

VOLUME 18 ISSUE 3 | SUMMER 2024

*in*FOCUS

QUARTERLY

Agenda: America



Benjamin Kerstein on American Radicalization | **Joshua Grundleger** on the 17th Amendment | **Adam Milstein** on Connecting Antisemitism and anti-Westernism | **Bari Weiss** on Campus DEI Programs | **James Kirchick** on Victimization | **Mark Mills** on Nuclear Power | **Todd Bensman** on Immigration Reform | **Jerry Underwood** on Alabama's Auto Industry | **Heritage Foundation** on Defense Budget Priorities | **Stephen Moore** on Carter and Biden | **Garion Frankel** on Faith in our Schools | **Steven Malanga** on Anti-Gentrification | **Shoshana Bryen's** Summer Reading List

An Interview with Senator **Katie Britt** (R-AL)

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Welcome to the Summer 2024 issue of *inFOCUS Quarterly* – our Domestic Policy Issue, which I have privately subtitled “Schizophrenia.” Our last two issues were devoted to the impact of October 7 at home and abroad. So, what makes this the “Domestic Policy Issue?”

While as supporters of Israel we cannot look away from the events there, as Americans we cannot ignore basic elements of American policy that affect us all. Join us for a broad picture in which our authors cover both.

Benjamin Kerstein’s essay makes the sobering case that today’s radicalism is simply the next phase of the old construct that seeks destruction of the America we cherish. His prescription? “Throughout its history, Americans have successfully risen up against threats to liberty not just without but also within. This eternal vigilance... is the price of the republic.”

Federal debt and the federal budget are priority items for Americans, as are the border and defense. Stephen Moore, Todd Bensman, and an outstanding panel from the Heritage Foundation respectively take them on. The 1st Amendment as cover for antisemitism and mob violence is the purview of Adam Milstein, and the less-prominent-but-very-important

17th Amendment is addressed by Josh Grundleger. Bari Weiss writes on the downside of the DEI movement – with a prescient 2015 sidebar by James Kirchik. The future of domestic nuclear energy is covered by Mark Mills, positive signs in American education by Garion Frankel, and the “anti-gentrification” movement in our cities by Steven Malanga.



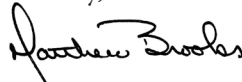
inFOCUS editor Shoshana Bryen interviews Sen. Katie Britt (R-AL) on the industrial, educational, and high-tech revitalization of the American South in general and

Alabama in particular. A sidebar by Jerry Underwood provides a great example. And Sen. Britt’s words of support for Israel made us smile.

Shoshana also sends you on your beach vacation with some books from our library – political, historical, and fun.

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

Sincerely,



Matthew Brooks
Publisher

inFOCUS

VOLUME 18 | ISSUE 3

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Jewish Policy Center

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Washington, DC 20013

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Cover Art: ChatGPT/OpenAI

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FEATURING

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MARK MILLS is a physicist and Executive Director of the National Center for Energy Analytics. (15)

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JERRY UNDERWOOD is the business editor at Big Communications. (27)

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STEPHEN MOORE is a visiting senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation. (33)

GARION FRANKEL is a Ph.D. student at Texas A&M University. (35)

STEVEN MALANGA is the senior editor of *City Journal* and a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute. (38)

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

This is the Way 1968 Ends...

by **BENJAMIN KERSTEIN**

There is a terrible logic to radical movements. They begin as expressions of a sort of idealism or at least what their followers perceive to be idealism. But they run headlong into a world that is not ideal: A world that, in its fundamental indifference, is not interested in idealism. A world that is, in its way, immovable.

This cannot but frustrate and enrage the radical, who is not capable of accepting a world in which everything changes and nothing changes; in which all is flux but everything ultimately returns to itself. As a result, radicalism ultimately arrives at a point at which it can no longer stand the frustration of its messianic ambitions. Out of bitter vengeance, it decides to destroy the world, and, along with the world, itself.

The most powerful and influential form of radicalism in the Western world today has no real name in the United States. It does in France, or at least its adherents do: *les soixante-huitards*, “the ‘68ers.”

The term refers to the radicals who took part in the 1968 student riots in Paris, as well as their ideology and the movements that emerged out of it: Third-worldism, environmentalism, anti-Americanism, anti-racism, etc. In many ways, the ethos of this kind of 1968-ism defines the modern left. It has rarely achieved outright political power; it rarely wins elections; but it exercises hegemony over culture and higher education, as well as the activist industry.

The ‘68ers may go unnamed in the US, but their influence is no less powerful. Above all, their primary post-1968 tactic has met with more success than in perhaps any other country. They called

it “the long march through the institutions,” though it was essentially a barely modified adaptation of the old communist tactic of “entryism.” Put simply, it involves the infiltration by radicals of more moderate institutions to conquer and colonize them. Once successful, they use the facade of moderation and the prestige of these institutions to consolidate power and pursue radical ends.

It hardly needs to be said that the American ‘68ers’ greatest success was in academia. During the 1960s, American radicals realized the power of the campus. They mobilized thousands if not millions of students, most of them wholly ignorant of the ideologies they claimed to advocate, in service of the movement to destroy South Vietnam and install a communist government in its place. In many ways, they succeeded.

Along the way, they also destroyed the Democratic party for a generation, committed numerous acts of terrorism, and forged a counterculture that continues to wield immense cultural power

Conquer the universities, install radicals at all levels of faculty and administration, and then consolidate a totalitarian regime - a dictatorship of the professoriate that would colonize and control the mind of America’s elite.

This takeover would be enabled by tactics drawn from the radical movements of the past: They would purge all dissenters by means fair or foul. Those they could not purge, they would ostracize and isolate. They would subject even those who remained neutral to rituals of public repentance and submission in the style of the Chinese Cultural Revolution—Mao’s brutal campaign against “ideological deviationism” that maimed and murdered thousands. If necessary, they would resort to outright violence and terrorism. In other words, they would construct and impose a suicide cult “by any means necessary.”

Their success was spectacular, and we are seeing the results today. As we speak, antisemitic mobs have conquered and colonized many of America’s most

During the 1960s, American radicals realized the power of the campus. They mobilized thousands if not millions of students, most of them wholly ignorant of the ideologies they claimed to advocate...

even after the passage of half a century.

But their greatest success was the Long March. Named for the Chinese communists’ legendary trek to northern China that ensured their survival and eventual takeover, the plan was simple:

elite institutions of higher learning. They advocate terrorism and genocide; brutally intimidate, abuse, and physically attack Jewish students; and call for not just the destruction of Israel but the annihilation of America itself.

Even though all of this is a direct violation of these universities' alleged codes of conduct, as well as numerous local, state, and federal laws, those who have the power to stop them have refused to do so. Many have endorsed the mob and more still are too terrified to take action against what they know to be evil.

They have good reason. They know quite well that if they were to take effective action, if they were to enforce their own codes, laws, and alleged principles, they would have to expel large sections of their student bodies. They would have to fire equally large numbers of faculty. They would have to cleanse their administrations of enablers and collaborators. They would have to break the regime. This, they are utterly unwilling to do.

The only recourse is vengeance through apocalyptic violence. If they can't have the country, no one else can either.

The reason is 1968. Even if they know that the mob is immoral and indeed monstrous, those who should know better—who *do* know better—are still '68ers. They believe in the basic tenets of 1968ism: America is corrupted by racism, imperialism, patriarchy, and their attendant evils. Radical action is necessary to change this. There are no enemies to the left. The chickens come home to roost by any means necessary. Ideological deviationism cannot be tolerated. Ideological deviationism is whatever they happen to disapprove of at any given moment. If all else fails, exterminate all the brutes.

The result of all this is now clear: The '68ers and the radical left as a whole have collapsed into something very like Nazism. Whatever their protestations otherwise, the parallels are obvious: Theirs is a minority movement that wields the mob to impose its ideology on the majority. It sees the past as compromised and corrupt and will redeem

it by any means necessary. It looks to a glorious future of tyrannical virtue. It takes over institutions of education, government, and culture and uses them to destroy those institutions and impose a totalitarian regime. It is perfectly willing to use horrific violence to achieve this. Its capacity to tolerate dissent is nil. And now, it has embraced racism, antisemitism, and genocide.

■ ***Exterminate All the Brutes***

All of this was probably inevitable. Radical movements always compound their radicalism, and the world always resists them because that is the nature of the world. In the end, their compounded radicalism results in compounded and enraging failure. Indeed, despite their

best efforts, the '68ers have succeeded in only partial conquest of elite institutions.

A strong conservative movement parries them at every turn. They know that to impose a totalitarian regime on a nation with a 250-year history of political and social liberty is all but impossible. The only recourse is vengeance through apocalyptic violence. If they can't have the country, no one else can either. They feel compelled towards a *seppuku*, a glorious suicide, a mass self-immolation, and they intend to take everyone else down with them.

In such a situation, however, an enemy must be found, a focus of all the inchoate energies of hate and violence buried deep in every human psyche. There must be someone to blame, a scapegoat for all the ills that the radicals have failed to overcome. And like the Nazis, they have found the ready victim, the eternal villain, and the eternal scapegoat. They have found the Jews.

In such a situation, the Jews have no choice but to defend themselves – not just for themselves but for everyone else the '68ers plan to force into a civilizational Jonestown. And everyone else must defend themselves as well. If the '68ers loathe the Jews, loathe their country, and loathe the world, that is their right. If they feel suicide is their only recourse, that is their right as well. But they have no right to demand that the country and the world do the same.

Thus, the rest of us have only one option: Smash the regime. The '68ers must be, at long last, relegated to the far corners of the dark web and their fellow Nazis' gated compounds in the Midwest. This will be a difficult and extended struggle. The '68ers have the mob, powerful institutions, and vast financial resources to call upon. They will scream and weep that they are being oppressed by malign forces, especially perfidious Jews.

But this is a lie. To smash the regime is not oppression. It is not a Jewish conspiracy. It is a reassertion, at long last, of freedom, of liberty, of anti-totalitarianism, of the right to be human even in an inhuman world.

Throughout its history, Americans have successfully risen up against threats to liberty not just without but also within. This eternal vigilance, is the price of the republic. It is a price worth paying and Americans—indeed all people around the world—who believe in liberty, including the liberty to be human, must now pay it once again.

We should take comfort in the fact that we did not seek the fight. But the fight is here all the same. We must not shrink from it. The '68ers and their descendants devoutly believe that we are the brutes who must be exterminated. We must inform them that they have picked a fight that, despite their best efforts, they cannot win.

BENJAMIN KERSTEIN *is an Israeli-American author. He currently writes a weekly column for The Jewish News Syndicate (JNS.org).*

Would Repealing the 17th Amendment Fix the Senate?

by **JOSHUA GRUNDLEGER**

The frenzied responses to states' new post-Roe abortion laws and President Joe Biden's latest student loan forgiveness program have once again highlighted America's extreme polarization, which has, in part, been driven by an ever-increasing tendency to nationalize political disagreements. A turn away from the modern obsession with one-size-fits-all federal policy and back to more localized politics may help alleviate some of our national angst.

One potential (albeit maybe slightly madcap and certainly longshot) approach is to consider a repeal of the 17th Amendment, an argument last earnestly considered by the Tea Party more than a decade ago. For those who have misplaced their pocket Constitution, the 17th Amendment, ratified in 1913, reworked Article 1 of the Constitution by stipulating that US senators are to be "elected by the people" rather than "chosen by the [state] Legislature." While acknowledging that any change to the Constitution seems far-fetched at this moment, it is nonetheless useful to consider how repealing the 17th Amendment could improve the state of our politics and discourse.

■ *Misdirection & Warped Incentives*

While the federalism argument advocated by the Tea Party still holds, it can now be supplemented with a more novel view that the 17th Amendment contributed to a reorientation of the Senate in a national manner by misdirecting senators' focus and warping

the incentives they face. In turn, these dynamics are exceedingly fueling polarization and yielding dysfunction in Washington, DC. Repeal may, consequently, contribute to a reduction of this national polarization by refocusing some political energies inward.

Although the federalism and polarization arguments are related, they emphasize different things. The traditional federalism argument tends to focus on who wields policymaking power—with a preference toward the most local level of government competent enough to address an issue. It rightly contends that a return to the status quo ex ante would have the potential to increase local control and rein in the excesses of the federal government. The original purpose of the Senate was to speak for

government as must secure the authority of the former and may form a convenient link between the two systems."

The 17th Amendment undoubtedly undermined the centrality of the states' role in the national framework and predictably failed its progressive patrons' purported objective of eliminating the corruption that, in their view, was germane to the original formulation of the Senate.

■ *Populist Democracy*

But it also had the often overlooked effect of creating a new system that was ripe for the more destructive aspects of populist democracy—a cost that America is resoundingly bearing more than a century later. In practice, the 17th Amendment did not merely

A turn away from the modern obsession with one-size-fits-all federal policy and back to more localized politics may help alleviate some of our national angst.

state interests, an unambiguous contrast to the House, which represents the interests of the people. This argument was made explicit in Federalist 62: "It is recommended by the ... advantage ... of giving to the State governments such an agency in the formation of the federal

change who selects senators, but distorted the incentive structure faced by politicians, and ultimately reordered which individuals and groups are a senator's effective constituents.

Contrary to the vision of the Founders, US senators today have



US Senate Chamber, circa 1873 (Photo: Brady-Handy Photograph Collection / Library of Congress)

broad national platforms—a primary source of the Senate’s increasing dysfunction. As Yuval Levin has eloquently argued, senators spend much of their time performing rather than legislating. In part this is due to the national incentive structure in which they find themselves, a combination of external pressures and powerful stakeholders that do not align with the state interests that senators are supposed to represent.

These national pressures are manifold and have both a centralizing and conforming impact on senators. The demand to conform to extreme national partisan positions is one of the rare features of DC that is bipartisan and has undermined the Senate’s capacity for any meaningful work.

A prime example of such national forces is the national media, including

social media and the X-verse (formerly Twitter-verse), which has all but abolished local media and its parochial interests. The elevation of the national media has had the dual effect of reducing or eliminating a major channel to funnel or express local concerns, and, simultaneously, diverting senators’ eyes toward large, uniform outlets. Senators are thus hearing less from locals and speaking more to a perceived monolithic national audience.

■ **Parties & Finances**

National parties have played a similar role. While the institutional power of national parties has waned—and is quite possibly at a historical low—they have a wide and influential platform that applies considerable pressure for conformity. No longer are they big tents

trying to negotiate a political compromise, but rather one-size-fits all special interests that are more adept, like many of our institutions in the digital age, at ostracizing and shaming. To be tarred and feathered as an outsider to the party, a RINO or a traitor, can be fatal to all but the most stalwart politicians. Even if not politically lethal, pushing back against such pressures exacts high costs, draining considerable political capital.

Likewise, senators are increasingly focused on a national campaign financing process, rife with special interests, national parties and the media; all of which are encouraging polarization and dysfunction. Large national special interests are often better funded and connected and can more effectively and efficiently leverage their heft than the

smaller parochial interests that are being crowded out.

While senators essentially swim in the combined national seas of media, party, and donors, their direct election under the 17th Amendment has also altered the bases to which they speak in elections. Common wisdom holds that

The original purpose of the Senate was to speak for state interests, an unambiguous contrast to the House, which represents the interests of the people.

primaries—through which most senatorial candidates are selected—tend to encourage extremism. While the research is mixed on whether primary voters are actually closer to the fringes of their respective parties, and successful primary challenges to incumbent senators are extremely rare, senators undeniably modify their positions and presentations to speak to such an audience. Indeed, candidate behavior and promises may very well cater to the perceived national base in a way that drives platforms and ultimately policies to the extremes.

The travails of Senators Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Kyrsten Sinema (formerly D-AZ, now I-AZ), who have been ostracized for failing to toe the national party line when they support the substantially divergent views of their respective states, highlight these enormous national pressures. Most sitting senators do not have the backbone of these two – and even they could not last long bucking the system – which is why good legislators, such as Richard Burr (R-NC), Pat Toomey (R-PA), Rob Portman (R-OH) and, more recently, Mitt Romney (R-UT), opted to retire,

and potential new talent, including Governor Chris Sununu (R-NH) have avoided the Capitol at all costs.

■ **Reducing Polarization**

The repeal of the 17th Amendment would reduce or eliminate the impact of these national pressures, which may

consequently help dampen growing political polarization in this country. Senatorial primaries will immediately disappear, and special interests will lose access and influence wielded through campaign contributions. National parties and media will undeniably have less

sway over senators. To be clear, national pressures will not disappear—certainly not overnight—but they will simultaneously command less senatorial attention and hold reduced influence over senators’ behaviors.

Such a move would help realign the system, first by placing another level between these populist forces and

the halls of power. State legislators will serve as a mediating level between national pressures and senators. The influence and power of national special interests, media and donor dollars will necessarily become less concentrated, as they will have to apply their pressure to 7,383 state legislators instead of 100 senators.

■ **Insulating Senators**

Concomitantly, repeal of the 17th Amendment would insulate senators from the masses. Such a reduction in democracy is a feature, not a bug, of the reform, particularly given the vitriolic populist age that we find ourselves in, and better aligns the Senate with its original purpose.

However, senators would not become unaccountable to the people, especially given the power that the digital age has given the citizen journalist. State legislators would remain directly answerable through popular elections and would, as intermediaries, ultimately bear responsibility for senators. Furthermore, the US House of Representatives would continue its

The 17th Amendment... distorted the incentive structure faced by politicians and ultimately reordered which individuals and groups are a senator’s effective constituents.

function representing the public, serving as a popular check on states.

Of course, this proposal does not imply that a return to the pre-17th Amendment model would remove external pressures. It is the explicit aim of representative democracy that elected leaders are to embody, in part, the desires of their constituents and to reflect the needs of

those who will be affected by the policies they implement. Pressure on politicians is germane to the system. However, it is preferable that those pressures and the incentive structures in which they operate are aligned in a way that is healthiest for our republic. For instance, the click-bait

back in the bottle—the proposed change cannot be worse than the status quo.

■ *And the Voters*

Furthermore, these challenges may be offset by increasing the importance of local elections. Voter interest in lo-

closest to their daily lives.

■ *There is no Panacea*

If individuals turn the focus locally, they will not only arrive at policy solutions more appropriate to their immediate needs, but they may help calm national tempers by reducing the desire to control the policies and behaviors of people in neighboring states. Senators can then serve a more appropriate and originalist role of advocating for their respective states' preferences in policy areas that can only be managed at the federal level.

This proposal is not a panacea. Drastic changes to our constitutional system should be made with caution. Unforeseen consequences are undoubtedly lurking around the corner. Additionally, such a change to the nature of the federal government cannot be made in isolation. Other tools should be deployed that both strengthen federalism and diminish pernicious populism and polarization. Nonetheless, a turn

It is the explicit aim of representative democracy that elected leaders are to embody, in part, the desires of their constituents

needs of 24-hour national media and the online X- mobs are less essential than the American citizens who need focused and functioning governments at all levels of our federal system.

■ *Representing the States*

The flip side of relieving national pressures is that it will free senators to articulate local concerns on behalf of state residents, without the distraction of national interests. It will considerably raise the importance of state legislators as the key constituents for senators. State legislators, who each speak for a smaller number of state residents, can better channel local interests and are generally more detached from national politics.

Critics may contend that rather than localizing politics, repeal will nationalize local politics. State legislators may continue to look to national markets and pressures—at least until the dynamic changes—and national special interests may corrupt local interests. State policies, such as gerrymandering, may become even more contentious as the stakes of local races rise.

While there is undeniably some truth to these concerns—local politics are increasingly becoming nationalized and there is no fully stuffing the genie

cal elections is abysmally low. Turnout in municipal elections is frequently less than half of that in presidential elections. Such voter apathy has led to general inattention, if not neglect, of the very real (albeit often humdrum) is-

sues, such as zoning and education, that most frequently and directly impact residents' lives.

In a higher-stakes environment, more residents will have an interest in getting involved—at first maybe merely to ensure they control their representation in the US Senate, but eventually to direct their energies at managing local concerns. Moreover, given the smaller size of their respective districts, voter action and votes will actually matter more, precisely at the level of government

The demand to conform to extreme national partisan positions is one of the rare features of DC that is bipartisan.

inward to the state, an encouragement for everyone to tend their own gardens, rather than agitating for change across the country, would temper the totalizing impulse of the modern age and contribute to a much needed calming of national politics.

JOSHUA GRUNDLEGER *is an economist and political analyst. An earlier version of this article appeared in The Dispatch. The views expressed here are his own.*

The Islamo-Leftist Alliance: Threatening Jews and the US

by **ADAM MILSTEIN**

In the rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape of the 21st century, a disturbing alliance has emerged. It poses a profound threat not only to Jews but to Americans and Western civilization. The confluence of radical Islamic ideologies and extreme leftist orthodoxy, often referred to as the "Islamo-leftist alliance," represents a paradoxical yet potent coalition united by a shared animosity toward Israel, Jews, and the values underpinning Western democracy. Part of this alliance, the Palestinian wing of the global Muslim Brotherhood, murdered 1,300 Israelis on October 7. Since then, American leftists wear keffiyehs, set up encampments across American universities, and openly endorse the murder of Jews. The alliance uses the pulpit in Tehran to condemn the "Zionist regime" and the bullhorn to shout "*** the Police" across American cities. Understanding this odd, yet burgeoning partnership and the threat it poses is crucial for all who value freedom, democracy, and human rights.

■ *The Genesis of the Alliance*

The origins of the Islamo-leftist alliance are rooted in a convergence of mutual interests and ideological blind spots. On one side, radical Islamic groups espouse a fundamentalist worldview that seeks to impose its interpretation of Sharia law in the West and oppose Western influence in the Muslim world. On the other side, extreme leftists advocate for radical social and political revolution, often viewing Western capitalism as the primary source of global injustice.

While these two groups appear ideologically disparate, their collaboration is driven by a hatred toward a common enemy: the West and its

allies. The Islamo-leftist alliance holds a particular hatred of Israel, the Jewish people, and their Western values in the Middle East. In the United States, the Occupy Movement, Black Lives Matter, Antifa, and the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement are key actors. And abroad, their unlikely yet staunch allies in Iran and across the Middle East encourage their advocacy. Leftist activists and radical Islamists

unite in terminology, tactics, and vitriol to delegitimize, demonize, and defame Israel and the United States. This movement, which consistently traffics in blatant antisemitism, targets Jews globally and fosters an environment of anti-American hatred and intolerance.

■ *The Threat to Jewish Communities*

For Jewish communities worldwide, the implications of this alliance are severe. Antisemitism, which reached its horrific zenith during the Holocaust, has resurged with alarming intensity. The Islamo-leftist alliance's rhetoric and actions seek to normalize antisemitic discourse by rebranding it as political criticism and labeling it as "anti-Zionism." Throughout history, antisemitism has taken many forms, today's most common version comes with "anti-Zionist"

wrapping. The question "Are you a Zionist?" is the new litmus test for entry to the left. The natural consequence, and likely its goal, is to exclude Jews from communal spaces, organizations, and institutions. Since October 7, Jewish students on college campuses have faced violent harassment, intimidation, and hatred, while synagogues and Jewish institutions are increasingly targeted with hate crimes.

When Israel and the Jewish community are assaulted, American civil liberties, values, and freedoms are next.

This wave of modern antisemitism not only endangers the physical safety of Jews but also seeks to undermine their historical and cultural identity. The delegitimization of Israel is a core tactic of the Islamo-leftist agenda, aiming to strip Jews of their connection to their ancestral homeland. For decades, the Muslim world attempted to delegitimize and isolate the Jewish state, but its collective impact was limited. Today, leftist leaders in South Africa, Ireland, Spain, and Norway carry the torch of the delegitimization efforts. This strategy not only affects Jews in Israel but reverberates through Jewish communities globally, instilling fear and insecurity. For many leftist leaders, to associate with and legitimize the Jewish state is politically toxic, so they appease the will of antisemitic activists, and put more Jews in danger.



An anti-Western protest in London. (Photo: David Wimsett / Zuma Press)

■ The Broader Threat to America

While Jews are often the immediate targets, the Islamo-leftist alliance poses a broader threat to America and its foundational values. At its core, this coalition seeks to dismantle the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and pluralism that define Western civilization. Their hatred toward Israel and the Jewish people overlaps with their rejection of American exceptionalism and America's international power. It's not a coincidence that every "pro-Hamas" march and rally - disguised as "Pro-Palestinian" - is drenched not only in antisemitic imagery and rhetoric, but also in anti-American vitriol. American flags are burned alongside Israeli flags. Calls for the destruction of Israel are followed by anti-American chants. When Israel and the Jewish community are assaulted, American civil liberties, values, and freedoms are next. The alliance threatens America in the following ways:

1. Undermining Institutions:

The extreme left and radical Islamists disdain the foundational values underpinning Western civilization. Together, they promote a narrative-based view of history, avoiding fact-based objective analysis. This can be best seen across American academia,

where ideological views are given priority over academic integrity and the pursuit of truth. The same leftist worldview, and the commitment to a stringent Marxist political orthodoxy, has also taken over American corporations and much of the media. The recent leftist obsession with demonizing the police perfectly encapsulates the Islamo-leftist overlap. The Black Lives Matter movement and associated protests maintain a posture that's anti-police and anti-Israel. Furthering this connection, both radical Islamists and leftists disseminate propaganda that connects Israel to American policing practices and training.

2. Erosion of Free Speech and Expression:

A key component of the Islamo-leftist strategy is to silence dissent through social and political pressure. Radical leftists often employ "cancel culture" to stifle voices that challenge their orthodoxy, while Islamists use accusations of Islamophobia to suppress criticism of extremist ideologies. Leftists also increasingly look to compel speech, mandating terminology to limit freedom of expression. Land acknowledgements, mandatory pronouns, and disclaimers are all arrows in the leftist quiver. Anyone who refuses to comply with their speech code faces discrimination and ostracization.

This assault on freedom of speech and freedom of expression threatens the open discourse essential to a functioning democracy.

3. The Rigid Adoption of Identity Politics: Both groups exploit identity politics to fracture society along strictly defined racial, religious, and ideological lines. By emphasizing group identity over individual merit, they create an environment ripe for conflict and division. American corporations and the public school system obsess over DEI policies, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and intersectionality. These ideological movements threaten American prosperity and cohesion. Additionally, meritocracy, a fundamental component of the American capitalist system, is verboten in leftist circles. Meritocracy has a proven track record of transcending identity and is often the most useful tool for economic advancement. Despite its value, leftists view meritocracy as a fundamentally racist concept and eagerly seek its demise. This poses a grave threat to the American economic, educational, and political future.

4. Support for Extremist Groups:

The Islamo-leftist alliance operating model relies on international reciprocity. Domestic leftist groups and international Islamic groups offer tacit political cover and explicit financial funding to one another. Leftist groups adhere to critical theory and simplify every interaction based on power dynamics, where there's an "oppressor" and an "oppressed." This is why they sympathize with terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah (the "oppressed"). Their continued anti-Israel activism in the West validates terrorism in the Middle East. Concurrently, anti-Israel groups like Students for Justice in Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace, and Codepink receive direct funding from anti-American entities around the globe including Qatar, China, Russia, and Iran. America's enemies effectively

weaponize these groups as influence campaigns to sow division in America from within. The Islamo-leftist global alignment not only endangers lives but also destabilizes regions crucial to global security.

■ *The Global Implications*

The consequences of the Islamo-leftist alliance extend beyond America, threatening the stability and security of the entire West. This alliance emboldens authoritarian regimes that oppose democratic values and human rights, and are eager to diminish America's leading role in the world. By undermining the moral and political authority of the West, specifically America, the Islamo-leftist coalition provides cover for regimes including Iran, China, and Russia, all of which seek to expand their influence through subversion and aggression.

Moreover, the spread of this ideology threatens to disrupt global cooperation on critical issues such as counterterrorism, climate change, and economic stability. As the United States becomes more divided and inward-focused, its ability to respond to global challenges diminishes, leaving a vacuum that can be exploited by malign actors.

■ *The Path Forward: Defending Western Values*

To counter the threat posed by the Islamo-leftist alliance, it is imperative for Americans and their allies to understand the gravity of the threat to American exceptionalism, and to reaffirm their commitment to the core values that define Western civilization. This requires a robust approach that includes the following:

1. A Staunch Commitment to Free Speech: Upholding the principle of free speech is essential to the future health of American democracy. This means protecting the right to criticize and debate ideas without fear of retribution, and ensuring that compelled speech does not become further normalized.

2. Strengthening Alliances: Building and maintaining strong alliances with other democracies and moderate Muslim-majority nations is vital. These alliances, including the Abraham Accords, stymie the spread of radical ideologies and support efforts to promote peace, security, and economic opportunity.

3. Supporting Israel: As the frontline state in the battle against radical Islam and a key ally in the fight for democratic values, Israel's security and legitimacy must be staunchly defended. This includes opposing efforts to delegitimize and demonize Israel

system to advance extremist ideologies. America's enemies can sow dissent and chaos with ease. The US government must investigate and prevent international funding for radical leftist domestic groups. Robust counterterrorism strategies and efforts to combat radicalization are critical in mitigating the threat posed by extremist groups. This includes both domestic measures to prevent homegrown terrorism and international cooperation to disrupt the networks that support and finance terrorism.

The Islamo-leftist alliance represents a formidable challenge to Jews, Americans,

Meritocracy has a proven track record of transcending identity and is often the most useful tool for economic advancement... leftists view meritocracy as a fundamentally racist concept.

through movements such as BDS, and supporting initiatives that promote peace and cooperation throughout the Middle East.

4. Defending Liberalism: It's imperative to continue to combat the nefarious efforts of radical leftist orthodoxy in the United States. Concurrently, leaders should make a better case for why American liberal values are worth promoting, not just defending. First Amendment rights, American multiculturalism, and capitalism have powered America to world power and historic prosperity. This case should be made unabashedly with confidence. The Islamo-leftist alliance relies on a fractured West. American leaders should make the case that our culture is united.

5. Countering Extremism and International Influence: Radical activists use America's public education

and the broader Western world. Its insidious blend of radical ideologies seek to undermine the very foundations of democracy, freedom, and human rights that define our societies. To preserve these values and protect our communities, it is essential to recognize this threat and mobilize a comprehensive and united response.

By reaffirming our commitment to the principles of liberalism, strengthening alliances, and countering extremism, we can confront the Islamo-leftist alliance and safeguard the future of the West. This is not merely a battle for the survival of the Jewish people or the security of Israel; it is a fight for the very soul of Western civilization. Let us stand united in this endeavor, resolute in our defense of liberty and justice for all.

ADAM MILSTEIN is co-founder of the Israeli-American Council. He can be found on X @AdamMilstein.

Ending Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

by **BARI WEISS**

Twenty years ago, when I was a college student, I started writing about a then-nameless, niche ideology that seemed to contradict everything I had been taught since I was a child.

It is possible I would not have perceived the nature of this ideology—or rather, I would have been able to avoid seeing its true nature—had I not been a Jew. But I was. I am. And in noticing the way I had been written out of the equation, I started to notice that it wasn't just me, but that the whole system rested on an illusion.

What I saw was a worldview that replaced basic ideas of good and evil with a new rubric: the powerless (good) and the powerful (bad). It replaced lots of things. Colorblindness with race-obsession. Ideas with identity. Debate with denunciation. Persuasion with public shaming. The rule of law with the fury of the mob.

People were to be given authority in this new order not in recognition of their gifts, hard work, accomplishments, or contributions to society, but in inverse proportion to the disadvantages their group had suffered, as defined by radical ideologues. According to them, as Jamie Kirchick concisely put it in these pages: “Muslim > gay, Black > female, and everybody > the Jews.”

I was an undergraduate back then, but you didn't need a Ph.D. to see where this could go. And so, I watched, in horror, sounding alarms as loudly as I could. I was told by most Jewish leaders that, yes, it wasn't great, but not to be so hysterical. Campuses were always hotbeds of radicalism, they said. This

ideology, they promised, would surely dissipate as young people made their way in the world.

It did not.

Over the past two decades, I saw this inverting worldview swallow all of the crucial sense-making institutions of American life. It started with the universities. Then it moved on to cultural institutions—including some I knew well, like *The New York Times*—as well as every major museum, philanthropy, and media company. Then on to our medical schools and our law schools. It's taken root at nearly every major corporation. It's inside our high schools and even our elementary schools. The takeover is so comprehensive that it's now almost hard to notice it—because it is everywhere.

Including in the Jewish community.

Some of the most important Jewish communal organizations transformed themselves in order to prop up this ide-

For Jews, there are obvious and glaring dangers in a worldview that measures fairness by equality of outcome rather than opportunity. If underrepresentation is the inevitable outcome of systemic bias, then overrepresentation—and Jews are 2% of the American population—suggests not talent or hard work, but unearned privilege. This conspiratorial conclusion is not that far removed from the hateful portrait of a small group of Jews divvying up the ill-gotten spoils of an exploited world.

It isn't only Jews who suffer from the suggestion that merit and excellence are dirty words. It is strivers of every race, ethnicity, and class. That is why Asian American success, for example, is suspicious. The percentages are off. The scores are too high. From whom did you steal all that success?

Of course, this new ideology doesn't come right out and say all that. It doesn't even like to be named. Some call it wo-

It isn't only Jews who suffer from the suggestion that merit and excellence are dirty words. It is strivers of every race, ethnicity, and class.

ology. Or at the very least, they contorted themselves to signal that they could be good allies in the fight for equal rights—even as those rights are no longer presumed inalienable or equal and are handed out rather than protected.

keness or anti-racism or progressivism or safetyism or critical social justice or identity-Marxism. But whatever term you use, what's clear is that it has gained power in a conceptual instrument called “diversity, equity and inclusion,” or DEI.

In theory, all three of these words represent noble causes. They are in fact all causes to which American Jews in particular have long been devoted, both individually and collectively. But in reality, these words are now metaphors for an ideological movement bent on recategorizing every American not as an individual, but as an avatar of an identity group, his or her behavior prejudged accordingly, setting all of us up in a kind of zero-sum game.

We have been seeing for several years now the damage this ideology has done: DEI, and its cadres of enforcers, undermine the central missions of the institutions that adopt it. But nothing has made the dangers of DEI more clear than what's happening these days on our college campuses—the places where our future leaders are nurtured.

It is there that professors are compelled to pledge fidelity to DEI in order to get hired, promoted, or tenured. (For more on this, please read John Sailer's *Free Press* piece: "How DEI Is Supplanting Truth as the Mission of American Universities.") And it is there that the hideousness of this worldview has been on full display over the past few weeks: We see students and professors, immersed not in facts, knowledge, and history, but in a dehumanizing ideology that has led them to celebrate or justify terrorism.

Jews, who understand that being made in the image of God bestows inviolate sanctity on every human life, must not stand by as that principle, so central to the promise of this country and its hard won freedoms, is erased.

For Jews, there are obvious and glaring dangers in a worldview that measures fairness by equality of outcome rather than opportunity.

What we must do is reverse this.

The answer is not for the Jewish community to plead its cause before the intersectional coalition or beg for a higher ranking in the new ladder of victimhood. That is a losing strategy—not just for Jewish dignity, but for the values



A satirical illustration of a safe space on a college campus generated by AI. (Photo: ChatGPT/OpenAI)

we hold as Jews and as Americans.

The Jewish commitment to justice—and the American Jewish community's powerful and historic opposition to racism—is a source of tremendous pride. That should never waver. Nor should our commitment to stand by our friends, especially when they need our support as we now need theirs.

But "DEI" is not about the words it uses as camouflage. DEI is about arrogating power.

And the movement that is gathering all this power does not like America or liberalism. It does not believe that America is a good country—at least no better than China or Iran. It calls itself progressive, but it does not believe in progress; it is explicitly anti-growth. It claims to promote "equity," but its answer to the challenge of teaching math or reading to disadvantaged children is to eliminate math and reading tests. It demonizes hard work, merit, family, and the dignity of the individual.

An ideology that pathologizes these

fundamental human virtues is one that seeks to undermine what makes America exceptional.

It is time to end DEI for good. No more standing by as people are encouraged to segregate themselves. No more forced declarations that you will prioritize identity over excellence. No more compelled speech. No more going along with little lies for the sake of being polite.

The Jewish people have outlived every single regime and ideology that has sought our elimination. We will persist, one way or another. But DEI is undermining America, and that for which it stands—including the principles that have made it a place of unparalleled opportunity, safety, and freedom for so many. Fighting it is the least we owe this country.

BARI WEISS is founder of *The Free Press* (formerly *Common Sense*) and host of the podcast *Honestly*. This article is reprinted with the permission of *Tablet Magazine*.

In 2015...

The Victim Hierarchy

by JAMES KIRCHIK

As a gay, Jewish man (consider privilege duly checked), I am not unfamiliar with, or unsympathetic to, the idea of highlighting the problems faced by victimized minorities. Earlier this month, for example, I came across a story that made me want to mount the barricades in righteous indignation. Images circulated by the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights showed a group of Islamic State thugs in the city of Tal Abyad shoving an elderly, blindfolded man from a plastic chair from the heights of a seven-story building. Nothing special in the land of the Islamic State, except for the “crime” that the man was accused of committing: homosexuality.

Here is an instance when identity politics, put into practice, could be eminently useful. Islamists kill homosexuals for something they cannot change: their sexuality. It’s the same reason they kill Jews, by the way, and the motive is quite clarifying, or it at least should be. Indeed, the recent spate of attacks against Jews *qua* Jews in Western Europe ought to be a wake-up call to that segment of the global left that insists there exists some sort of quasi-moral license for Arabs who kill Israeli civilians because of the existence of settlements. Those who obsess over identity politics—who believe that every political and social question can be reduced to somebody’s skin pigmentation or what’s between their legs—ought to realize that there is no truck with people who kill people precisely because of their immutable traits. When it comes to fighting violent Islamist supremacy—theocratic, sexist, genocidal, homicidally anti-gay—the identity politics brigade should put warmongering neocons to shame.

Yet just at the moment when we need our identity-politics warriors to be most outraged, they are notably silent. Why?

Many progressives would claim that they believe in “intersectionality”: that aspects of an individual cannot be separated out to highlight the oppression associated with that group. And so we cannot understand Muslims killing gays without first understanding the effect of Western colonial power on the peoples of Muslim lands. The embrace of intersectionality by progressives is ironic in that it has undermined one of the left’s greatest (and most fundamental) attributes—universalism—and replaced it with a myopia that obsesses over the minute concerns of ever-narrowly defined minority groups, rather than those of broader segments of society, like, say, the American working class. Traditional liberals committed to addressing widespread disparities related to class, race, and gender become enemies of the intersectionalists because they fail to pay sufficient obeisance to the grievances of each and every imaginable minority amalgamation.

But while intersectionality goes some way to explaining the penchant for moral equivalence that has overcome much of the online left, even that’s just a cover. The truth is simpler, which is that there exists, in the progressive universe, a victim hierarchy. It used to be quite fashionable to root for the gays, but that was back in the 1980s when they were dying of AIDS, and Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan were arrayed against them. Today, HIV is a manageable disease, gays can get married, and many of them are white, live in the suburbs, and sometimes even vote Republican. Same with Jews.

The discussion of vital issues today has been reduced to a game of Rock, Paper, Scissors, in which the validity of one’s argument is determined not by the strength of your reasoning but by the relative worth of the immutable qualities you bring to the table, be it skin color, sexual orientation, or genitalia (or, in the case of pre-operative transsexuals, wished-for genitalia). In the game of Race, Gender, Sexuality, black beats white, woman beats man, trans beats cisgender, and gay (or, preferably, “queer”) beats straight.

In the progressive imagination, the perceived plight of Muslims now trumps the sufferings of all other groups.

What makes this current cultural moment so depressing is that both identity politics and the preferred tool of enforcing its precepts—social media—are so easy and widely available to use and are being used in regressive ways by people who claim to be promoting social justice. What they are actually doing—quite deliberately—is making themselves social despots by driving out everyone who lacks the taste or the ability to shout angry slogans and personal accusations through the social media megaphone... (It) puts the burden of proof on the defendant, making it very hard to defend oneself against the eight word tweet that uses a hot-button word to slime whoever becomes the target of the mob’s ire. It’s Salem, with 21st-century technology. And sooner or later, we will all become witches.

JAMES KIRCHICK is a Tablet columnist and the author of *Secret City: The Hidden History of Gay Washington*. Adapted with permission.

Nuclear Now?

by MARK P. MILLS

There was remarkably little fanfare for the 70th anniversary of President Eisenhower's December 8, 1953 "Atoms for Peace" speech before the United Nations. Seven months before that anniversary, *Time Magazine* featured an essay headlined, "Nuclear Energy's Moment Has Come," by Charles Oppenheimer, grandson of the man who led the Manhattan Project. History, however, shows that scientists of Eisenhower's era believed that moment had already arrived.

Only four years after Eisenhower's speech, America's first nuclear-electric generating plant was completed in Shippingport, PA. Just three years later, Illinois's Dresden plant came online, the first to be privately funded. In 1962, President Kennedy asked the Atomic Energy Commission to take a "hard look" at the prospects for nuclear power. At that time, the nascent industry enjoyed broad bipartisan support, but even so, not everyone supported "taming the atom."

Many will remember a 1970s mantra adopted by the global anti-nuclear movement, "split wood, not atoms." On April 30, 1977, that slogan graced the placards of some 2,000 protesters who occupied the construction site for the planned Seabrook, NH nuclear station. That protest resulted in one of the largest mass arrests in US history. While protests and legal interventions failed to stop that plant's completion, the resulting delays helped induce an 800 percent cost overrun for Seabrook. Similar tactics and consequential cost overruns became increasingly common.

Such protests were mounted across the country, often at epic scales. In 1978, Helen Caldicott, an Australian firebrand and physician, published *Nuclear Madness*, which served as a kind of new testament to the previous decade's

environmental bible, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Despite the confusing mingling of protests over nuclear energy and atomic weapons, nuclear construction continued apace.

■ *Three Mile Island*

Then, infamously, it all came to a crashing halt. On March 28, 1979, one of two nuclear reactors located at Three Mile Island (TMI) island on Pennsylvania's Susquehanna River suffered a meltdown.

Ironically, just weeks earlier, theaters were featuring a movie, *The China Syndrome*. That "B" movie, one of a spate of similar "disaster themed" movies then in vogue, was the perfect set-piece for credulous reporters. The movie, the protests and the media, made implicit and overt allusions to the possibility of an atomic-bomb-class explosion in the event of a nuclear "meltdown," i.e., if a runaway chain reaction caused tons of uranium to superheat and melt through

Jimmy Carter.

Meanwhile, not a single human being was injured by that billion-dollar accident. Nor was an atomic-bomb-class explosion averted; it was never even a remote possibility because of the physics of nuclear reactors.

The commercial nuclear industry immediately mounted major campaigns to combat "fake news" and growing protests. Despite those efforts, public opposition soared, construction programs slowed, and every planned reactor order was cancelled.

■ *Chernobyl*

Then, on April 26, 1986, a Russian nuclear power plant suffered a catastrophic accident. Unlike TMI, tragically nearly three dozen employees died, and a highly radioactive plume spewed into the atmosphere leading to detectable contamination as far downwind as Sweden. That Russian design was inherently unsafe (unlike the coda of "inher-

Despite subsidies and exhortations, China remains the primary upstream supplier of materials used to build all things "green" (wind, solar, batteries)...

the steel containment vessel and continue to, ostensibly, unstoppably burrow into the earth; hence "China syndrome."

Media coverage featured apocalyptic headlines and storylines, including "the day we almost lost Pennsylvania" in the cartoonish language of the movie's engineers. Following that accident that captivated the world, polls found more Americans could identify, "Three Mile Island" than they could then-President

ently safe" for Western designs). It also lacked the massive, concrete containment dome standard for all Western reactors. But such facts mattered not a whit to the alarmists.

■ *Fukushima*

The third accident that ended prospects for a vibrant nuclear industry, followed the tsunami on March 3, 2011, that overwhelmed the inadequate sea wall at

Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear site. It was predictable, and predicted that no workplace or public injury would result from that accident itself. Those that occurred came from ill-advised mass evacuations. But global nuclear construction slowed or stopped. Several European nations shut down all operating reactors.

...for 30 years, the number of operating global nuclear reactors has remained largely unchanged, and in the US just three new plants have been built.

Thus, for 30 years, the number of operating global nuclear reactors has remained largely unchanged, and in the US just three new plants have been built. The split-wood activists got their wish. Today, all the world's nuclear power plants combined supply less than half as much global energy as does burning wood.

This history of the rise and fall of "atoms for peace" is particularly relevant today, as we supposedly face the moment of a nuclear resurrection.

■ "Onshoring"

In the past year or so, numerous countries have announced plans to revive commercial nuclear programs, while several US states have rescinded statutory bans. The secretary of energy recently proclaimed that America needs to triple its nuclear fleet. France's president pledged to double theirs. Japan is restarting its shut down plants. Meanwhile Silicon Valley potentates are rushing to fund startups featuring designs for tiny nuclear plants.

Even some in Hollywood, which played a pivotal role in the demise of the nuclear industry, has called for a resurgence, including a June 2023 pro-nuclear documentary from Oliver Stone, *Nuclear Now*, chronicling the "rise of

the anti-nuclear movement." Ironically, Michael Douglas, who directed *The China Syndrome*, recently said, "I have to say I changed my mind."

Why the change? One could invoke an aphorism from Philip K. Dick, whose science fiction has inspired several Hollywood movies: "Reality is that

which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away."

One reality is that technological progress always leads to more electricity demand. The past couple of decades of flat electricity growth was an interregnum, not a new normal. American utilities now report expected near-term demands will vastly exceed plans for new supplies. Part of that comes from bipartisan efforts to "reshore" manufacturing, especially for computer chips, hatched without thinking about the power needed. Every \$1 billion of new chip factories brings about \$30 million a year in new electricity demand.

Hundreds of billions of dollars in factory spending are coming. Add to this, the implications of more electric vehicles (EVs). Every \$1 billion of EVs put on roads adds about \$20 million in annual electricity demand. And then there's the epiphany that all things digital use electricity, especially artificial intelligence (AI). Roughly every \$1 billion in new datacenters brings about \$60 million a year in electricity demand; that demand doubles or triples if AI is used.

■ Renewables

Second, the illusion that wind and solar energy can meet the scale of

growth in today's electricity demands has been shattered. To meet the scale of demand for reliable power, utility executives are petitioning the government to postpone plans to force the shutdown of any conventional power plants, including coal. Even stalwart champions of an "energy transition" are calling for more "dispatchable" power. "Dispatchable" simply means a power plant delivers electricity when customers' need it, not when nature makes it available. (The fiction that batteries can solve that problem is a non-starter in the real world.)

■ Security

The third reality is the (re)discovery that security and geopolitical factors matter. Despite subsidies and exhortations, China remains the primary upstream supplier of materials used to build all things "green" (wind, solar, batteries) with a market dominance that is double OPEC's share of world oil markets. And we should expect analysts will discover that sprawling acres of wind or solar hardware are not only easy targets for potential enemy military forces but are also vulnerable to nature's predations.

■ Nuclear Benefits

Nuclear power plants require comparatively trivial use of real estate and can operate continuously regardless of supply-chain disruptions caused by natural, or non-natural, disasters. No other power system can store, on-site, years of fuel supply.

Nuclear's operational security derives from the under-appreciated energy density of nuclear phenomena. In energy-per-pound terms, nuclear fuel offers a theoretical potential one million-fold greater than hydrocarbons, and 100 million-fold over lithium chemistry, the latter being essential to convert episodic solar/wind into reliable power. Today's nuclear technology can, so far, "only" realize a one-thousand-fold energy density advantage over petroleum (and a million-fold over solar/batteries).



The Watts Bar Nuclear Plant in Rhea County, TN. (Photo: Alison Jones / DanitaDelimont)

■ **Lise Meitner**

Discovery of the physics of fission stands in history as consequential as Sadi Carnot's century earlier framing the Laws of Thermodynamics. But it bears noting a name often missing from history, Jewish physicist Lise Meitner, who should have been at least co-awarded the 1944 Nobel Prize in physics. While records credit Meitner as one of the research scientists working alongside Otto Hahn (who got the Nobel) and Fritz Strassmann, both chemists, it was Meitner who first published the correct theoretical interpretation in 1938, before she fled Nazi Germany. Nobel Committee records, now public, reveal they had debated including her. (One might imagine why she was left out.)

■ **The Early Rush**

The realization of the astonishing physics of $E = mc^2$ is what inspired the wild rush in the 1950s in the first place, and not just for big power plants, but

also nuclear-powered planes, trains, automobiles, ships, and spaceships.

Enthusiasms weren't mere musings of futurists (though the Ford Nucleon car design was affirmatively silly). The US Air Force spent over \$1 billion designing and prototyping a nuclear airplane, including ground testing in 1956 a GE-built ultra-compact 2.5 MW molten-salt reactor. (President Kennedy cancelled the program.) Also built in 1959, a 600-foot, 60-passenger, \$600 million (today's dollars) commercial nuclear ship, the NS Savannah (still afloat at a Baltimore, MD, pier). In those heady days, designs were drawn up for nuclear locomotives and a rocket program which ran from 1959 to 1973 entailing 20 different nuclear engines, some nearly as powerful as the chemical ones later used for the space shuttle. Tiny reactors for high-power satellites were launched into orbit both by the US and the USSR. NASA's nuclear programs continue to this day. (The reality is, Elon Musk's hyperbole

aside, Mars missions will need a nuclear rocket.)

In 1954, the US Army deployed seven micro-nukes with electrical output of 1 to 10 MW that operated (some for a decade) in places such as Greenland, the Panama Canal Zone, Antarctica, and Wyoming. Now, a 2018 Army analysis imagines re-animating that program with up to one hundred micro-scale reactors.

■ **Patience, Please**

This history contains a lesson for today's nuclear aspirations: in a word, patience. Foundationally new technologies take time. The advent of nuclear fission was arguably as foundational as internal combustion, realized first as the steam engine that vaulted civilization into the industrial revolution. But that took a century.

Steam engine technology involved a long march of continual engineering advances from Newcomen's first

invention, circa 1710, to the 1760 arrival of the Watt engine, followed by another five decades to the steam-age apotheosis in the mid-1800s. Steam's successor, Rudolph Diesel's revolutionary 1893 patent, started a new era with a similar trajectory and ultimately didn't replace steam, but supplemented the pantheon of energy-machine applications.

The reflex, that "this time it's different," is belied by reality: long timelines are an inherent feature of deploying all industrial-class technologies at scale. To continue the steam analogy, nuclear en-

happen faster than the maturation of next-generation designs.

Odds are that amongst the amazing array of dozens of new designs for smaller nuclear reactors, all will work, technically. But none are yet built, and time is necessary to meet the non-trivial engineering challenges of manufacturing at scale and cost-effectively.

Meanwhile, the US faces a near-term shortfall of hundreds of gigawatts. Some of the latest hyperscale datacenter proposals each approach one gigawatt of demand.

Regulatory reforms are needed to allow American firms to build at the velocity of Chinese firms. The challenges are political, not technical.

ergy, now with decades of improvements in collateral materials and technologies, is at a pivot comparable to the arrival of Watt's 1760 design superseding the 1,500 Newcomen engines built after its 1710 introduction. (What will be the nuclear equivalent to Rudolph Diesel's disruption? Odds favor micro-nukes, not fusion.)

■ Options

Today we have only two nuclear options: gigawatt-scale reactors we know how to build, and those we'd like to build, someday.

The world has built over 500 of the gigawatt-scale light-water reactors (440 are still operating, 93 in the US). The supply chain, safety record, and costs are well-established, even if the necessary materials and skills infrastructures have atrophied in the US. Meanwhile, over one-third of all nuclear plants under construction are in China; in the US, none. With political willpower, we can rekindle the American infrastructure—from mines and fuel fabrication through nuclear-qualified welders. While rekindling will take time, it can

Gigawatt-class light-water reactors have been built overseas in five to six years. When they become available, to match the output of the big nukes, we will need tens of thousands of the tiny, multi-megawatt-class reactors. It's not unreasonable to believe that's possible. Industry builds several thousand of the 10 to 50 megawatt-class (gas turbine) engines annually for aircraft, a task of comparable engineering complexity. But it took decades after inception for the latter industry to expand and mature. (As a practical matter, soaring near-term electricity demands will be met, mainly, with aeroderivative gas turbines, the technology that traces its lineage to the discovery of internal combustion.)

The energy bottom line is that even if the world completes all the nuclear plants now under construction and planned, burning wood will still be a bigger global source of energy.

■ And Impediments

A future with far more nuclear electricity requires policymakers to embrace more gigawatt-scale nukes

while also ensuring today's operating plants are not shut down. Chip factories and datacenters can't run on dreams of future small reactors.

The next step also falls to policy-makers, not engineers or financiers. Further regulatory reforms are needed to allow American firms to build at the velocity of Chinese firms. The challenges for nuclear energy's future are political, not technical. We've known how to build nuclear at scale for a long time.

Similarly, regulatory tweaks can help accelerate the work engineers and investors do to prove out fascinating, even radical new kinds of small nuclear plants. Realizing the benefits from that will require patience—a rare political virtue. But it's worth noting the reason America's nuclear industry is in the doldrums now is precisely because of (bad) decisions made decades ago.

Finally, back to Hollywood: Anti-nuclear activism is wired into the "source code" of the environmental movement. It is naive to assume that's changed. For example, a recent NRDC report has already fired a warning shot across the bow, opposing any rush to revive nuclear. They aren't alone.

As for those environmentalists proclaiming support for nuclear because it's "carbon-free," such support is focused on future plants we can't build yet. States lifting nuclear bans have done so for tiny reactors that don't exist.

There's a history to that. In 1962, the Audubon Society opposed the proposed Storm King Mountain hydro dam on the Hudson River, promoting instead a gigawatt-class nuclear plant, Indian Point. Activists eventually succeeded in getting that plant prematurely shut down in 2021.

History, as they say, often rhymes.

MARK MILLS is a physicist and Executive Director of the National Center for Energy Analytics. Early in Mills' career, he spent the week of the accident at the site of the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant.

Chronic Counterterrorism Lapses at the Border

by **TODD BENSMAN**

In the early morning hours of May 3, a Jordanian immigrant who illegally crossed the US-Mexico border a month earlier joined with another illegally present Jordanian. Together they drove a large box truck to the entry gates of Quantico Marine Corps Base in northern Virginia.

The driver announced they were Amazon subcontractors there to make a delivery to the Quantico town post office just inside. But after neither could produce credentials and were denied entry, the driver hit the gas in an apparent attempt to plow the truck through and into the base's target-rich interior. Quick-thinking military sentries raised automatic road barricades, arrested the pair for trespassing, and turned them over to US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Local media soon reported that one of the Jordanians was on the FBI's terrorism watch list.

The White House and all involved federal agencies have steadfastly stonewalled questions as to whether an illegal, border-crossing alien from Jordan on the FBI's terrorism watch list had just attempted a jihad-motivated attack on US soil for the first known time. It is an often ridiculed scenario, but one that government experts have been warning about, including the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) own 2024 threat assessment, since the worst mass migration crisis in US history began on January 20, 2021 – President Joe Biden's Inauguration Day.

Among the estimated seven million illegal immigrants from 160 countries



A US Customs and Border Patrol agent monitors the barrier separating the U.S. and Mexico in Nogales, Arizona. (Photo: Manuela Durson)

around the world that Border Patrol agents encountered in just the few years since were 362 illegal immigrants who were on the FBI's terrorism watch list – all detained.

But the fact that one of these border-crossing Jordanians was reportedly on the FBI's watch list – and nevertheless was NOT detained but left free inside the country to ram a large truck through into an important military base – is emblematic of a serious new kind of national security threat to the US homeland.

■ **Mohammad Kharwin**

In at least seven recent cases, Border Patrol agents, overwhelmed by the crisis, have accidentally released illegal border-crossers who were on the US terror watch list. Their belated discoveries prompted panicked nationwide

manhunts to round them up before they could conduct terror attacks. Was the Jordanian at Quantico one of them? No one knows.

But a twice-freed Afghan national man was the most recent of these. The 48-year-old Mohammad Kharwin roamed America for 11 months between his border crossing and his capture. This case and too many others demand that the federal government acknowledge emergence of a patterned new chronic national security emergency requiring elevation to the highest priority within the intelligence community, federal law enforcement, and Congress.

An overwhelmed Border Patrol freed Kharwin into America on March 10, 2023, before agents could confirm the FBI watch list hit that initially flagged him and then, a swamped Texas

immigration court freed a second time in February.

By current public accounts, an initial Border Patrol database check flagged Kharwin for membership in Hezb-e-Islami, which the US Director of National Intelligence (DNI) describes as a “virulently anti-Western insurgent group.” He illegally crossed the California border in March 2023, one of 23,286 illegal aliens caught crossing that month in what would turn out to be a record-breaking year for the agency’s San Diego Border Sector. All told, there were 230,941 illegal crossers caught in 2023, up nearly 60,000 from 2022 and 90,000 more than 2021.

That extraordinary traffic no doubt strained all normal Border Patrol counterterrorism and vetting processes.

Instead of keeping Kharwin detained as a “special interest alien,” tagged until standard face-to-face interviews and corroboration of the initial hit was complete, Border Patrol agents – under

detention facility for a hearing. Perhaps because ICE still didn’t have the initial terrorism flag hit, that agency’s court lawyer representative did not report it to the judge, or appeal, when Kharwin was ordered released on \$12,000 bond for a distant 2025 hearing.

“The judge placed no restrictions on his movements inside the US” in the meantime, NBC reported.

Somehow, the FBI figured all of this out and got word to ICE agents to find and arrest Kharwin, which they did a month later, on February 28, in nearby San Antonio.

■ **And Others**

To date, only one federal investigation has produced a public report branding the problem, remarkable but forgotten or given short shrift by major US news media, although I did write about it. That eye-opening document was the DHS inspector general’s office report about the April 19, 2022 crossing and

for allegedly firing a rifle outside a Carolina Quick Stop store in the small town of Eure. He then attacked responding Gates County Sheriff’s deputies and barricaded himself in a four-hour stand-off with them. Sheriff Ray Campbell reported that an ICE fingerprints check revealed that Hagos was on the watch list, the sheriff later told local news. North Carolina’s Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, running for the governor’s office this November, penned a letter to President Biden demanding answers about Hagos. But these moves drew scant coverage from local newspapers and gained no known traction.

- In February 2024, a Pakistani illegal immigrant on the watch list who had crossed from Mexico into California, was accidentally released for a day before US authorities, luckily, uncovered the release error and caught up with him.

- In late 2023, New York police arrested a Senegalese man wanted in his home country for “terrorist activities” who somehow got into the American interior.

- In 2022, Border Patrol waved through a watch-listed Somali member of the al-Shabaab terrorist group near San Diego. He was free for nearly a year before authorities untangled their mistake and finally picked him up in Minneapolis.

- Also in 2022, ICE released an FBI watch-listed Lebanon-born Venezuelan who had crossed from Matamoros into Brownsville, TX. Washington ordered him released on grounds that the man was at risk of catching Covid. This release occurred against ardent FBI recommendations that he remain in detention because he was both dangerous and a flight risk. FBI documents on this case leaked, no doubt out of an overabundance of frustration among those in the intelligence community who dealt with it. I have them.

- A late 2021 accidental release case of Yemen national Ahmed Mohammed Ahmed shows that Mexico too is struggling with the Biden-fomented mass migration crisis. Mexico has long been a close partner of the United States in

In 2022, Border Patrol waved through a watch-listed Somali member of the al-Shabaab terrorist group near San Diego. He was free for nearly a year before authorities untangled their mistake...

orders from Washington – waved him through like millions of other illegal crossers on “Alternatives to Detention” (ATD) personal recognizance papers, where crossers agree to voluntarily report later to ICE in a city of their choice.

NBC reports that Border Patrol never even informed ICE of the initial FBI watch-list flagging, which is evidently how the same collapsed border management system missed a second opportunity to catch Kharwin in late January of this year, when he showed up before an immigration judge in a Pearsall, TX, ICE

mistaken release of a Colombian on the FBI watch list. ICE agents were not able to track him down to Florida for two long weeks.

Its key finding was that Border Patrol and ICE agents couldn’t do normal counterterrorism protocols because they were simply too “busy processing an increased flow of migrants.”

But these six other cases qualify as investigation-worthy.

- In February 2024, North Carolina authorities arrested an immigrant, Awet Hagos, reportedly from Eritrea,

counterterrorism at the border. But in this case, Mexico released the Yemeni terrorism suspect without informing its US partners, resulting in a “Be On the Lookout” bulletin that made its way to me about a manhunt alert that went out on the Texas side of the border.

■ *How Many Have we Missed?*

Terrorism threat border lights have been flashing red for some time now just from the hundreds who were actually caught and detained, especially since the US Customs and Border Protection agency in March 2022 began publishing “Terrorist Screening Data Set Encounters” by the month on its public-facing website. Those began breaking all national records when the Biden government took office in January 2021, when apprehended illegal border crossers on the FBI watch list ballooned from a mere three during Trump’s last fiscal year in office to 15, then by another 98 in fiscal 2022, then 169 in fiscal 2023, and another 80 through April 2024.

That all those who were caught is less a positive national security accomplishment than an unacceptable sampling of much bigger flows of watch-listed illegal aliens coming into America who are not caught and handled. If some two million of these so-called “got-aways” went through since 2021 (like Kharwin evidently tried to, or possibly the Jordanian at Quantico), more suspected terrorists on the FBI watch list are almost certainly among them.

In recent months, the terrorism threat at the border has generated some public concern, but almost never explicitly about the preventable accidental releases of terrorist suspects authorities later had to chase down.

In September 2023, I testified about the accidental release problem before the US House Subcommittee on the Judiciary in juxtaposition with my 2021 book *America’s Covert Border War*, which revealed counterterrorism programs at the border that have kept the nation safe from infiltrated attacks

for nearly 20 years. I told the members that Biden’s border crisis had severely compromised those old programs and caused a spate of accidental terror suspect releases, which elevated the threat of terror attack as a result.

Until then, concern was on the rise but never explicitly named accidental releases as a problem.

■ *Threat Assessment 2024*

The Biden Administration’s own 2024 Homeland Threat Assessment generally warns that “terrorists may exploit the elevated flow and increasingly complex security environment to enter the United States” and that “individuals with potential terrorism connections continue to attempt to enter the Homeland illegally between ports of entry...via the southern border.”

The Biden Administration’s own 2024 Homeland Threat Assessment generally warns that “terrorists may exploit the elevated flow and increasingly complex security environment to enter the United States” ...

In recent testimony about what he regards as a rising terrorist border infiltration threat, FBI Director Christopher Wray told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that a “wide array of very dangerous threats...emanate from” the southwest border, including the designated terror group ISIS.

Despite the variably specific warnings about the border infiltration threat, the ever-growing number of known accidental-release cases such as Kharwin’s and the ones I earlier told the subcommittee about, remains broadly unrecognized as the unique emerging threat problem these cases indicate. Probably because no one has been killed yet as a consequence, few federal agencies or homeland security

committee lawmakers seem interested in calling it out.

But why must blood run in the streets before something is done?

■ *Triple Down*

These cases demand a public accounting as well as a classified briefing to Congress if one hasn’t happened. Each demands a full investigation that produces not only recommendations for better counterterrorism but also consequences for those up and down the chains of command who perpetrated these failures.

If federal agencies won’t do the right thing, lawmakers in both houses of Congress should compel investigations into these accidental releases and turn up the political pressure with public hearings that force top officials to testify.

They must propose legislation, send demand letters to DHS and other relevant agencies, and justifiably rant about this at their bully pulpits before it’s too late to do any of that, which it might well be.

Short of vastly reducing the millions-per-year border crossings by restoring former president Donald Trump’s discarded policies, the Biden Administration could at least be forced to triple down on its counterterrorism resources at the southern border.

TODD BENSMAN is Senior National Security Fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies and author of *OVERRUN: How Joe Biden Unleashed the Greatest Border Crisis in U.S. History*.

“Its All About the People”

An *in*FOCUS interview with Senator KATIE BRITT

In 2023, Katie Britt became the first woman elected to the US Senate from Alabama and the youngest Republican woman Senator. Previously president and CEO of the Business Council of Alabama, she focused on workforce and economic development through tax incentives and addressed the state’s prison system. She also served on the Alabama Wildlife Federation board of directors and as chief of staff to Sen. Richard Shelby. JPC Senior Director Shoshana Bryen spoke with her recently.

Editor’s Note: After this interview, the Biden Administration blocked munitions shipments from going to support Israel. Sen. Britt has been a strong supporter of Israel and an outspoken critic of the Administration’s move. We went back and asked her why.

Sen. Katie Britt: The United States must unequivocally, unceasingly stand with Israel as she fights to bring every single hostage home, eliminate the threat of Hamas, and ensure there is never another October 7.

President Biden has turned his back on Israel, and at the worst possible time. I was proud to cosponsor Senator Tom Cotton’s Israel Security Assistance Support Act, which would force the Administration to end their ill-advised blockade and send critical munitions to Israel. We must also stand firmly with our Jewish brothers and sisters here at home. The rise of virulent antisemitism we have seen play out on college campuses and city streets across America is disgusting and unacceptable. “Never Again” is now, both abroad and in our homeland. We must not become the first generation after World War II to break this promise.

*in*FOCUS QUARTERLY: DOES RE-INDUSTRIALIZATION IN ALABAMA IN PARTICULAR, BUT ALSO THE SOUTH IN GENERAL, TEND TO HAPPEN MOSTLY AS A RESULT OF PRIVATE SECTOR ACTIVITY? OR IS THERE A BIG HELPING HAND FROM LOCAL, STATE, OR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?

KB: In Alabama, we believe that it’s the government’s job to foster a pro-growth climate. But ultimately, it is the private sector, it’s entrepreneurs, it is small business owners that actually drive that growth. It takes both, and I think we’ve done a great job striking that balance.

The leaders in our state have been focused for several decades on pro-growth policies and building a business climate that is one of the best, not just in the South, but in the entire country. We do that by promoting small businesses, cutting red tape, slashing unnecessary regulations, and curtailing burdensome regulations that typically hit the small guy the hardest; those are the strongest impediments to growth. At the end of the day, we want every Alabamian to be able to realize their American Dream.

We also are big believers that no child’s Zip Code should determine their opportunity.

■ **Education and Opportunity**

iF: HOW CAN BUSINESSES HELP TO ENSURE THAT OUR SCHOOLS HELP STUDENTS SEE WHAT THE FUTURE CAN HOLD FOR THEM? AND WHAT IS THE ROLE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION? YOU NEED TO CREATE JOBS BUT ALSO CREATE THE PIPELINE SO THAT STUDENTS SEE THE JOBS COMING IN THEIR FUTURE.

KB: We have the First Class Pre-K program in our state. We actually have been the highest rated in the nation for the past 18 years. I have seen as a mother, as someone who is passionate about

making sure that no child’s Zip Code determines their opportunity, that the earlier children have an opportunity to learn and to grow and develop, the better. Look at the statistics: if a child is not reading on grade level by third grade, their chances of graduating high school is one-fourth that of children who DO read on grade level at that point. And then, if they don’t graduate from high school, their chance of being arrested is five times greater.

Third grade, eight-years-old, is crucial. A child traditionally starts kindergarten at five, so if a child – by no fault of their own – has never been taught colors, or letters, or that a cow goes “moo” and a dog barks, they get to kindergarten and they are behind in so many fundamental ways. And then, they’re treated as being behind from ages five to eight, trying to catch them up, or the vicious cycle continues.

We’ve worked hard on that in Alabama and it’s something that we’ll continue to do. We want to make sure that First Class Pre-K is available to any Alabama four-year-old and their parents who want to take advantage of that.

Drilling down and looking at elementary school is a first step. But then you get to middle school. We have several different programs, “World of Work” for one, where we’re going into classrooms and talking to eighth and ninth graders about the various tracks of success. And we are not of the belief that the only path to success is a four-year college degree. We have incredible community colleges that can send students into a

career pathway that is fruitful for themselves and for their families.

There are many ways high school students can be given the tools to succeed, come right out of high school into the workforce, and have excellent and very successful careers.

We start them young to give them ownership in making those decisions. And we are really proud of the result. We have the #4 overall workforce development program across the fifty states.

Our education system, working with different programming at different levels, is what we hope to give students, young people, and all Alabamians the tools they need to be successful. And I would add, we have more HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) than anywhere else in the nation. We have to utilize all the incredible assets right there at our disposal.

■ Addressing Rehabilitation

Another way to address workforce needs is to make sure we work to rehabilitate our prison population; we don't think of prison as just housing, it is a rehabilitation process. We have Ingram State Technical Community College, we have Calhoun Community College doing this. I have seen them first-hand. It's just incredible what they're achieving, giving men and women the opportunity to get the credentials they need to go directly into the workforce when they finish their time in prison, and give them an opportunity to have dignity and to be able to participate in society.

iF: ONE OF THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS IN THE PRISON SYSTEM IS HOW MANY PEOPLE IN IT NEVER LEARNED TO READ. AND SO, YOU HAVE PEOPLE WHO NEVER GOT THE START YOU TALKED ABOUT. HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THAT IN PRISON?

KB: In addition to colleges and some of the technical schools that provide opportunities for credentialing people in prison, there are also volunteer



Senator Katie Britt (Photo: U.S. Senate)

programs where people work with inmates on reading and other things. It is a combination of things that we, as a community, do our part to give people the tools. We have programs that are faith-based, as well. There is a lot of work between the faith communities and the imprisoned population.

■ Corporate Responsibility

iF: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CORPORATE COMMUNITY – THE END OF YOUR PIPELINE. DO THEY EXPECT YOU TO TURN OUT THESE GUYS READY TO GO, OR DO THEY WORK WITH YOU?

KB: My first visit to Ingram State Technical College was during my time

as president and CEO of the Business Council of Alabama. We felt it was critically important not only to go and see, to support and encourage, and to spread the word, but also to be a voice saying, “Look at what the prison population has been able to achieve. Look at the rehabilitation. Look at the opportunity for credentialing.” The business community has done an excellent job as a true partner, giving more people the opportunity.

I would add - we've talked about education and young people, and we are rehabilitating them at prison population, but we also see a more mature population looking to get back into the workforce. We also have programs within our state, both partnerships and giving the

more mature population the skills and the tools they need for the 21st century work environment. We are doing all of those things.

It is a comprehensive approach whether you're four years old or 65 years old and wanting to get back into the workforce.

All of this creates a better business climate, and the climate and infrastructure allow business to flourish.

■ *Looking at the Future*

iF: I'M A NORTHERNER. I ADMIT IT. WE NEVER THOUGHT OF THE SOUTH AS A BASTION OF HIGH-TECH, OR MANUFACTURING, OR ANYTHING. BEAUTIFUL FOR SURE, BUT HAVE WE BEEN MISSING SOMETHING?

KB: I'm so glad you asked. Someone said to me last week, "If you told me the youngest Republican female ever elected to the US Senate and simultaneously, the only Republican female with school-aged kids... if you asked me what state that person was from, I would not have guessed Alabama." The fact that

more of a tech and innovation hub in our state, and we're seeing that foothold take place in places like Birmingham and Tuscaloosa. We look at what is happening in Huntsville at Redstone Arsenal – everything from NASA with Marshall Space Flight Center to Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center (TEDAC), and other things that are important to our defense. National defense means a great deal to Alabama, and Alabama means a great deal to national defense.

There are some people who overlook us, but if you take a second glance, I promise you, you'll be impressed by what you see.

■ *High-Tech Alabama*

iF: CLEARLY, THE US SPACE COMMAND WAS IMPRESSED BECAUSE IT WANTED TO BE IN HUNTSVILLE.

KB: Senator Richard Shelby – the seat I fill – was truly a visionary leader. He always thought down the road and around the corner and we're going to continue

Command, Aviation and Missile Research Center, and the Missile Defense Agency. And we have resources for all of them.

■ *The View from the Senate*

iF: YOU ARE NOT JUST SENATOR FROM ALABAMA, BUT PART OF THE SENATE. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT CONCERNS EVERYBODY THAT DOES BUSINESS, AND EVERYBODY WHO LIVES IN THIS COUNTRY, IS GOVERNMENT DEBT.

KB: Our national debt is unsustainable. The position we are in right now is not only fiscally irresponsible, but also morally irresponsible. We are placing this debt not just on the backs of our children, but on our children's children. We must do better. I often say, you balance your budget, your magazine balances its budget, but the federal government, for whatever reason, believes that it is above that. It is not, and the American people deserve better. We have to get back to actually living within our means, but then taking a look at the abuse of entitlements. We want people to have a safety net, but you don't want them to have a hammock. And that's what it's turned into. Things that are supposed to help people get through difficult times, unfortunately, is where some people have chosen to stay.

We look at our labor participation rate in Alabama; it's 57 percent. If you're an able-bodied, working-aged American without dependents, you should be working to receive government benefits. In the original debt ceiling negotiations, it said those people should be working, or volunteering, or learning 20 hours a week.

There is a dignity in an honest day's work, not to mention contributing. We've got to get back to a place in this country where people realize that we are all called to contribute, to be a part of this economy and this country.

iF: WE HAD THAT ONCE. WE HAD A REPUBLICAN CONGRESS AND A

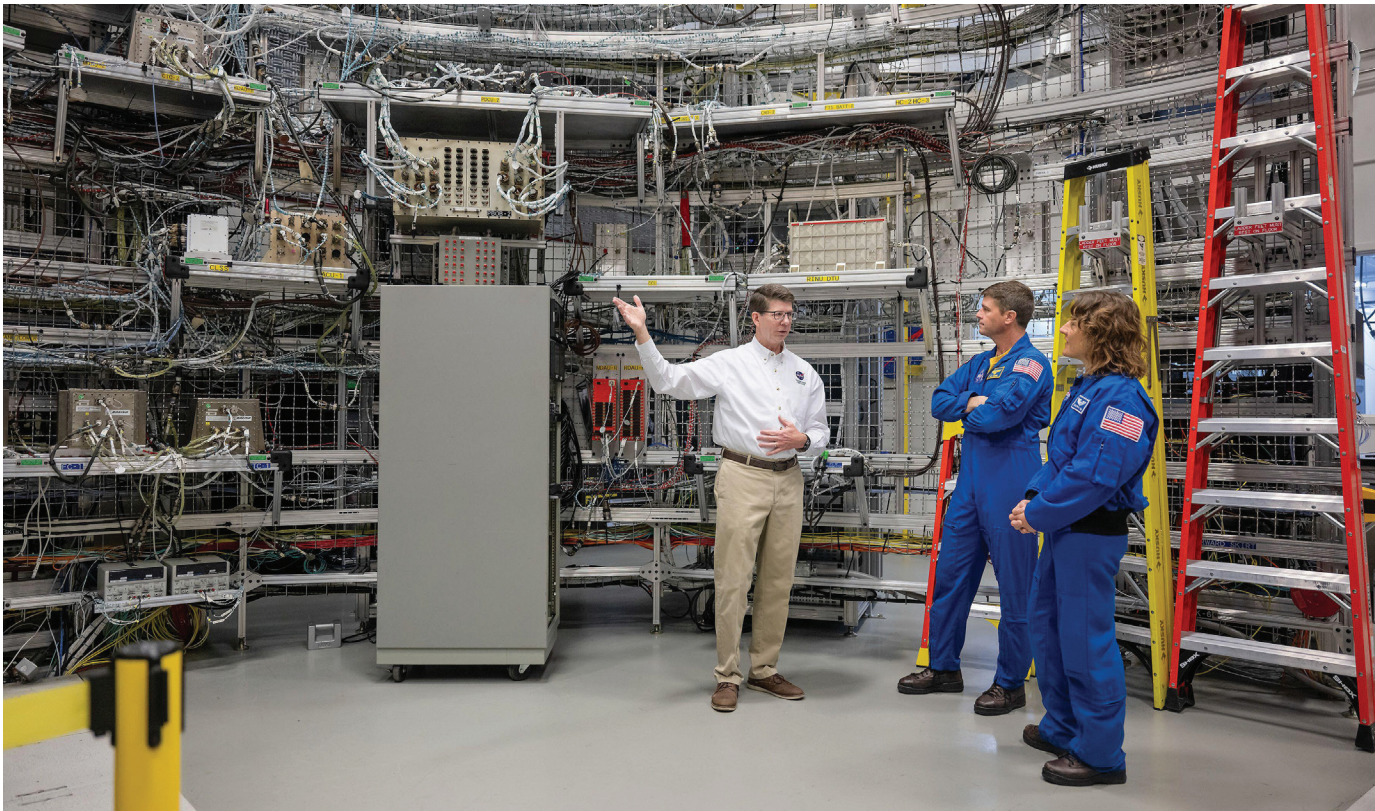
...we've talked about education and young people, and we are rehabilitating them at prison population, but we also see a more mature population looking to get back into the workforce.

Alabama gave me the opportunity to represent her and her people says a lot about who we are and where we're going. We believe in creating opportunity for any and all citizens.

We are, in fact, a very diverse state. Mountains in north Alabama to the white sandy beaches on our coast and everything in between. We have filled that with opportunity. The state government passed incentives to create

that. I have to be my own senator and stand on my own two feet, but he always worked to connect the talents and opportunities in the state and with the needs of our nation. I'm going to continue to be an advocate for that every single day.

Look at the potential. We have Redstone Arsenal and the Marshall Space Flight Center. Army Material Command, Army Space and Missile



Artemis II astronauts visit NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. (Photo: NASA)

DEMOCRAT PRESIDENT, AND NEWT GINGRICH AND BILL CLINTON FIGURED OUT HOW TO DO WELFARE-TO-WORK. DO YOU SEE ANY POSSIBILITY OF THAT AGAIN?

KB: I absolutely do. We've got to speak directly to the American people about it and explain to them that moving just 4 million Americans from welfare to work would boost the economy by almost \$150 billion and it would grow Social Security and Medicare revenues significantly. We have to communicate that.

iF: ANY BIPARTISANSHIP ON THIS ISSUE?

KB: I have hope. As long as we continue to talk and work, I think we're right on this issue. It makes sense. And I am hopeful that the more that we speak about it, the more people will come to the table in a bipartisan way and realize that it is one of many things that we need to be doing to get this country moving in the right direction.

iF: WHEN YOU CAME TO THE SENATE, DID YOU FIND MORE BIPARTISANSHIP THAN YOU THOUGHT YOU MIGHT – OR LESS?

KB: I approach it as an opportunity to earn the trust and respect of my colleagues no matter what side they sit on. You don't have to agree with someone to show them respect. And unfortunately, I think we've seen a change in that in our culture, in our country, where if you don't agree with someone 100 percent of the time, then you can't possibly respect them. That's not how you forge solutions. I have been intentional about getting to know colleagues on both sides. And whether that's building a great relationship with Senator [John] Fetterman [D-PA] and my freshman class, or Senator Tom Cotton and me joining with two Democrats to work on a social media bill to help protect children.

We have to do more of that and have to have more honest conversations. To move this country in the right direction, we have to have a lot of tough

conversations. And the only way to do that is by having relationships built on trust and respect.

iF: I'M GLAD TO HEAR IT BECAUSE FROM THE OUTSIDE, IT LOOKS HOPELESS.

KB: I have tremendous respect for my colleagues, and this is what we owe the nation. The American people deserve our very best and that includes being able to have a conversation with someone that you may not agree with.

■ China

iF: LET'S TURN TO CHINA. LEADERS OF AMERICAN INDUSTRY AND FINANCE PAID A FORTUNE TO HAVE DINNER WITH XI JINPING WHEN HE WAS IN SAN FRANCISCO. THEY'RE LOOKING, CLEARLY, FOR BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES. BUT CHINA IS AN ADVERSARY, NOT A FRIEND. HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE THE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY?

KB: China is our greatest geopolitical adversary. And economic security is national security. The public and the private sectors need to be working together to safeguard and bolster our domestic supply chain. If we learned nothing else from COVID, it was that we needed to onshore jobs and shore up our supply chains. I'm hopeful that our business community will continue to understand and do that. We also must be very smart about the theft of intellectual property that occurs from China every single day.

The last three years, I think, have opened the eyes of many across our nation. We have to continue to talk about it and safeguard against it. I find TikTok a particular menace – an infiltration into an entire generation.

iF: ARE THERE PEOPLE IN THE SENATE WHO SHARE YOUR CONCERNS?

KB: Absolutely. This is one of the areas where you find the most bipartisan agreement: the economic, military and social threat of China. We may have different postures or different ideas on how we solve the problem, but I think we both very clear-eyed and seeing China as the threat that it is.

■ *The Defense Budget*

iF: DO WE NEED TO INCREASE OUR DEFENSE BUDGET? ARE WE BEHIND THE CURVE WHEN IT COMES TO THE CHINESE THREAT?

KB: I've seen the reports, particularly when it comes to INDOPACOM [The US Indo-Pacific Command], and the number of ships in China's navy versus the number that we have. They are continually ramping up their defense budget. We have to ensure that we are modernizing our capabilities and putting dollars in the right places. I am a big believer in peace through strength, which means we make sure that our warfighters are the best prepared, equipped, and trained in the world.

■ *Conclusion*

iF: WHY SHOULD COMPANIES CONSIDER MOVING TO ALABAMA? AND SECOND, WHERE DO YOU SEE THE STATE GOING OVER THE NEXT DECADE? IS THIS ENDLESS PROGRESS OR DO YOU SEE SNAKES ON THE WAY?

KB: I am so glad you asked. We want to create opportunity for our state and for the citizens of our state, and we work diligently at it. I mentioned railways, waterways, airports and interstates. We're serious. And we have business incentives that we want people to know we value their business, and we value the opportunity that they create for our citizens.

But it is also important to say that Alabama is not only a great place to do business but a great place to live.

Huntsville comes out at or near the top of the best places to live in the United States. And that is about our people – and we have a lot of great people in the state – working, worshipping, and raising their families. More and more people are finding that out. And as long as I am in the Senate, I'm going to fight every day to bring opportunity to the state, and the nation, and make sure that our kids can be safe and secure and have a pathway to success.

iF: EXPAND THAT THOUGHT TO THE REST OF THE COUNTRY BECAUSE EVERYBODY WANTS THE SAME THING. WHAT WOULD BE THE MAIN THING THAT ALABAMA CAN SHOW OTHER STATES? IF I LIVE IN INDIANA OR OREGON, WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO SEE THAT MAKES ME SAY, "I WANT THAT"?

KB: It is about people. Elections have consequences and I really believe we have people from top down in our state who believe in the country, and believe in the state, and believe in fighting for the next generation. Alabama is filled with people who understand that the most important things in life are faith, family, and

freedom. It is a cold glass of iced tea on somebody's front porch. It's your neighbor bringing in your garbage cans when you didn't even ask them to. It is random acts of kindness at the grocery store that catch many Northerners off guard.

iF: SOMETIMES.

KB: It's a way of life in the South; treating people with dignity and respect, valuing the Golden Rule, being willing to give the shirt off your back to someone who may need it more. Alabamians have a whole lot of heart. We love the nation, we love our state, and we believe both are worth fighting for.

iF: IT'S NOT TOP-DOWN. SOMETIMES WE TEND TO LOOK AT WASHINGTON AND EXPECT WASHINGTON TO SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS FOR US. BUT WHAT YOU DID WAS LAY OUT THIS GREAT CASE FOR THE FACT THAT IT'S BOTTOM UP.

KB: Exactly. It starts in the home, it starts with the family, and it filters out to community, to local elections. People in DC often get it wrong. They think that the electorate sent them up here because they have all the answers. The truth is the best thing that we can do is turn right back around and sit in front of the people who deal with these issues every day.

iF: THAT WAS A GREAT ANSWER. AS A CITIZEN, IT MAKES ME FEEL GOOD.

KB: Wherever I am, the question is, "How is this going to affect every day Americans?" People in Washington often get caught up and they forget to ask that question. That's where we lose our way. We have to do better and be better. And I'm certainly trying to bring that approach to the Senate office.

iF: SENATOR BRITT, THANK YOU FOR A GREAT INTERVIEW AND ROLL TIDE!

KB: Roll Tide!

A Deeper Dive...

Alabama's Auto Industry

by JERRY UNDERWOOD

For Alabama's economic future, the pivotal moment came on Sept. 30, 1993, when executives of Mercedes-Benz arrived in Tuscaloosa with an announcement that shocked the global business community.

In the months leading to that day, a Mercedes team had explored potential sites in at least 30 states as a home for the automaker's first U.S. manufacturing facility. They came to Alabama that day to announce their decision.

For many, the news was a lightning bolt out of the blue. After all, Alabama had never produced an automobile and barely had any presence in the industry. But Mercedes found what it wanted in a rolling 900-acre site, lined with pine trees, just outside of Tuscaloosa.

The initial investment back in 1993 was \$400 million, with plans for 1,500 workers. The project quickly become much more than that; in fact, it came to represent a dividing line for Alabama. For many, it became "Before Mercedes" — and "After Mercedes."

Flash forward to 2023. Mercedes has invested over \$7 billion in its Alabama operation through repeated expansions that have seen its workforce in Tuscaloosa County swell to over 6,300 people. Over 4 million vehicles have rolled down its assembly lines.

Critically, Mercedes' arrival in Alabama opened the door for other automakers, which were also attracted by the state's low-cost environment, first-class worker training programs, a large available workforce and its status as a right-to-work state, among other factors.

Today, Honda, Hyundai and the Mazda-Toyota partnership have joined Mercedes to operate large-scale

assembly plants in Alabama, solidifying the state's reputation as an auto industry powerhouse.

"The auto industry has been the primary driver of economic growth across Alabama for over two decades, providing high-paying careers for our citizens and first-class workplaces for our communities," Governor Kay Ivey said. "The industry's impact on Alabama has been massive but what really excites me is how its future is going to be even brighter in our state."

■ Growth Engine

The industry's ascent has been rapid. Automakers have assembled over 15 million vehicles in Alabama since the first Mercedes M-Class rolled down the line in February 1997. Combined production capacity at the state's auto plants now tops 1.3 million vehicles annually, earning the state a Top 5 ranking in the U.S.

Direct employment in Alabama's automotive manufacturing sector ap-

proaches 48,000, surging from just a few thousand back in 1997. Around 26,000 of these jobs are in Alabama's expanding auto supplier network, which today counts 150 Tier 1 suppliers and logistics companies.

Motor vehicles rank as Alabama's No. 1 export category. Exports of Alabama-made automobiles totaled \$8.9 billion in 2022, while exports of Alabama-made auto parts and products approached \$500 million. Alabama ranks No. 3 among the states for vehicle exports.

Alabama's five automakers have combined to invest around \$15 billion in their assembly operations in the state, according to data from the Alabama Department of Commerce.

With capital investment of that magnitude, it's obvious that Alabama's auto industry functions as a dynamic growth engine for the state's economy.

Consider the powerful impact of the Mazda Toyota Manufacturing (MTM) joint-venture assembly plant in Huntsville, which now produces a SUV for each of the automakers. This \$2.3 billion facility, which began production in 2021, is not only bringing up to 4,000 direct jobs to Alabama but also generating strong economic ripples in its wake.

Direct employment in Alabama's automotive manufacturing sector approaches 48,000, surging from just a few thousand back in 1997.

More than a dozen Mazda Toyota suppliers, logistics firms and support companies have established locations in Alabama, creating over 2,000 new auto-sector jobs. Combined, this supply-chain investment exceeds \$725 million.



New vehicles in production at the Mercedes-Benz Plant in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

In addition, the MTM venture has joined Toyota, which operates a \$1.5 billion engine plant in Huntsville with 1,900 workers, as a good corporate citizen in North Alabama.

“MTM has been a strong community partner since its inception,” Mayor Tommy Battle said. “We have been excited and honored to celebrate each milestone with our friends and partners, and we look forward to many more years of collaboration, contribution and prosperity.”

Meanwhile, investment by the auto industry continues to grow across Alabama.

Since 2020, companies in the automobile manufacturing sector have announced plans to invest around \$4 billion in Alabama growth projects, creating almost 7,500 jobs, Commerce data show. In August 2023, Hyundai announced a new \$290 million investment in its assembly plant in Montgomery to prepare for mass production of a next-generation Santa Fe SUV.

Other major 2023 growth projects are being launched by suppliers Samkee, which is investing \$128 million to open a plant in Tuskegee with 170 workers, and Shinhwa, which is expanding in Auburn with a \$114 million investment and 50 additional workers.

■ **Economic Transition**

Before the auto industry came to Alabama, the textile and apparel industry provided a large share of the bread-and-butter jobs in many small towns across the state. By the time Mercedes had planted roots, however, the decline of the old-line textile industry was beginning to accelerate across the state.

Chambers County, which borders the Georgia state line and stands 80 miles from Montgomery on Interstate 85, stood at ground zero for this free-fall. The rural county had long depended on the textile industry before the plant closings started.

During a bleak 2007, a single textile company shuttered seven facilities in

the county, eliminating 1,637 jobs. More pain was on the way as jobs vanished. By February 2009, the county’s unemployment rate peaked at 19.7%, with 2,833 people out of work.

Having endured the bloodbath of lost textile industry jobs, Chambers County is now home to a dozen auto suppliers that have replaced the lost textile jobs and continue to add more workers.

At least three of Chambers County’s auto suppliers have even located in vacant textile facilities, providing a potent symbol of the economic transformation.

This shift has played out in many other rural communities across Alabama as the rise of Alabama’s auto industry began bringing supplier companies to communities such as Alexander City, Opelika, Greenville and Selma.

“Alabama’s rural communities offer auto manufacturers and other companies from all over the globe everything their ventures need to grow and thrive over the long haul,” said Brenda Tuck, Rural Development Manager for the

Alabama Department of Commerce. “Opportunities abound in the state’s rural communities, and corporate decision-makers are paying attention.”

■ *Preparing the Workforce*

Alabama’s commitment to workforce development has been a factor in the auto industry’s growth in the state — and that commitment is unwavering.

In November 2023, AIDT, Alabama’s primary workforce development agency, announced plans to build a \$30 million workforce training center in Decatur that will focus on electric vehicles and emerging technologies to fully position the state’s auto industry for the next chapter of its growth.

The facility will be located on the campus of the Alabama Robotics Technology Park, a unique \$73 million center operated by AIDT that helps companies train workers on advanced R&D and manufacturing technologies.

“Our main goal is to help the state’s automakers continue to grow during the transition to electric powertrains and assist them as they embrace new technologies that are evolving all the time,” AIDT Director Ed Castile said. “We just want to make sure we have a workforce that has the ability to thrive in this new environment, so it’s a natural extension of what we do at the Robotics Park.”

AIDT has been involved in the growth of Alabama’s auto industry since the early days, when it assisted Mercedes in assembling and training its original workforce. Over three decades, AIDT has completed automotive training for over 125,000 people.

“We are full partners with all of our original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and almost all their suppliers in the workforce space, having recruited, assessed and trained workers for many years and through all their expansions,” Castile said. “Our auto companies continue to invest in their Alabama operations. We’re a real player in the industry now, and we’re just going to keep becoming a bigger player in this influential

global business.”

In 2023, AIDT revived a multi-state campaign called “Shift” to attract a new generation of workers for the sector and help the industry fill over 11,000 auto manufacturing positions.

■ *The EV Evolution*

It’s clear the global auto industry views electric vehicles as the future, prompting automakers to craft strategic plans — powered by massive investments — to position themselves for a revolutionary shift that’s approaching at top speed.

In Alabama, the industry is making major moves to capitalize on the evolution toward EVs.

It’s starting with Mercedes, which is steering Alabama into the future once again as a \$1 billion investment to prepare for EV production is coming to fruition. The project upgraded a plant that the company already described as

also their high-performance batteries,” said Michael Göbel, head of Production North America and president and CEO of Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, as the Alabama operation is known.

In another milestone, Hyundai’s Alabama assembly plant has begun producing its first EVs — the electrified Genesis GV70 and a plug-in hybrid electric Santa Fe SUV. To get ready for that production launch, Hyundai pumped a \$300 million investment into its Montgomery plant.

To advance future EV production plans, supplier Hyundai Mobis is embarking on a project to open a \$205 million EV battery module plant in Montgomery that will employ as many as 400 people.

The increasing activity in the EV supply chain transmits the signal that Alabama’s auto sector is fully concentrating on tomorrow, according to Greg

Before the auto industry came to Alabama, the textile and apparel industry provided a large share of the bread-and-butter jobs in many small towns across the state.

one of the world’s “smartest” manufacturing facilities.

In August 2022, just months after opening a sprawling battery assembly plant in Alabama, the German automaker celebrated the production launch of its luxury EQS sport utility vehicle at its Tuscaloosa County factory. Another EV, the EQE sport utility, is also being built there.

“Our team here in Tuscaloosa plays a major role in the global success of Mercedes-Benz. We are proud that not only the new all-electric EQS SUV and EQE SUV are being built here in Alabama for markets worldwide, but

Canfield, who as the state’s Commerce Secretary for 12 years has witnessed the industry’s growth

“In just a quarter century, Alabama’s auto industry has gone from zero to 100 mph, and I know that our five global automakers will continue to invest in their operations in the state to fully realize their potential,” said Canfield, who stepped down from his post on Dec. 31.

“There is serious horsepower here, and I think our auto industry is just getting started in this new age,” he added.

JERRY UNDERWOOD is the business editor at *Big Communications*.

THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION ROUNDTABLE

Building Enduring Advantages in Defense

by **ROBERT GREENWAY, WILSON BEAVER, ROBERT PETERS, ALEX VELEZ-GREEN, JOHN VENABLE, BRENT SADLER and JIM FEIN**

Editor's Note: The Biden Administration's official fiscal year 2025 defense budget request "does not fund the military sufficiently and does not allocate resources appropriately," according to the Heritage Foundation Special Report "A Conservative Defense Budget." This section, "Building Enduring Advantages" is focused on the human side of defense spending.

The U.S. military must invest in the well-being of its service members both because it is the right thing to do, and because these soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are the future of the force.

■ **Supporting the Troops**

The conservative budget request supports the officially requested 4.5 percent pay raise for the troops. The conservative budget also increases spending for family housing in all three military departments. This additional spending is intended to address the appalling living conditions at some family housing units that have come to light across the force.

Critically, the conservative defense budget calls for \$400 million in reallocated spending to improve housing conditions for American servicemembers and their families. At the House Armed Services Committee Quality of Life Panel in 2023, the Director of Defense Capabilities and Management at the Government Accountability Office (GAO) testified that military housing had mold, sewage overflows,

pest infestations, and multiple instances of unsafe conditions. The Biden Administration is paying \$2.5 billion in taxpayer funds for Immigration and Customs Enforcement to house illegal migrants but failed to allocate sufficient resources within the official budget request to address these issues. Unacceptably, family housing funding for the Air Force and Navy decreased in the official budget.

■ **Recruiting**

The national recruiting crisis is a threat to national security. The Army in particular has fallen short of its recruiting goals since 2018.

obesity rates are expected to increase to 24.2 percent by 2030, up from 21 percent in 2017. If the military hopes to address and overcome this challenge, it needs to engage with American youth much earlier. Congress should provide funding for the military to increase the number of programs available to help prospective recruits lose weight at the recruiting office before shipping out to basic training. The military could also establish stronger partnerships between recruiters and high school physical education classes.

- Recruiting messages should focus on the importance of service and duty. Many American service members be-

Obesity has become one of the top medically disqualifying conditions for prospective recruits—a negative trend that is likely to continue

A declining number of Americans are qualified for service, many average Americans are concerned about politicization within the military, and there is a declining sense of patriotism among America's young people.

- Obesity has become one of the top medically disqualifying conditions for prospective recruits—a negative trend that is likely to continue as adolescent

long to generational military families and join out of a deep, heartfelt sense of patriotism and duty to country.

- Student debt has become a major issue for young people nationwide. Those worried about student debt need to know that the GI Bill offers them a way to finish a four-year college degree or technical certification from a vocational school without incurring debt. Military

veterans receive the full cost of public, in-state tuition and fees and partial or full funding at private universities. Full-time students also receive money for housing and books while attending classes.

■ *Major Defense Reforms*

The DOD must cut waste and spend money as efficiently as possible. Defense spending is designed to defend the interests of the American people, and this includes being a good steward of the taxpayers' dollars. Out-of-control federal spending and the ever-increasing national debt threaten the economic security of the nation, and wasteful spending undermines public confidence in the DOD. The DOD must cut or relocate wasteful and non-defense spending and identify new efficiencies within the defense budget.

Major Internal Reallocation.

This conservative defense budget moves \$18.8 billion out of defense-wide Operations and Maintenance (O&M) and Research Development Test & Evaluations (RDT&E) accounts into the Procurement and O&M accounts of the Navy, the Air Force, and the Army. The intent is for less money to be spent on the bureaucracies at the departments and more money to be spent on real military capability for the warfighter.

Delivering Capability. Every RDT&E program should be constantly evaluated to ensure that it is progressing toward necessary fielded capability. RDT&E programs often spend years, even decades, in the research and development phases without delivering any warfighting capability. Certainly, some technologies that initially appeared promising do not pan out, but the DOD should be required to conduct more frequent reviews of program progress.

Any program that has been in RDT&E longer than three years should be brought up for consideration and potential elimination if it has not transitioned to an acquisition program. This would not affect long-term programs



Navy Personnel Command (NPC), hosts a listening session focused on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at a Career Development Symposium. (Photo: U.S. Navy / PO1 Jeanette Mullinax)

like Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD). Instead, it would focus spending and effort on the most critical projects that are most likely to become military programs of record and deliver a new capability to the force.

Contracting Reform. There are potential areas for savings in contracting reform. Section 1244 of the FY 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) removed munitions contracting requirements to allow a faster response in Ukraine. Current contracting requirements are burdensome and have grown over time. The Advisory Panel on Streamlining and Codifying Acquisition Regulations (also known as the Section 809 Panel) performed some work in this area, but more is needed. Reducing contracting requirements would increase speed and save billions.

One problem is that any time a contractor does something unethical or costly to the DOD, instead of punishing one bad actor, Congress or the DOD creates new regulations meant to prevent the same thing from happening again even though 99.9 percent of other contractors did not engage in similarly bad behavior and even though the bad actor may have been flaunting some already existing regulation. Offending firms

should be held more firmly to existing standards and subjected to congressional scrutiny when found to be in violation. Put another way, any large defense contractor engaging in unethical practices should be publicly shamed, both to encourage it to reform and to deter other contractors from engaging in similar behavior.

Under Secretaries of Defense (USD) and Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense (DASD). USD and DASD positions should not be created unless others are eliminated on a one-for-one basis in order to prevent bureaucratic bloat and duplication of efforts across the Department of Defense. Congress should implement a one-for-one rule for creation of new USD or DASD positions.

Professional Military Education (PME). PME schools are expensive to run, and military personnel can often receive the same education from private universities. PME schools should not be eliminated entirely, as many of them are necessary to an educated officer corps, but their overall numbers can be reduced, and their delivery of training and education can be modified. Officers should be permitted to attend only PME schools that are tied to their

career paths. Congress should ask the GAO for a report on the total number of PME schools and their enrollment and the feasibility of proposals to reduce the overall number. The education being funded must fit within the officer's career path and provide a benefit to the DOD. There is no critical need, for example, to send medical officers to a war college to study the history of grand strategy and warfare. There should be a demonstrable mission purpose behind the education being funded.

Additionally, the FY 2025 conservative defense budget endorses the following reforms in President Biden's FY 2025 defense budget request:

O&M Unobligated Balance Carryover. This proposed general provision would allow the DOD to carry over up to 50 percent of unobligated balances in the O&M account into the next fiscal year. This change reinforces good fiscal stewardship by giving financial managers a tool they can use to make better year-end spending decisions and enables the DOD to respond to emergent requirements.

• **Two-Year Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Funding.** This proposal (to change appropriations language) changes the PCS funding availability period from one to two years in the military personnel appropriations for the Active Components. This change maximizes the use of PCS funds, which typically cross fiscal years because of the seasonal nature of PCS moves and minimizes the unexpended balances in the military personnel appropriations for the Active Components, ultimately allowing the DOD to maximize the use of congressionally appropriated funds for their intended purpose.

• **National Guard 2 Percent Carryover.** This proposal (to change appropriations language) allows a percentage of National Guard funding to carry over into the following fiscal year to address emerging National Guard missions without undermining core baseline training requirements.

• **O&M, Defense-Wide, Civil Military Program (CMP) Enhancement.** This proposed general provision allows any excess funds not needed for a specific CMP project to be transferred back to the originating appropriation for use on another project. This flexibility ensures maximum execution of the Innovative Readiness Training opportunities that will help to increase deployment readiness while simultaneously providing key services with lasting benefits for our American communities.

• **Health Care Transformational Fund.** This proposed general provision allows the Defense Health Program (DHP) to transfer unobligated balances of expiring discretionary funds in any of its accounts into a Transformational Fund. This change helps the DHP to target structural investments, such as the backlog in Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization, and enables the DOD to maximize its health care investments without additional topline increases.

■ *Depoliticizing the Department of Defense*

The American military is not a social laboratory. It is the guarantor of the American people's safety and prosperity and as such needs to prioritize lethality over other considerations. Non-defense spending and initiatives should not be included in the defense budget.

Under the Biden Administration, all manner of woke policies have been forced on the DOD. These hyperpolitical, left-wing policies distract the military from its core mission and cause division within the force. These policies alienate conservative Americans and contribute to the recruiting crisis.

American servicemembers are subjected to training sessions on inane concepts such as the correct use of personal pronouns according to the latest gender theory. American servicemembers are taught that America is fatally flawed because of systemic racism and white privilege—left-wing ideological

concepts with their roots in the Marxist tenets of critical race theory. West Point cadets have to attend lectures with titles like "Understanding Whiteness and White Rage." Such policies are divisive and demoralizing and have no place in the American military.

The FY 2025 conservative defense budget includes recommendations that the DOD:

• Eliminate all diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and positions.

• Eliminate all climate change initiatives and positions. The current Pentagon leadership has stated that climate change will touch every aspect of the department's planning. While energy and electricity are of paramount importance in every aspect of military operations, the reliability of energy sources is more important than their carbon emissions. In many of the environments where the Pentagon operates, such as Alaska, having energy is a matter of life and death. Congress should prioritize mission needs when evaluating incoming energy proposals from the Administration.

• Make all physical fitness tests gender neutral. Physical fitness is a key aspect of military readiness, especially in combat roles.

• Strive to be apolitical. Military officers should avoid weighing in on sensitive political issues. Senior military officials, by inserting their views into culture-war issues over the past several years, have decreased the American people's traditional esteem for and trust in the military.

• Refuse to fund abortions either directly or indirectly.

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A Return to the Carter Era? We Don't Have To

by **STEPHEN MOORE**

Everything happening in our fractured nation today seems so worryingly reminiscent of America's last lost decade — the 1970s.

For those who don't remember, the late 1970s under part-time President Gerald Ford and then, much worse, under President Jimmy Carter, were one economic and national security setback after another.

The witches' brew of 7 percent to 10 percent inflation by 1979 and ever-increasing tax rates — which rose as high as 70 percent — drove the economy into a ditch. Real family incomes cratered under Mr. Carter because inflation rose so much faster than take-home pay. Interest rates soared and homes became unaffordable. Gasoline prices tripled. Mr. Carter blamed Big Oil and “invested” in pipe-dream green energy alternatives that went bankrupt.

Every time inflation rose, the economic whiz kids in Washington assured us the high prices were just temporary. (They didn't use the term “transitory.”) When prices kept rising, Mr. Carter blamed corporate greed and installed price controls and windfall-profits taxes — which only made problems worse. Mr. Carter had the worst record of inflation in modern times. President Biden is right behind him.

We saw student protesters occupying the offices of college presidents. Race riots turned our inner cities into powder kegs.

Because America was so weak at home, our enemies abroad capitalized as Soviet tanks rolled into Afghanistan and troops into Nicaragua, and Iran held Americans hostage.

Federal spending and debt soared,

and the private sector started shrinking.

His response to the bad news was to point the finger at Americans and lecture them to turn down the thermostat, put on a sweater, or learn to live with less. (Even Mr. Carter didn't threaten to abolish air conditioning and gas heat.)

Interest rates on mortgages skyrocketed to 17 percent, and buying a home became financially out of reach for most Americans.

The new term that slid into the American lexicon was “stagflation.” The term refers to the combination of high prices and sluggish economic growth.

Does any of this sound familiar?

■ ***Biden's Prescription***

Mr. Biden's prescription for the US economy isn't to reverse course. It is Carterism on steroids. More price controls, higher taxes on the rich and businesses, \$2 trillion more in spending on programs like student loan “forgiveness,” green energy subsidies, and mortgage relief programs.

The tax rate on investment would soar well above 50 percent. As former Trump economist Larry Kudlow has put it: “Biden thinks he can tax America to prosperity.”

On energy policy, he's doubling down on his commitment to “net zero” fossil fuel production and will command people to buy \$70,000 electric vehicles made in China.

■ ***“Unappreciative” Americans***

When most Americans say they are financially worse off, he doesn't feel their pain. He shames them for not appreciating the wonderful things he's done and

the virtues of “Bidenomics.”

That message is a little tone-deaf, given that Americans are worried about '70s-style stagflation making a comeback. Inflation is trending back up, while growth in gross domestic product just slowed to a 1.6 percent trickle.

Mr. Biden's response is that Americans are unappreciative, and we are all selfish for not wanting to live with less or give up our gas stoves and SUVs to save the planet.

In his famous “malaise speech” in the summer of 1979, Mr. Carter spoke of a national “crisis of confidence,” and he lectured Americans about too much “self-indulgence” and learning to consume less and conserve more. He even talked about “threats to democracy.” Instead of inspiring the nation, he put the country in a funk.

Like Jimmy Carter, President Biden offers four more years of austerity, sacrifice, and bigger, more intrusive government. That platform won the incumbent Jimmy Carter 41 percent of the vote in 1980.

■ ***Four Radical Reforms***

Idea no one in Washington's swamp will want to adopt

It was exactly 50 years ago that the liberal post-Watergate Congress, dominated by Democratic big spenders, passed a new set of budget rules called the Budget Reform and Impoundment Control Act.

This law has been a complete and unmitigated disaster. In the 50 years since its passage, the budget has been balanced four times and unbalanced 46 times. This was by design. Despite

being called a “budget reform” law, it was intended to grease the skids for new spending.

To that extent, the law worked.

This year, Congress hit a new low. Even with record-high deficits of nearly \$2 trillion a year, Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill held hands in bipartisan agreement to spend \$95 billion on a foreign aid bill for Ukraine and Israel without a penny being paid for with offsetting spending cuts — even though the flabby budget now exceeds \$7 trillion.

Members of Congress should wear T-shirts that read “Stop us before we spend again!”

(Carter’s) response to the bad news was to point the finger at Americans and lecture them to turn down the thermostat, put on a sweater, or learn to live with less.

So, I’d like to suggest four common-sense ideas about when citizens should impose a fiscal restraining order on Congress and the White House.

- **Bring back presidential impoundment authority.**

The president — like the CEO of any company — should have the power to suspend spending on programs if it is deemed unnecessary. Presidents from Thomas Jefferson — who used the power to stop some shipbuilding for the military — to Abraham Lincoln to Franklin Roosevelt — who used the authority to end New Deal programs as we entered World War II — to Richard Nixon exercised this control. In a \$7 trillion budget, there are thousands of instances where money authorized by Congress is no longer needed.

So let the president cancel it.

- **Establish a supermajority vote requirement to raise taxes.**

President Biden wants to balance the budget with \$4 trillion of economically disastrous tax increases and no spending cuts. But the spending is out of control, not the tax revenue. Any tax increase enacted by Congress should require a two-thirds vote in both houses to be approved. This is what many well-run state governments require, and there should be similar safeguards in Washington.

- **Eliminate subsidies to millionaires.**

This is an idea that the late great economist Walter Williams and I pro-

posed more than a decade ago. The idea is that no individual with an annual income of more than \$1 million should be eligible for federal aid payments. No business entity with more than \$1 billion in annual revenue should be eligible for federal corporate welfare subsidies. This would have rendered the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, with its tens of billions of dollars in handouts to green energy and semiconductor companies such as Intel, null and void.

- **Issue ‘budget stamps.’**

This simple idea would effectively require a balanced budget each year. The concept was originally proposed by then-Reagan administration economist John Rutledge. Under this plan, the government would issue a special blue currency called “budget stamps” to all recipients

of federal spending — much in the way that food stamps are issued to the poor. The value of budget stamps, however, would fluctuate with the amount of excess spending authorized by Congress — much as the dollar fluctuates in value every day relative to the price of gold or other currencies.

Recipients of federal assistance, federal employees, and those who run federal agencies would receive \$6 trillion in budget stamps this year. (Interest on the debt is excluded.)

But that money in total would be worth only as much money expected to be collected in taxes that year. So, if the tax collections were estimated at 90 percent of the spending, then every budget stamp would be worth 90 cents, not a dollar. The bigger the expected deficit, the less that a budget stamp would be worth.

This would create competition for dollars between agencies and programs. Each dollar allocated to foreign aid would be one less dollar available for the Pentagon, Social Security recipients, defense contractors, green energy programs, bilingual education, and sugar subsidies.

Deficits would be impossible since the government under the new rule would be incapable of spending more than it took in. Because Congress’ salaries and staff would be paid in budget stamps, Congress would have a financial incentive to cut unnecessary and wasteful spending.

■ **Conclusion**

Almost no one in the Washington swamp will like these ideas, which is all the more reason to adopt them.

STEPHEN MOORE is a visiting senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation and a co-founder of the Committee to Unleash Prosperity. His latest book is *Govzilla: How the Relentless Growth of Government Is Devouring Our Economy*. A version of this piece was first published in the Washington Times.

Should We Have Faith in Our Schools? Yes, Actually.

by **GARION FRANKEL**

To the casual observer, American schools must be within the deepest section of Plato's cave — far away from the shining lights of truth, beauty, and justice.

Day after day, parents and educators alike tell stories of students who are no longer able to understand classic texts like *The Most Dangerous Game* or *The Cask of Amontillado*, teachers who are legally defenseless against violent and out-of-control students, and districts that would rather spend \$20 million on a commercial water park than properly provide math instruction. Although most parents are satisfied with their child's specific school, only a paltry 16 percent agree that the public school system in general is headed in the right direction.

If one looks at scores on standardized exams, stakeholders are right to be concerned. Reading and math scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are the lowest they have been since the early 1970s, undoing decades of progress in boosting student achievement. While some of these declines are undoubtedly the result of the COVID-19 pandemic's lingering effects, they also point to critical institutional problems within American schools. In short, the kids are not alright — they are very, very not alright.

That said, it is far too early to throw in the towel. In a country with roughly 115,000 schools, there are inevitably going to be families, administrators, teachers, and students doing things right. Rather than simply dismissing these noble efforts as exceptions to the rule of inadequacy, we should celebrate them as exemplars of the virtues many of us want

the next generation of children (and their schools) to strive for.

I intend to shine a positive light on some of these innovations, adaptations, or, in some cases, returns to form. Although these developments are, for now, on a relatively small scale, they cover a wide range of methods and subject areas and provide at least some source of hope. I do not intend these highlights to serve as apologetics for American schools — the contrary, if anything — but to show that these large and powerful institutions are still worth fighting for.

■ *The Mississippi Miracle*

Mississippi, often dismissed by coastal elites as the most backwater state within the most backwater region of the country, is a seemingly unlikely candidate for an educational renaissance.

Indeed, as recently as 11 years ago, Mississippi had some of the lowest 4th Grade reading scores in the country —

scores than Mississippi. In other words, the state's educational prospects were bleak, to say the least.

Nevertheless, what has transpired in Mississippi over the past decade is one of the most remarkable education reform successes in recent history. Whereas Mississippi was one of the worst states for 4th Grade literacy in 2011, it was in the middle of the pack by 2022. For students on free and reduced lunch plans, the results are even more promising — no state performed significantly better than Mississippi in 2022. Considering that an estimated 74 percent of the state's students rely on free and reduced lunches, this is a major achievement.

How did Mississippi advance so far, so quickly? It embraced the science of reading. In 2013, the state passed the Literacy-Based Promotion Act (LBPA), which rooted its reading curriculum in a research-backed model derived from linguistics and cognitive science. In ad-

Reading and math scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are the lowest they have been since the early 1970s, undoing decades of progress...

particularly for students receiving free or reduced lunches. Among those students, only two states performed significantly worse than Mississippi that year, with a whopping 36 states performing significantly better. The numbers for all students were even worse, as 47 states/jurisdictions had significantly higher reading

dition, the LBPA offered training and resources to ensure that the model was applied properly, with particularly impoverished schools and districts being given special priority. If a student was unable to read at grade level by the end of 3rd Grade, the state, rather controversially, elected to hold them back.

Call this model what you will — phonics, the science of reading, or whatever else — the LBPA made a dramatic difference in the lives of Mississippi’s students. This is especially important given that the state’s fundamental demographic characteristics did not change in this time frame. In other words, Mississippi is still one of the nation’s most impoverished and disadvantaged states.

Mississippi still has a long way to go, and it has had a difficult time replicating its 4th Grade successes in 8th Grade. Nevertheless, for a country wracked by a literacy crisis, Mississippi shows us that poverty and corruption are not insurmountable barriers to children’s progress in developing necessary skills for citizenship.

■ *A New Life for Arts Education?*

For millennia, scholars, families, and philosophers alike have considered the arts and humanities to be a proper, virtuous education’s backbone. Yet despite widespread public support for continued arts education, American children, particularly those living in disadvantaged communities, arguably have less access to the arts in schools than ever before.

Nobody wants to be the person known for cutting arts education programs, but with school budgets floundering and both state and federal accountability metrics prioritizing test scores above all else, cultural enrichment is often first on the chopping block.

But hope may be on the horizon. Researchers are applying rigorous economic research techniques to give less discussed school programs — drama, art, music, field trips, and more — a second look. Early results, though tepid and preliminary, are rather promising. A liberal education, long seen as instrumental to academic performance, virtue, and/or effective participation in a republican form of government, may accomplish exactly that.

A landmark 2013 study investigating 643 Australian students from 15 schools revealed that students who participated

in the arts were more academically-motivated, were more likely to enjoy school, and were more likely to complete their assignments. These students also had higher self-esteem, had a greater sense of meaning and purpose, and were much more satisfied with their lives. In other words, even when controlling for sociodemographics and previous grades, arts participation in school was strongly associated with improved lives.

Scholars have observed similar associations in the United States. A 2020 experiment involving researchers at Texas A&M University and the University of Missouri found that adolescent students who went on a field trip to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Houston were more likely to support civil liberties, had deeper historical knowledge regarding

...adolescent students who went on a field trip to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Houston were more likely to support civil liberties, had deeper historical knowledge regarding antisemitism...

antisemitism and the Holocaust, and were more likely to donate to organizations promoting tolerance. Simply put, it may be possible, at least in some circumstances, to “educate hate away.”

Obviously, these results should be taken with some caution. The results were overwhelmingly concentrated among students from college-educated households, and some students responded less positively to social tolerance indicators after the experiment. But in an age where many schools have become platforms for hatred and critical race theory, any improvements in tolerance or support for civil liberties are heartening.

The arts may not be a silver bullet that will alleviate all our educational woes. But, where schools diligently and faithfully implement them, they may have a noteworthy impact on student achievement, student wellbeing, and our civil society as a whole.

■ *School Choice and Public Schools*

In March, Alabama became the 11th state to pass universal education savings accounts (ESAs), which allocate public funds for families to use on private school tuition, supplies and materials, additional tutoring and services, home-school, and, in some states, technology and transportation.

It has quickly become apparent that ESAs are — rightfully — the policy tool of choice for school choice advocates and broader education reformers alike. They offer the most bang for taxpayer buck in durability, flexibility, and educational innovation. Moreover, no matter how good the public schools are in any area, a one-size-fits-all approach can never adequately meet every family’s unique needs.

What often gets lost in the hoopla surrounding private school choice, however, is that school choice can and increasingly does exist for public schools as well. Far from destroying the public school system in its entirety, the school choice movement stands to instead incentivize public education to compete (in the Adam Smith sense), to innovate, and to directly respond to the interests and needs of the families they serve. Considering American education’s perpetual reluctance to embrace new ideas or challenge established ed-school orthodoxies, this shock to the system should be very much welcome.

Many states, including Arizona, Arkansas, and West Virginia, that have passed universal educational savings accounts, are partnering private school choice with universal open enrollment, which allows public school students to freely transfer within and between

districts. Not only might these policies save public schools that might otherwise close due to declining student enrollment, but they may also boost academic performance and force district operating budgets to become more efficient. Both taxpayers and students win in this scenario.

But even private school choice programs in and of themselves have positive effects on the surrounding public schools. When public schools are faced with new and innovative competition from private schools, they have a clear incentive to improve themselves to avoid losing students. While these improvements are not necessarily game-changers in and of themselves, there is a developing body of literature indicating that these incentives translate into increased achievement among students who remain loyal to public schools.

The advancement of public and private school choice programs alike should generate meaningful, if modest, improvements to American schools in general. If nothing else, the literature is increasingly clear that expanding educational freedom in no way obliterates the public school system.

■ *The Potential for Merit Pay*

In 2015, the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) in Texas introduced a radical new teacher salary schedule, called the Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI). Rather than paying teachers the traditional way — based on how many degrees and years of classroom experience they had — Dallas implemented a complicated formula that would instead pay teachers based on their evaluation scores.

The program was immediately controversial. Though teachers' unions in Texas lack formal collective bargaining power and are unable to strike, they are still capable of causing quite the ruckus when motivated. They contended that the TEI was unfair to experienced, well-credentialed teachers, and that the policy would not only fail to move the needle on student achievement but also drive

good teachers away from DISD entirely.

The unions appear to have been wrong on both counts. As of early 2020, DISD has retained 100 percent of its “master-level” teachers (some of whom earn six-figure salaries) and 93 percent of its slightly-lower “Proficient II” level teachers. There has been little evidence of a mass exodus of teachers from DISD, and those teachers who have left are generally those who had not been performing nearly as well. In other words, when you pay good teachers more, it encourages them to stay in the district.

In addition, the TEI does seem to have moved the needle on student achievement. A 2023 working paper noted that DISD experienced consistent improvements in its math and reading scores between 2015 and 2019 — far more than a synthetic control district — not a

Rather than paying teachers the traditional way — based on ... years of classroom experience they had — Dallas implemented a complicated formula ... based on their evaluation scores.

formal district — without the TEI experienced in the same timeframe.

Considering that Dallas is an urban district with many disadvantaged students, these consistent improvements are noteworthy and to some extent remarkable.

Texas is working to scale the TEI statewide. In 2019, the Texas Legislature created the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) to reward effective teachers in high-need or rural areas with dramatically higher salaries. Although there is not yet quality data regarding TIA outcomes, the high-quality administrators and principals I study alongside at Texas A&M are constantly clamoring for TIA recognition in their districts. If there wasn't something to it, they would not be so motivated.

There are many challenges to merit

pay programs, and they may be impossible to implement in areas where teachers' unions have a great deal of formal power. Nevertheless, despite their unpopularity with some groups, they do seem to generate results. At the very least, they give parents and advocates something else to fight for.

■ *Conclusion*

The state of American education is collectively bleak. Around the country, kids struggle to read, the types of values needed for effective participation in a liberal democracy are on the decline, and widespread social media use has been a nightmare for discipline and behavior.

Despite these trials and tribulations, however, there are still reasons for optimism about American schools. Mississippi has shown that an effective, phonics-based literacy curriculum can

overcome great socioeconomic challenges. The arts community has used rigorous research to prove that there is a clear place for them in public education. The school choice movement will stimulate competition within public school districts, and between public and private schools, both of which may stimulate improvements. And Dallas has paved the way for effective merit pay programs despite union opposition.

The road ahead will be challenging, but the nation may yet still reap rewards. The path is lit. It is on the rest of us to follow it.

GARION FRANKEL is a Ph.D. student in PK-12 educational leadership at Texas A&M University. He also has forthcoming academic publications in the *Independent Review* and the *Journal of School Choice*.

Anti-Gentrifiers Gone Wild

by STEVEN MALANGA

America's housing shortage, rooted in an acute building slowdown that began during the 2008 financial meltdown, has caused an alarming rise in the cost of owning or renting a place to live. Policymakers across the political spectrum have offered useful ideas to boost the construction of new homes. In some markets, the ambitious goal is to double the annual production of housing units.

Unexpectedly, however, fierce resistance to such ideas has come from an unlikely source: local housing advocates and allied politicians.

British sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term "gentrification" in 1964, after observing that working-class London neighborhoods were being "invaded" and transformed by middle-class residents. The monied newcomers, Glass said, bought modest places and then upgraded them, driving prices higher; many existing residents found themselves "displaced," she argued. The term "displacement" became central to the concept of gentrification.

In America, however, this concern was hardly the biggest issue facing many cities, particularly in the Northeast and Midwest. Starting in the mid-1960s, as industrial jobs fled cities and crime rose, middle-class residents headed for the suburbs. Urban populations contracted significantly, resulting in the widespread abandonment of residential and commercial properties—a process accelerated by the race riots of the late 1960s in dozens of American cities. New York City's population fell from 7.9 million in 1970 to 7 million a decade later; owners deserted tens of thousands of buildings. Devastated by riots in 1967, Newark saw its population plummet from 405,000 in 1960 to 329,000 in 1980, and the city kept shrinking for another decade. Detroit's population peaked at 1.85 million in 1950.

Even Sunbelt metropolises like Salt Lake City witnessed a pause in their rapid growth, and then a population decline beginning in the late 1960s.

Federal and local policymakers responded with programs to bolster cities

began snapping up Bushwick properties. Annual production of housing rose sevenfold within a decade. Bushwick is transformed from how it looked a half-century ago, with a different, more diverse demographic makeup.

Protesters in Detroit, for example, battled efforts to renovate abandoned buildings and wore shirts emblazoned: "Don't Brooklyn My Detroit"

and neighborhoods, including tax credits for urban investment and direct building subsidies. But many of these efforts yielded little, overwhelmed by growing urban disorder. By the late 1980s, New York City still had in its possession properties with thousands of units of housing, left vacant and derelict for years.

■ *Reversing Fortunes*

Municipal fortunes began to improve only in the 1990s, when, with New York leading the way, cities started winning the war on crime and gaining back people and investment. Even so, it took years for many blighted areas just to replace what they had lost; displacement was hardly an issue.

The once-thriving blue-collar neighborhood of Bushwick in Brooklyn is a good example. It had endured an extended decline, starting in the mid-1960s, as crime exploded, arson became endemic, and riots tore it apart. Its population cratered from 138,000 in 1970 to just 93,000 in 1980.

Abandoned, uninhabitable buildings pockmarked its streets. It wasn't until the late 1990s, as crime plunged, that developers, finding unused land to build on, old industrial buildings to repurpose, and young urbanites willing to move to the no-longer-so-dangerous neighborhood,

But such makeovers, even when they take place slowly and include little evidence of widespread dislodgment of residents [Bushwick's population remains smaller than it was in the 1960s] spark anti-gentrification defiance. In Bushwick, community groups rallied against new construction; students of a mostly Hispanic school painted a mural depicting newcomers as vultures. Brooklyn's overall revival, meantime, became an object lesson for community groups in other cities.

Protesters in Detroit, for example, battled efforts to renovate abandoned buildings and wore shirts emblazoned: "Don't Brooklyn My Detroit"—a startling slogan, considering the Motor City's long, sad deterioration.

■ *Financial Crisis & COVID*

Given the misperceptions around gentrification, it was inevitable that a sharp spike in housing prices, precipitated by a construction bust following the 2008 financial crisis, would bring louder cries of displacement. From a peak of nearly 2 million housing units completed by developers in 2006, annual output slumped to just 584,000 homes in 2011. Average annual new housing construction fell by more than half in the eight years after the 2008 crash, leaving the country with a shortfall

of nearly 4 million housing units by 2020.

Restarting that market, even after demand rose, has proved difficult. Skilled tradesmen were harder to find after the post-2008 building slump pushed some laborers out of the industry. Later, Covid shutdowns hobbled construction, and worldwide supply-chain disruptions caused shortages of building materials. All these developments sent prices soaring. A growing thicket of local zoning and environmental requirements have also made building new housing harder and thus more expensive, in some areas.

Increasingly, when builders have built, they've focused on producing pricier housing, as their own costs have skyrocketed. Housing prices more than doubled between 2012 and 2022, squeezing affordability up and down the income scale. Many buyers then began "buying down," looking for cheaper housing in poorer neighborhoods that they might not previously have considered.

Even so, many still blame gentrification for our current housing woes. A survey of California voters found that just 13 percent believed that the state's housing crisis resulted from underbuilding. Voters were more likely to point to the proliferation of monied tech-industry workers and an influx of foreign buyers. They can be excused for thinking this way, given how the press handles the housing crisis.

■ *Climate & Carbon*

As if to harden opposition even further, community advocates and academics now identify new types of gentrification that they claim victimize poorer urban residents. "Climate gentrification" refers to how climate-related environmental changes, such as rising seas, may transform neighborhoods, resulting in winners and losers. For instance, press reports reflect worries that wealthy residents, who formerly sought prime beachfront locations in places like Florida, are now starting to migrate inland, potentially driving up prices in other areas. The process is playing out around Miami Beach, advocates say, as



Anti-gentrification protesters in New York City. (Photo: Pacific Press)

developers head to nearby higher ground to invest, raising fears in traditionally minority communities like Little Haiti, which is seeing new development, that its character will change irreversibly.

Closely related is "carbon gentrification," when efforts to cut carbon emissions lead to changes that residents fear will drive them out. In this view, when tech firms like Amazon or Google expanded in Seattle's city center, and many of their youthful employees decided to live downtown, where they could walk or bike to work, instead of using cars, carbon gentrification resulted. What many urbanists would see as a triumph of city life—greater density leading to lower emissions—was viewed locally as a threat. Critics say that the wealthier new residents consumed more than current inhabitants, raising the neighborhood's total emissions, anyway. In other words, the densification of neighborhoods, once considered model urban planning, works only if a community attracts the right kind of new residents: not well-compensated tech workers, apparently.

Many low-income residents complained for years about the decline of city parks in their neighborhoods. Over time, cities sought to address those concerns, restoring old parks and adding new ones in low-income areas. That strategy has been enormously successful, providing

people with better recreation and helping to attract new residents. But now comes the charge: "green gentrification." Community activists have tried to block some new parks, or put severe restrictions on the revitalization of existing parks, seeking to stave off another purported threat to current residents.

■ *Renovation*

One strategy of anti-gentrifiers is to admonish entrepreneurs for "enabling" gentrification. In Indianapolis, a mother-daughter team that restores old, often-abandoned homes under the name Two Chicks and a Hammer have fixed up and resold some 100 residential properties over the past 15 years. Hosts of a popular HGTV remodeling show, Good Bones, the pair caught flak from activists for reviving properties in the Fountain Square section of Indianapolis—a formerly working-class community that now shows signs of upscaling. The renovators defend themselves by pointing out that they revive properties that no one wants in a city short of housing.

Progressives in many industries, some only tangentially connected with housing, are now told to examine their consciences to see how they might have abetted gentrification. A San Francisco restaurant critic attended a workshop held by a "progressive culinary think

tank,” which asked participants to discuss gentrification. Afterward, she published a Cultural Revolution–style self-examination, titled “Am I Fueling Gentrification in the Bay Area?” She described how the arrival of the kind of trendy restaurants that she reviews is often an early signal of a neighborhood’s upswing and how activists increasingly worry about things like “food gentrification.”

■ **Land Trusts & Profit**

The consequences of the anti-gentrification philosophy are evident in misguided policies that seek to stem gentrification, but at the cost of a productive, efficient housing market. Land trusts controlled by community groups and governments are multiplying, wielding millions of dollars to buy up property to limit market-rate housing and stall neighborhood change. By some estimates, more than 300 land trusts now operate in America. Their numbers are likely to grow rapidly.

Chicago, meantime, has created a Housing Trust division to buy and manage properties in potential gentrification areas, at least in the government’s estimation. New York City formed an initiative linking 14 land trusts in East Harlem and other areas of the city. New York legislators have proposed a bill that would give the trusts first rights to land when an owner lists a property for sale.

Most of the trust-owned properties get developed into subsidized rentals or owner-occupied homes—but with a twist. An owner seeking to sell a land-trust property will be restricted in the profits he can make. A Minneapolis land trust keeps 75 percent of any gain when an owner sells. A Houston land trust lets an owner sell for a profit, but only up to an amount that equals a 1.5 percent increase annually in value. Someone purchasing such a property ten years ago for \$100,000, in other words, would be able to sell it today for only about \$116,000. With the average rise in housing prices around the country during that period, the house’s

true market value might be more than \$200,000.

Eventually, the value of trust properties will fall well below the cost of similar housing valued at market rates. That makes these houses desirable to tenants who want to stay in them and gives the trust operators enormous power, as they get to decide who lives in them. But one thing residents buying into trust properties won’t be able to do is build significant equity, and therefore wealth, in their homes.

■ **Conservation Districts**

Gentrification fear is so intense that politicians can work at cross-purposes on housing. Even as they pour money into government-subsidized housing, they’re also using anti-gentrification tools to restrict or slow housing construction. Consider the proliferation of so-called conservation districts. These emerged from the historic-preservation movement, which saw New York and other cities, starting in the 1960s, declare certain neighborhoods worth preserving architecturally and curb building or rebuilding there. Though originally meant to protect distinctive historical architectural features of neighborhoods, these districts often expanded into a mechanism to thwart all change.

Now, cities have created a new kind of preservation district, where local residents get to determine how to manage their neighborhoods’ construction, often resulting in yet more tight limits on new development.

Cities are also designating cultural districts that activists want to shield from gentrification. San Francisco, suffering one of the nation’s worst housing shortages, has ten such districts based on demographics and sexual orientation, including Japantown, the African American and Pacific Island districts, the Transgender Cultural District in the Tenderloin, and the Leather and LGBTQ Cultural District in the South of Market neighborhood. To qualify, an area must have many residents belonging to “a specific cultural,

community or ethnic group.”

Once upon a time, trying to protect a community’s current racial or ethnic makeup might have been deemed illegal housing discrimination; today, it amounts to government-approved anti-gentrification policy.

All this effort seeks to disrupt a process that rarely causes the harm to current residents that critics claim and, in fact, often helps them. A recent study by New York University researchers tracked children from Medicaid-eligible homes living in gentrifying areas. They found no greater levels of movement out of those neighborhoods by these families, compared with the movement of similar families in non-gentrifying places. The study found, too, that those who remained as areas gentrified saw higher growth in income and lower poverty levels than similar families in neighborhoods that weren’t changing. Previous research had found comparable benefits for lower-income residents in gentrifying zones, including reduced crime, better schools, and less inequality.

Yes, over time, the population of any community changes—but this is normal turnover that occurs everywhere. Politicians, community activists, and the press, however, often mistake or mislabel that turnover as forced displacement. Often, when activists and politicians protest such change, what they’re really objecting to is a new dynamic that might see a neighborhood’s politics and power structure change, along with its population. Much of the current movement against gentrification, in other words, isn’t really about displacement. It’s a struggle for control. The losers are the residents of these places, who come to believe that their community getting better will somehow turn out worse for them.

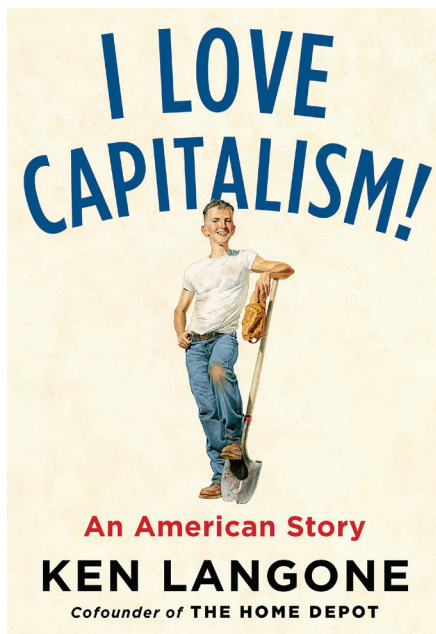
Usually, the opposite is true.

STEVEN MALANGA *is the senior editor of City Journal and a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute. A version of this article appeared in City Journal; it is adapted with permission.*

Beach Reading

reviews by SHOSHANA BRYEN

The upheaval in parts of our country makes the idea of a beach vacation even more compelling than usual. But you can't leave your concerns behind entirely, so take these books off your shelf and look for the best ways forward. Each has a longer review in an issue of inFOCUS Quarterly (date supplied). But never mind the review – read the books.



I Love Capitalism

Ken Langone (Spring 2019)

Start with a mood-lifter. This is the happiest book going about economics, economies, people making money, and people spending it. Capitalism, contrary to the rising flock of young “socialists” who refuse to look at the socialist hell-hole that is our sad neighbor Venezuela, is the best way ever devised to let people rise, live well, spend money, and give it away in large chunks...

Capitalism is not a charitable institution, but capitalism provides the means for charitable people to help

others. Langone and his wife made a gift to NYU Medical School that made the institution tuition-free.

Capitalism, then, is the mechanism by which people can start with very little, work very hard, and end up better off. Not necessarily millionaires, but, according to Langone, no matter how many rungs you climb on the ladder, you are obliged to share your success. People across the book rise and Langone enjoys watching and helping...

Capitalism, which allows for maximum personal input into lives and business, is best able to account for all of those differences and reward them in the marketplace. No, it isn't perfect. Yes, some people have less. Some people will have more and some of those won't share. Langone regards it as an article of faith – he is a religious man – that those having more have to have a conscience.

Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick (Fall 2021)

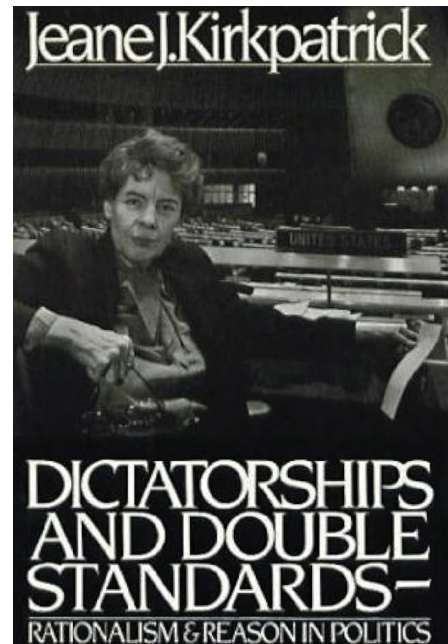
You Were Warned: The movement is:

- Universal
- Teleological
- Final
- Comprehensive
- Moral
- Promising an end to alienation

Can you name it? Whether you can or not, the late Jeane J. Kirkpatrick's *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics* is your next important read.

And hurry up.

In his 1967 gubernatorial inaugural address, Ronald Reagan said, “Freedom is a fragile thing and it's never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by way of inheritance; it must be fought for and defended



constantly by each generation.”

If a generation is normally defined as 20-30 years, we're late.

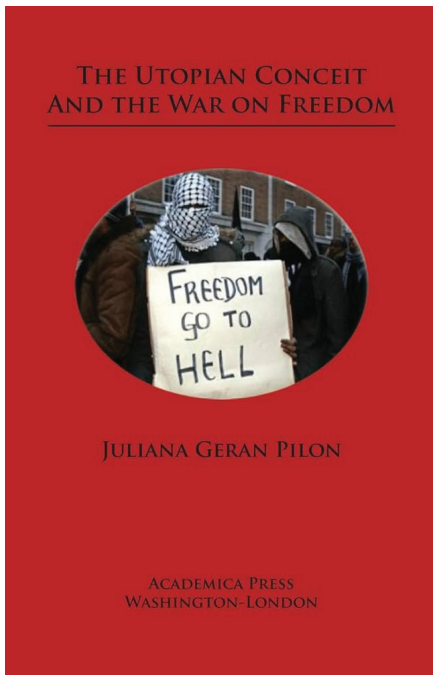
In one of his rare public pessimistic moments, Reagan added in his gubernatorial address that freedom “comes only once to a people. And those in world history who have known freedom and then lost it have never known it again.”

Published in 1982, *Dictatorships and Double Standards* is not easy, but it is crucial.

The Word-Deed Connection: The Utopian Conceit and the War on Freedom

Juliana Geran Pilon (Winter 2020)

Pilon spotlights the repeated word-deed connection, from an ideology that must not be contradicted to the necessary mass slaughters of those – early Christians, the bourgeoisie, capitalists, kulaks, natives, blacks, whites, Jews, Zionists or any “other” depending on time and place – whose beliefs or very existence contradict the true believers.



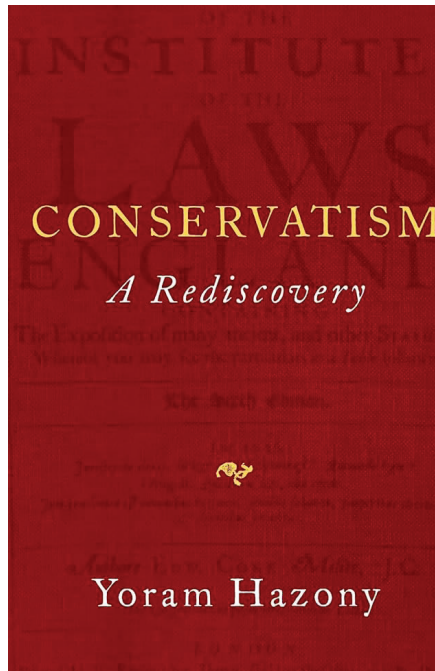
Americans can hear the one-size-must-fit-all demand for perfectibility, for utopia, in the intolerance of today’s “woke progressives.” The anti-liberal left detests the capitalism that sustains it – capitalism resting on private property and the personal liberty to acquire and use it.

They promise a perfectly equal, perfectly just, essentially classless society here, and, if not now, then soon. As soon as the remaining class enemies, enemies of the people, of the faith, of the race, of the party can be eliminated.

The utopian conceit has been especially dangerous for Jews.

In their pursuit of earthly utopia, with themselves in charge, too many Western intellectuals reject the classical liberalism of the Founders who led the American Revolution. Geran Pilon recalls that these widely read practical men of experience did not overthrow an existing social order yet devised something new on Earth. This was constitutionally limited government, strong enough to protect individual citizens enjoying their God-given rights including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but lacking power to disregard or dispose of those rights.

**To Ponder and Discuss:
Conservatism: A Rediscovery**
Yoram Hazony (Fall 2023)



This is the political philosophy class you didn’t take in college; actually, it’s probably better than the political philosophy class you didn’t take in college.

Hazony provides lots of information, draws very disconcerting conclusions, and asks disturbing questions – much of it politically incorrect by today’s definition. Which is the point. Hazony, chairman of the Edmund Burke Foundation and president of the Herzl Institute, is an unabashed proponent of British political philosophy and its conservative American extension, leading to the sort of representative democracy we have, and disdainful of American political liberalism.

And that’s OK, he posits. Check out this politically incorrect thesis: “Not everyone is equal in deserving honor.”

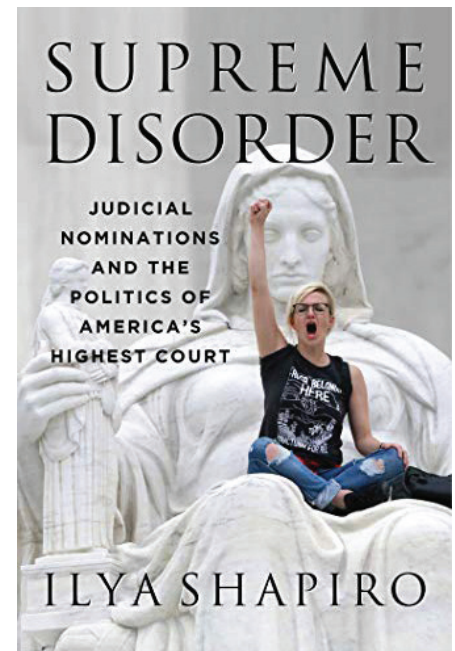
Discipline, personal and governmental, is a key to freedom and democracy. The list of obligations for a citizen in actual “democracy promotion” is long. Have we lost the discipline the Founding Fathers believed necessary to hold a country together – or even

to hold a society together – or even to hold a family together? Hazony is not a defeatist, but he recognizes that those who choose the “conservative” route will end up working harder.

Wherever you fall on the liberal/conservative spectrum, you will find yourself wanting to argue with Hazony. Better would be to argue with your friends and especially your political adversaries in search of that common ground that has held the United States together for nearly 250 years. And, perhaps for the next 250.

**Return to the Founders’
Constitution: Supreme
Disorder**

Ilya Shapiro (Winter 2021)



Through Reconstruction up until the New Deal, legislators legislated, and the Supreme Court measured legislation against the Constitution. The advent of media – and now social media – brought citizens across the country into the halls of power, peeking under the table and over the shoulders of powerbrokers. This creates an apparently irresistible temptation for politicians to become actors, and journalists to become “media personalities.”

Under those circumstances, the selection and vote for a nominee becomes

an event in a way it never had been before. And Justices are now understood to sit on the Court to advance policy – the policy of the political party that appoints them. The politician’s temptation becomes planning on a Justice making policy for the country, instead of evaluating the constitutionality of measures enacted by the legislative branch and signed into law by the Executive.

It also allows Congress to evade its responsibilities by writing broad outlines of law, then commanding the Executive Branch to write policy rules and regulations, when Congress should write laws, not hopes and dreams.

Therein lies the problem, according to Shapiro.

The question of the court’s legitimacy is primarily one posed by progressives. But, it isn’t the Court that has failed the American people. The problem is that the Court is presently filling in for the inability of Congress to legislate.

President Abraham Lincoln was both timely and prescient in 1861, when he said, “If the policy of the government upon vital questions...is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court... the people will have ceased to be their own rulers.”

■ **Need More? Try These:**

If Not Us, Who; If Not Now, When? Indispensable Nation

Robert J. Lieber (Winter 2023)

“Indispensable” should not be confused with correct – or capable. An “indispensable nation” should never be confused with a country that always does the right thing or does it well. That said, Robert Lieber’s *Indispensable Nation* is probably an indispensable book.

He dissects the candidates for the title of “indispensable nation,” the United States, Europe (more than a notion but not a nation), Russia, and China. The chapter on Europe is worth the price of the book

LAWRENCE J. HAAS

THE
**KENNEDYS
IN THE WORLD**

How Jack, Bobby, and Ted Remade America’s Empire



The Kennedys in the World: How Jack, Bobby and Ted Remade America’s Empire

Lawrence J. Haas (Spring 2021)

The Limits of American Idealism: The Kennedy brothers had a plan to remake non-Western and non-democratic countries over in our image – to help them, to save them. They never considered that those people might not want to or might not be able to. No one asked, “What if we push them into is NOT a version of ourselves, but a rift that allows communists, or jihadists, or anarchists or other despots to gain power?”

For all of the good intentions, there are limits to what American idealism can do; limits to what even Kennedys could do. On the other hand, where the Kennedy brothers were openly patriotic and admiring of the American political system and Western Civilization, today’s political leaders are running the other way.

Ruled or Governed? Young Patriots

Charles Cerami (Fall 2020)

Ruled is when someone tells you what to do because they think they know better or God tells them or they

have more money or the right color skin or more weapons or less compunction about stealing, beating, or killing people who don’t conform. [Slaves of any color in any country in any historical or present-day context have experience with this, as do Jews, Uighurs, Tutsis, Armenians, women, and others.] Governed is when people are periodically vested by the voters with the authority to represent the needs and wishes of their constituents in the laws they pass. Governed well is when the laws they pass protect the people they serve – including from the government. The operative words are “represent” and “serve.”

The great genius of the United States is that the Founders believed two things: that governing was better than ruling and that the nature of the American people and their government would evolve toward better. They did not believe in perfection.

And always:

The Israel Test

George Gilder (Winter 2024)



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



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■ *The Last Word ...*

Opening Rafah

There were always two ways to open the humanitarian corridor from Egypt through Rafah, which Cairo nailed shut in early November.

One was for the US to grovel; that failed. *The Wall Street Journal* reported in February that Egyptian officials threatened the Egypt-Israel peace treaty could be suspended if Israel entered Rafah, or if any of Rafah's refugees moved into Sinai.

Preventing refugees in a war zone from finding safe haven — even temporarily — is, if not a war crime, then totally uncivilized. Northern Sinai is almost entirely empty, and a temporary military facility could easily have been established there. Even NPR remarked on it.

While fruitlessly begging Egypt, the US was threatening Israel. President Joe Biden said. "If they go into Rafah, I'm not supplying weapons."

As Israel persevered, the US turned again to Egypt, pleading for supplies to enter. But Egypt even more firmly closed the border, leaving aid trucks "rotting in the sun," according to Reuters.

Undeterred by American threats, Israel successfully moved more than 900,000 Palestinians out of Rafah and took the Philadelphi Corridor.

That always was the second option.

Then, things began to make sense. Israel has discovered nearly 700 tunnels inside Gaza, of which at least 70 are known to go into Sinai.

Look backward from there.

Egypt, much as it fears the Muslim Brotherhood, of which Hamas is the Palestinian branch, couldn't refuse the benefits associated with the subway-sized tunnels from Gaza into Egypt. And those benefits are tied to Iran, Hamas's master. As a side gig — as the kids say — Palestinians who wanted to leave Gaza could get a visa through Egypt for about \$10,000 plus tip.

Egypt is still slow walking the supplies through the Israeli-controlled Keren Shalom crossing. But to the extent that they enter, the supplies are a blessing for the people of Gaza.

How the Israeli operation in Rafah plays out and how Israel ensures the security of its border and of its citizens remains unclear. What is clear, however, is that the US should have taken Israel's position from the beginning and worked with its ally against a monstrous enemy.

That, however, was always unlikely.