INVARIANCES:

The Structure of the Objective World.

By Robert Nozick. Harvard Univ. Press.
416 pp. \$35

Robert Nozick, the Harvard University philosopher who died in January at 63, earned his considerable public reputation with his first book, the libertarian manifesto *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974). He had mixed feelings about this reputation, because he never really considered himself a *political* philosopher. After *ASU*, he devoted almost all his attention to the big problems of philosophy: value, knowledge, rationality. Ambitious topics, certainly, yet with Nozick there has always been a sense of ambition not quite fulfilled, of expectations not quite met.

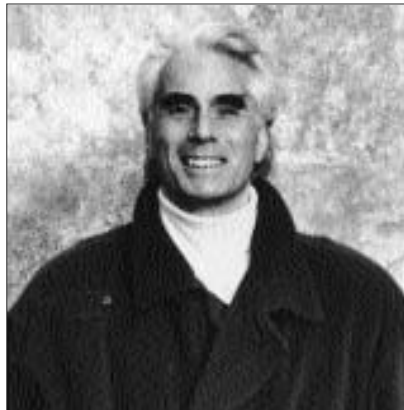
There are two reasons for this. The first is methodological. Especially in his later work, Nozick rejected the notion of "proof" as the aim of philosophy. He sought to say things that were "new and interesting," even if not, strictly speaking,

true—concocting inventive explanations for how it could be that there is something rather than nothing, for instance, or for why we might have free will. Second, his writing is not always accessible. *ASU* is rightly praised for the clarity and liveliness of its prose, but his next book, *Philosophical Explanations* (1981), is long, dense, and frequently unrewarding. As Nozick himself confessed, in some parts he was merely "thrashing about."

As a result, Nozick has long been in need of a critical expositor, someone to present his philosophy in a straightforward yet rigorous fashion. This is Lacey's goal, and the results are mixed. The book, clear if rather stiff, covers every major aspect of Nozick's thought, including his original contributions to epistemology, rationality, and metaphysics. Yet

by the end, even the careful and sympathetic reader may be left wondering just what Nozick was about.

Lacey begins each chapter with a short overview of the general nature of the philosophical problem to be considered, followed by a too-brief statement of Nozick's position and then a look at the objections



Robert Nozick

raised by critics. Lacey presents the critical response in all its breadth instead of focusing on a sustained and consistent line of criticism, so the book often reads like an annotated bibliography. The treatment of *ASU* is especially disappointing: That book was in many ways a direct response to John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971), but Lacey gives Rawls versus Nozick a mere two pages. In fairness, Nozick made a point of not responding to critics or revising his views in light of objections. He didn't want to become "defensive" about his work, and he often joked that he didn't want to spend his life rewriting *ASU*—a dig, perhaps, at his colleague Rawls, who made a career of revisiting *A Theory of Justice*.

Regardless, the philosophy that emerges from Lacey's study has an unfinished feel to it. That feeling persists in Nozick's last book, *Invariances*. He again tackles some big questions—necessity, objectivity, consciousness—and the book demands a lot from the reader. Nozick was a stupendously learned man, but that learning was not always lightly worn. In justifying once again his rejection of philosophical proof, he compares his method to that of physicists who use messy mathematics to make quick progress in a new area. He casually invites the reader to "recall the state of the calculus before [Karl] Weierstrass, and the path to renormalization methods in quantum field theory"—and this is only the introduction. Still, there is some great philosophy here. The discussion of evolutionary cosmology and how it might give us objective worlds is state-of-the-art metaphysics, both new and exciting.

Nozick is an important philosopher who led an interesting life. With his passing, what we need, and what he deserves, is an intellectual biography with the scale and scope of Ray Monk's book on Ludwig Wittgenstein.

—ANDREW POTTER

AS I LAY DYING:

Meditations upon Returning.

By Richard John Neuhaus. Basic.
168 pp. \$22

It would be nice to forget all the baggage that accompanies Neuhaus's lovely

new book. For some, the book will have to carry the weight of its author's famous conversions: from Lutheran vicar to Catholic priest, and from liberal social activist to one of our more temperate and stylistically gifted neoconservatives. For other readers, the weight of doctrinal purity implied by the nihil *obstat* and the imprimatur on the copyright page might compromise the book. The audacious literary allusion in the title could cause a few knowing heads to shake, and the book's willingness to present itself as a quiet and well-informed self-help volume might prompt others to ignore it.

Almost hiding in the subtitle is the best clue to the book's intent: meditations. Several years ago Neuhaus, whom the popular press labeled one of the most influential intellectuals in America, almost died. A misdiagnosed colon cancer ruptured his intestines, necessitating major surgery. During the operation, doctors unwittingly nicked his spleen, causing internal hemorrhaging that required a second operation a day later. One of his doctors later told him, "It was as though you had been hit twice by a Mack truck going 60 miles an hour. I didn't think you'd survive."

In the tradition of great meditations, in which momentous events throw life into focus and place its purpose, or lack of purpose, under intense scrutiny, Neuhaus reflects on the meaning of death. He invokes Augustine, Michel Foucault, Hamlet, and Big Daddy from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, among many others. On one page, he moves from a poem by W. S. Merwin (which he summarizes as "poetically pleasing, but not . . . a rewarding line of inquiry") through Descartes to Cicero and Marcus Aurelius, and ends up most comfortable, not surprisingly for a priest, with Thomas Aquinas. Although one might disagree with one or another of his summaries (for instance, I find the Merwin more interesting than he does), Neuhaus's ease with a broad range of references can be breathtaking.

But the most vivid and memorable moments in *As I Lay Dying* come from his own experiences. Of course, there is his near-death experience, which he nicely

relabels a “near-life experience,” and which he recounts without self-pity and with a wonderful sense of humor. I was most moved, though, by those moments when his pastoral vocation takes him to the bedsides of the dying. I found myself wishing this little book were just a bit longer and carried more of this kind of authority.

Neuhaus is satisfied neither with an objective understanding of the condition of death nor with a purely subjective response to the event. While recognizing that such arguments can be “endlessly fascinating,” he knows that meditations don’t have to reach firm conclusions. He understands—and persuades us, too—that “death eludes explanation.” He is finally content with an understanding of the correlation between brain and thought, between matter and spirit, that can only be explained as mystery. Despite what might sound like an overtly Christian ending, it is a measure of the success of this meditation that it can convince, at least for a moment, even the nonbeliever.

—KEITH TAYLOR

***THE ELECTRIC MEME:
A New Theory of How We
Think and Communicate.***

By Robert Aunger. Free Press. 334 pp.
\$27

If the brain is an alphabet soup, according to Aunger, “memes” are the alphabet letters that spell out our most fundamental beliefs and values—in effect, our culture. Richard Dawkins coined the word to help explain cultural evolution in *The Selfish Gene* (1976). In the years since, the concept has spawned a thriving field called memetics, complete with academic conferences (Aunger organized the first one) and rival theories.

Mememes are abstractions rather than tangible objects, and many memeticists are philosophers by training. In this captivating if sometimes challenging book, Aunger, a biological anthropologist, approaches the subject with scientific precision.

He differs with those who view mememes and ideas as synonymous. A mememe, in his

view, is far smaller, the most basic building block of understanding. “You can’t equate meaning with mememes,” he writes. “Meaning comes in the contingencies of their expression.” Mememes are mere nuances: cognitive morphemes whose sum equals a word and, in accumulation, an idea. That is, it takes a bunch of mememes combined with a bunch of context to produce a single thought, let alone a fully developed concept.

Some memeticists liken mememes to viruses; others say they’re closer to genes. Aunger rejects both models. To him, a mememe is more like a benign parasite that’s incapable of reproducing without a host, the host being the human brain. In the brain, mememes are both fecund and redundant, generating multiple copies to ensure against cell death. Out of sheer repetition, the mememe eventually embeds itself in long-term memory. From there, it transmits outward in search of another brain.

How do mememes bridge the gap between minds? They don’t fly through the air like “magical darts,” Aunger writes, or spread like germs. According to his model, the mememe expresses itself as a signal—utterance, writing, semaphore—that “searches for a place to create a brother mememe elsewhere.” Without actually leaving the brain, the mememe seeks to lodge a duplicate mememe in another host. The mememe proselytizes. But, as human proselytizers know, the message may not be faithfully reproduced—“noise in the chain” may modify or corrupt it.

Originally, Aunger says, mememes probably came along to influence behavior. In shaping behavior, they seem to be governed by natural selection. Mememes compete, he writes, “to be selected for the good effects they produce in the host.”

One of Aunger’s most compelling arguments is that mememes can store cultural information in the external environment. While a mememe stays in the brain, its message can be buried in an artifact, such as the Rosetta stone, that awaits a signal to replicate itself in a new brain—a signal that may not come until the mememe’s living hosts all are dead. The symbiotic relationship between mememe and artifact is especially rich concerning books, paintings,

videotaped TV shows, and other communicative objects. “We are educated in part by our own artifacts,” Aunger writes, and “the real cause of cumulative culture may be

the ability to share knowledge across generations through the manufacture of artifacts.” Culture, it seems, is infectious.

—JAY KIRK

CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel Akst, the author of the novel *The Webster Chronicle* (2001), writes a monthly column about business for *The New York Times*. **Steven Bach**, who teaches film and literature at Bennington College and Columbia University and is the author of *Final Cut: Dreams and Disasters in the Making of Heaven’s Gate* (1985), *Marlene Dietrich: Life and Legend* (1992), and *Dazzler: The Life and Times of Moss Hart* (2001), is writing a biography of Leni Riefenstahl. **Glenn Garvin** writes for *The Miami Herald*. **Jeff Greenfield**, a CNN senior analyst, is the author most recently of *Oh, Waiter—One Order of Crow* (2001), an account of the 2000 election. **Christopher Hitchens**, a columnist for *Vanity Fair* and *The Nation*, is the author of *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (2001) and the forthcoming *Why Orwell Matters*. **Jay Kirk** has written for *Harper’s*, *The Chicago Reader*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *nerve.com*, among others. **James Pinkerton**, the author of *What Comes Next: The End of Big Government—and the New Paradigm Ahead* (1995), is a fellow at the New America Foundation. **Andrew Potter** is a professor of philosophy at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. **Amy E. Schwartz** writes about cultural issues for *The Washington Post*. **Harry Shearer** is an actor, writer, and director whose new feature film is *Teddy Bears’ Picnic*, a comedy about a Bohemian Grove-type retreat. **Keith Taylor**’s most recent book is the coedited volume *What These Ithakas Mean: Readings in Cavafy*, published this year in Greece. **Terry Teachout**, the music critic of *Commentary* and a contributor to *Time*, is the author of *The Skeptic: A Life of H. L. Mencken*, to be published in November.

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FROM THE CENTER

Readers of the *WQ* often praise the magazine but tell me they would like to know more about its parent institution, the Woodrow Wilson Center. The Center, created by an act of Congress in 1968 as the official and living memorial to our 28th president, is a nonpartisan institute for advanced study that promotes dialogue and research on issues of national and international concern.

Unlike many research organizations in Washington, the Center does not have an ideological agenda and does not make policy recommendations. Instead, it aims, in more than 350 meetings a year and numerous publications and books, to inform the discussion of the great issues of the day by offering a hospitable forum for the expression of a variety of ideas. Each year the Center hosts some 150 scholars and fellows, about half of whom hail from outside the United States.

The Center's budget comes in roughly equal shares from the federal government and private sources. Critical guidance is provided by the Center's outstanding Board of Trustees, which includes nine private members and, ex-officio, the Secretaries of State, Health and Human Services, and Education; the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution; the Librarian of Congress; the Archivist of the United States; and the Chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Wilson Council, the Center's private-sector advisory group, provides important additional support.

In recent months, the Center has probed an extraordinarily wide range of issues. Among our recent speakers are the presidents of Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Romania, Uganda, and Mozambique; the prime ministers of Lebanon, Slovenia, Croatia, and Nepal; Vice President Dick Cheney; AOL Time Warner Chairman Steve Case; National Science Foundation Director Rita Colwell; District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams; and World Bank President Jim Wolfensohn.

The Center is focusing on issues related to the war on terrorism, from the complex U.S.-Saudi relationship to the advancement of democracy and women's rights in the Middle East. A May meeting with Mohammed Arkoun, a leading Algerian scholar of Islam, examined the challenge of implementing educational reforms to counter distorted perceptions of the West in

classrooms and textbooks in the Islamic world.

Much of the Center's programming is based in its outstanding regional programs. Recent meeting topics include the conflict between India and Pakistan, challenges in transatlantic relations, the prospects for peace in Macedonia, U.S. assessments of Russia's economy, Argentina's financial future, and the civil war in Sudan. The Center's new Canada Institute and Project on Brazil are studying America's relationships with those hemispheric allies, and the Center is developing a similar project on Mexico.

One of the Wilson Center's strengths is its capacity to bring together public- and private-sector experts to discuss issues that transcend a single geographic area or discipline. For instance, it recently hosted a groundbreaking conference on the economics of war, which analyzed the role of resource wealth—whether oil, gold, drugs, or diamonds—in fostering conflicts abroad. In the domestic arena, the Center has encouraged debate of issues such as welfare reform and civil rights in forums with sociologist William Julius Wilson and attorney Vernon Jordan.

Another Wilson Center priority is to explore the historical context of public-policy issues. In April, the Center's Cold War International History Project illuminated some of the challenges facing the United States in Afghanistan by hosting a discussion of newly released documents on the Soviet war there during the 1980s. The Center is also peering into the future with a new Foresight and Governance Project that is establishing an excellent reputation for innovative examination of the challenges that we will face during the next 10 to 20 years.

To share its work with a wider public, the Center is redesigning and upgrading its Web site, www.wilsoncenter.org; distributing succinct news digests of its meetings; and launching a new TV program, *dialogue*. Aired on public television, *dialogue* features conversations with scholars and foreign leaders, and builds on the success of the Center's radio program of the same name. As these and other new initiatives go forward, I am confident the Wilson Center will remain true to its charge of bringing together the scholar, the policymaker, and the businessperson so that better understanding and better policy can emerge.

Lee H. Hamilton
Director



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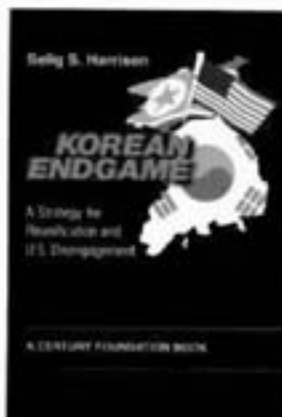
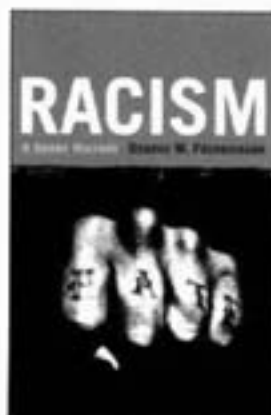
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