

Lessons for an Unserious Superpower

*The “Scoop” Jackson Legacy
and US Foreign Policy*

Nicholas Eberstadt

April 2024



AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

Lessons for an Unserious Superpower

*The “Scoop” Jackson Legacy
and US Foreign Policy*

Nicholas Eberstadt

April 2024

AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

© 2024 by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. All rights reserved.

The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) is a nonpartisan, non-profit, 501(c)(3) educational organization and does not take institutional positions on any issues. The views expressed here are those of the author(s).

American Enterprise Institute
1789 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
www.aei.org

Executive Summary

Although policy research typically focuses on “lessons learned,” this report examines “lessons forgotten.” It argues that the conduct of US foreign policy in the decades since the collapse of the Soviet empire has been marked by a carelessness, even fecklessness, made possible by today’s historically unprecedented and overwhelming preponderance of American power and wealth. As the extraordinary and unnatural surfeit of US power diminishes, Americans will have to reacquaint themselves with once familiar precepts for protecting and promoting US interest in a dangerous world. To illustrate what such a “relearning” might entail, the report attempts to apply the vision of Sen. Henry M. “Scoop” Jackson (D-WA), one of the great US foreign policy voices during the Cold War era, to some of the growing international threats facing the US and the Pax Americana today.

Lessons for an Unserious Superpower

The “Scoop” Jackson Legacy and US Foreign Policy

NICHOLAS EBERSTADT

Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-WA), who was born in 1912 and passed away in 1983, is a largely forgotten political figure.¹ That he is not better known is in a sense unsurprising, considering the confusion and disrepair so evident in US foreign policy these days.

Jackson—known always as “Scoop”—was one of America’s great voices on foreign policy and national security. From his perch in the US Senate, where he served for three decades, Jackson could always be trusted to bring vision, clarity, and principle to debates over America’s foreign policy in the early postwar era.

Those qualities—vision, clarity, and principle—often seem conspicuously wanting in American foreign policy nowadays—and not just under the current administration, but for some considerable time. Americans might benefit from recollecting what these qualities looked like when put in practice in the not-so-distant past—and likewise from considering what they might look like if applied today. With a presidential election later this year, now would seem an especially good time to take measure of where America is in the world—and where it should be. Scoop Jackson’s legacy has much to offer as we reflect on these questions.

The Cold War: A Now-Forgotten Era

Forty years ago, when Sen. Jackson passed away, the global arena was vastly different from today. Americans raised in the post-Soviet

4 LESSONS FOR AN UNSERIOUS SUPERPOWER

era may have difficulty recognizing, much less fully comprehending, the enormity of those differences.

In the early 1980s—and in the decades preceding—the world was a dangerous place, and serious Americans recognized as much. A Cold War was raging. The globe was largely divided into mutually hostile ideological blocs, led respectively by the United States and the Soviet Union, with little direct contact, trade, or communication.

America was engaged in a wholesale global contest against Soviet Communism, informed by foundational thinking from documents such as “The Long Telegram”² and NSC 68.³ For the US, that contest entailed a worldwide network of military alliances and American bases, endless efforts to combat Soviet propaganda and make the case for freedom with our available communications media (instruments that may look antique or even primitive to a modern eye), and recurrent, often costly, proxy wars in far-off lands.

The USSR was a formidable adversary, commanding what was then widely believed to be the world’s second-largest economy, as well as the largest arsenal of nuclear weapons. Hard though this may be to recall today, 40 years ago, China was a decidedly secondary global player, with scant economic, military, and technological capabilities—just starting to open up under Deng Xiaoping.⁴

The prospect of direct superpower conflict was never far off. On September 1, 1983, for example—the day Scoop passed away—a Soviet jet fighter shot down a South Korean passenger plane that had inadvertently crossed into Soviet airspace, killing its 269 civilians, including a US congressman, and precipitating one of many Cold War-era crises that could potentially have spun out of control. Back then, nuclear war was not “thinking the unthinkable.”⁵ Rather, it was the everyday background noise in international strategy and public diplomacy, and it was operationalized through such US doctrines as “extended deterrence” to defend otherwise indefensible outposts of freedom, such as West Berlin.

Today, that epic geopolitical saga is in the rearview mirror for most Americans—forgotten altogether or treated as quaint and

ancient history. When discussed, it sometimes elicits ironic eye rolls. Witness the current “what time is it?” meme,⁶ mocking politicians who sound “Reagan era”: a vogue today even for some recent presidential aspirants.

But as this great forgetting may suggest, Americans are less interested in, and seemingly less capable of, strategic thinking today, a generation after the collapse of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War, than they were back in Sen. Jackson’s day.

This slackening of disposition and thought is not an inexplicable mystery. There are obvious reasons for it. Quite simply, neither the American public nor its elected representatives have needed the geopolitical acumen of their predecessors for quite some time.

Our newfound diffidence about national security and international strategy relates directly to the victory of the US alliance in the Cold War. That event was of such monumental significance as to result in a historically unprecedented preponderance of global power—economic, financial, scientific, and military—for the United States.

With greater global reach than any nation or empire ever before—greater than the British, Romans, and even the Mongols—Americans after the Cold War could afford to engage in international sleepwalking and embark on a prolonged adventure in substandard political leadership, with little immediate risk to themselves. And so, for better or worse, we did just that—under Democratic and Republican administrations alike—for decades.

But our latest American holiday from history may be running its course. The extraordinary, utterly unprecedented surfeit of US power is diminishing. As the US edge reverts to more historically familiar proportions, Americans may no longer have the luxury of expensive indulgences and self-delusions in domestic and foreign policy.

Increasingly, we will feel the consequences of our national actions—sometimes painfully. And so, Americans will have to relearn much of what they have unlearned about geopolitics and national security since the Berlin Wall came down.

Americans under age 45 face the steepest learning curve of all. These men and women—some well into middle age by now—have known only a world with overwhelming American power, wherein international conflict seemed an aberration rather than the norm, and in which (at least for Americans) state resources are commonly regarded as, basically, a free good.

Americans under age 45—the generations too young to remember the Cold War era themselves—now account for nearly 200 million people—that is, for the overwhelming majority of our citizens and a substantial minority of eligible voters.⁷ And with every passing year, Americans with no recollection of the Cold War era are coming to comprise a greater share of our population and electorate.

Jacksonianism of the Scoop Jackson Variety

As we try to regain our strategic bearings at a time when national security strategy promises once again to have more immediate impact on American life, we could do much worse than to reacquaint ourselves with the basic precepts of “Jacksonianism”—of the Scoop Jackson variety.⁸ Given that Scoop and his ilk constituted a now-vanished political tendency—Congress has not had any “Scoop Jackson Democrats” for years—it is necessary to explain what he stood for in foreign policy.

Scoop Jackson’s politics did not wholly fit into intellectual categories familiar today. A member of the transition team after Ronald Reagan’s landslide 1980 electoral victory, staunch Democrat Jackson reportedly was offered the position of defense secretary but declined. While he found much to like in Reagan’s foreign policies, he deeply disagreed with “Reaganomics” domestically.

Jackson’s outlook aligned in some ways with the neoconservative intellectual and political movement of the 1970s and 1980s. One admirer even describes him as “the avatar of neoconservatism.”⁹ That compliment will mainly confuse nowadays. “Neocon” has become a term of opprobrium, associated with the unpopular

US intervention in Iraq two decades after Scoop's death rather than with neoconservatism's Cold War antecedents, whose precepts garnered wide public support. Even during the Cold War, neoconservatism was no monolith. In the late Soviet era, the movement bubbled with debate between those who endorsed Jackson's foreign policy more or less in toto and those who objected to important parts of it.¹⁰

So what was the foreign policy of a "Scoop Jackson Democrat"? As a postwar cold warrior and liberal Democrat (a term with a very different connotation back then), Scoop held a worldview comprising three basic tenets.

- First, he knew the world was a dangerous place—full of adversaries and enemies, not just "competitors." US policy had to work ceaselessly to limit their power and ability to impinge on our own prosperity, security, and freedom.
- Second, as an internationalist, Jackson was convinced that American prosperity, security, and freedom were best protected through alliances with like-minded states. Under the dictates of exigency, alliances with overseas friends who were less than perfect were also needed at times.
- There was a third signature element of Scoop's worldview, and this concerned human rights. Jackson's deep love for and commitment to the US polity—with its constitutional order, limited governance, rule of law, enshrinement of individual rights, and embrace of the "open society" (not his formulation, but one he could have readily endorsed)—led him to regard the promotion of human rights abroad as inseparable from defending freedom at home. He understood that the postwar era's international threats to the United States derived from not just the age-old pull of power politics but a modern conflict of values and ideologies. The American creed, and the postwar international order shaped and informed by that creed, was not only

anathema to totalitarians and autocrats overseas; it was deeply threatening to their own projects.

To Jackson, the Cold War struggle could not be properly understood—much less won—without championing our own basic political ideals abroad. Thus, from the early years of his Senate tenure in the 1950s, he was already castigating the Soviet Union for its egregious treatment of its subjects and its systematic violation of both religious freedom and freedom of international movement for ideas and people. In the 1970s, during the *détente* era, his Jackson-Vanik legislation¹¹ conditioned improved US economic relations with the Soviet Union on freedom of emigration from, and other basic human rights in, that country. To Jackson, defense of human rights was not just a moral imperative for US leadership. It was a strategic advantage, thanks to our “American exceptionalism.”

In his day, Jackson had to contend with two powerful sources of opposition to the vision of human rights as a “force multiplier” for US national security policy—perspectives that remain alive and well in US foreign policy circles today.

The first came from *soi-disant* “realists,” who held that ephemeral moralistic aspirations such as human rights had no place in the statesman’s or soldier’s often grim agenda for defending and promoting the national interest. To these realists, preoccupation with human rights would be a distraction at best and an invitation to dangerous blundering at worst.

Intellectually, the most important exponent of such realist thinking in Jackson’s day was former Harvard professor Henry Kissinger, a key architect of the 1970s *détente* under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. Brilliant on paper, charming and persuasive in person, Kissinger preferred to “manage” the “competition” with the Kremlin, seeking a more favorable “equilibrium” for the United States than it might otherwise obtain.

To Jackson’s way of thinking, however, a strategy that sought US-Soviet “stability” without placing human rights squarely in the calculus made the United States all but complicit in the

Soviet state's suppression of its own subjects and those in "captive nations." His point was inadvertently but vividly affirmed by Kissinger and President Ford themselves in the Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn affair of 1975. For fear of displeasing the Kremlin, the famous émigré was denied an audience at the White House, despite pleas from Jackson and many others.¹²

Evidently, self-styled realists could botch great-power politics and sacrifice moral principle at one and the same time. Fortunately, it turned out that President Reagan had no compunction about terming the Soviet Union an "evil empire" or charting a course for victory over Soviet Communism rather than mere management of the competition. Thus, with the end of the Cold War, the Jacksonian vision won out.¹³

Jackson also faced a second, different sort of intellectual challenge from a collection of voices in the 1970s who ostensibly favored human rights but were less certain about the propriety of maintaining relations with problematic US allies. Some of these voices even seemed to harbor ambivalence about the propriety of US power itself. This "New Left" point of view was associated with the radical and increasingly influential McGovernite wing of the Democratic Party, and it eventually came to be associated with President Jimmy Carter, even though he was no man of the left.

Carter, though, proved schoolmasterish and inconstant—unfortunate traits in a world leader. He scolded America to rid itself of its "inordinate fear of Communism"¹⁴ and hectored US allies (and only US allies) who failed to meet his human rights ideals. Perhaps by no coincidence, Carter's proclivity for foreign policy setbacks seemed to pave the way for Soviet advances around the world—and to whet the Kremlin's appetite for more.

Jackson and his allies had neither patience for nor sympathy with misguided—and ultimately self-defeating—international posturing under the banner of human rights. They recognized that the greatest threat to human rights around the globe was Communist power and, further, that some clearly imperfect regimes with which Washington was allied were reformable, while Marxist-Leninist rights violators most decidedly were not.¹⁵

For Jackson, pursuing human rights required discernment—a principled weighing of competing concerns in a complex and dangerous world. Thus, he could favor rapprochement with Communist China, despite Beijing’s own grave rights violations at home, so as to harry Soviet power and check its advance, without entertaining or promoting illusions about the Chinese regime. Morality played a central role in Scoop’s view of US foreign policy. Carter-style moralism, by contrast, he eschewed—and with good reason, since it led to not only confusion in US foreign policy but also setbacks overseas for the causes of freedom and human rights.

Although the Cold War is long over, the debate about human rights’ role in US foreign policy most assuredly is not. Echoes of Kissinger’s realism and Carter’s New Left moralism still reverberate in foreign policy circles today. Both perspectives still have influential proponents. There is still a strong case for Scoop Jackson’s counsel on this matter, too, notwithstanding all the momentous geopolitical changes of the past four decades.

A Scoop Jacksonian View of the Threats Facing the United States Today

How would Scoop Jackson view the global threats and opportunities facing the United States today? Of course, we cannot answer that question with complete certainty, but the foundations and principles of his worldview offer strong hints. They allow us to theorize about what a fusion of national security and human rights concerns in the Scoop Jackson tradition might look like for contemporary America. They would be put in practice in a markedly different world from the one Jackson knew, though, so we should begin by describing how the geopolitical terrain has changed since his time.

The world today is dramatically richer and more economically integrated than in 1983. Despite much faster population growth in poor regions, global per capita output has roughly doubled over the past 40 years, and per capita trade has more than tripled, both

in real terms.¹⁶ Thanks to growth and globalization, global poverty is at an all-time low. By one World Bank reckoning, the fraction of humanity living in “absolute poverty” plummeted from 45 percent in 1983 to under 10 percent in 2019 (and is likely still lower today).¹⁷

The collapse of the Soviet empire and the rise of the Chinese economy both contributed to these trends. Also reinforcing them was a revolution in communications, connecting peoples around the world as never before. In 2019, on the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly two billion airline passengers flew internationally—10 times as many as in 1983.¹⁸ By 2023, over five billion people (nearly two-thirds of the world’s population) were estimated to have access to the internet,¹⁹ while nearly seven billion people (85 percent of the world) had access to cell phones.²⁰ Those two technologies were only nascent in Scoop’s time.

For its part, the United States is now far wealthier than it was in Jackson’s day. Real US private net worth overall is nearly five times as high as in 1983—more than tripling on a per capita basis.²¹ The US dollar is the world’s reserve currency. Wealth is power. And military might is power too; US defense capabilities are still unrivaled. Current campus follies and embarrassments notwithstanding, US universities remain the envy of the world²² and, possibly, may be even more dominant than they were in Scoop’s day. And in a form of soft power we seldom consider, English is likewise even more dominant in international trade, finance, research, science, and culture than it was 40 years ago—a reign abetted by the aforementioned communications revolution, in which America’s language is the *de facto* lingua franca.²³

To be sure, there is much learned talk today, both in the US and abroad, about the supposed decline of American power and rise of multipolarity. But there always is. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the death of American global power has been greatly exaggerated—and continues to be.

This is not new. Back in the Reagan era, a bestselling historian famously warned of US “imperial overstretch”—the syndrome that had, in this telling, humbled would-be great power after

would-be great power for centuries.²⁴ But ironically, that treatise came into print less than 24 months before the fall of the Berlin Wall—and the ascendance of the US to a position of global dominance never before attained by any state or power.

Measured against the standard of a once-in-history apogee of national power (i.e., the American condition in the immediate aftermath of the USSR's downfall), it should not be difficult today to find evidence of American decline. What may surprise, instead, is the extent to which America's unnatural state of dominance has continued in the decades since Soviet collapse.

Consider: Despite China's stunning economic transformation in the decades since Scoop Jackson's death, the US at this writing accounts for almost half of total global market capitalization for publicly traded corporations.²⁵ In fact, US companies today make up just about the same share of total global market cap as they did in the early 1980s—and more than they did in the late 1980s, when talk of US imperial overstretch was in vogue.²⁶

Why does this matter? Because the valuation for equities is supposed to reflect—at least in theory—general expectations for their future profits; that is how these markets work. While some may be betting against the prospects for American capitalism in the years ahead, the world's investors do not appear to be part of that club.

America's sway is further magnified by the postwar international architecture of commercial, financial, and security arrangements the US helped build and is still central to maintaining—the institutional embodiments of our current Pax Americana. As veteran financial journalist Martin Wolf recently reminded, the US and its allies (what he calls the “US bloc”) still account for the majority of world trade, over five-sixths of international portfolio investment and foreign direct investment, and virtually all the world's convertible currency.²⁷ Though much more difficult to measure, an assessment of military capabilities today could no doubt point to a corresponding preponderance of defense forces on the side of the US bloc.

Reviewing this strategic inventory may strike some as “American triumphalism.” It is not. The US has growing international

vulnerabilities, some of which are widely known²⁸ and others that are less commonly discussed.²⁹ But overlooking or minimizing existing US competitive advantages would also be a strategic error—one that could also lead to costly and far-reaching miscalculations.

Yet the US position in the world today reflects an extraordinary juxtaposition of paradoxes. For while the United States is richer than ever before, enjoying unparalleled unilateral power in the world arena, Washington also displays a continuing fecklessness in foreign policy formulation and execution that earlier generations would not have dared—and would never have been able to afford. American post-Cold War foreign policy displays a deep and enduring streak of unseriousness, a puzzling but unmistakable proclivity for consistently subpar political leadership both at home and abroad under administrations from both political parties.

Any number of examples could be adduced from the international arena, including Bill Clinton's insouciance in the face of the al Qaeda terror network's mounting menace, George W. Bush's deep gaze into Vladimir Putin's "soul," Barack Obama's assurance that the United States could lead from behind, Donald Trump's often deliberately rude and antagonistic treatment of US allies, and Joe Biden's willful, completely unnecessary fiasco in Afghanistan. Suffice to say, the behavior and decision-making of an entire generation of American presidents has been of a quality we might describe as uncharacteristic of a superpower. Could any state *become* a superpower with the sort of leadership Washington has exhibited over the past three decades?

Let us be clear: The United States has had a very good run since the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet empire collapsed. No country has ever been as prosperous; no economy before has ever been so productive. US power—both hard and soft—is prodigious. All this has been possible despite the aforementioned fecklessness in US policy.

But unseriousness in international affairs is ultimately unsustainable, even for a nation as wealthy and powerful as the United States today. The world is a moving target—and ominous global

developments, some of them long underway, promise to force Americans to devote serious, undivided attention to national security and the international balance of power once again.

A number of menacing new developments in the international security landscape would not only catch a Scoop Jacksonian's eye but also sound alarm bells.

- Europe is once again in flames, with a seriously weakened but nonetheless ambitious and assertive Kremlin slogging into the third year of its invasion of neighboring Ukraine.
- An irredentist Iran has already cultivated an extensive and sophisticated Middle East military and terrorist network, covering or even dominating Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. Tehran is also committed to developing nuclear weapons and the ballistic missiles to deliver them against its designated enemies, chief among them “little Satan” (Israel) and “great Satan” (the United States).
- North Korea, the tiny country with the world's fourth-largest standing army,³⁰ is now a declared nuclear weapons state, has tested long-range missiles that can reach the continental United States, and is perfecting shorter-range rockets that could be used for conducting nuclear war against neighboring South Korea, a state it has long been doctrinally dedicated to eradicating.³¹
- More portentous than any other emerging threat is the rise of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the totalitarian Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that commands it. With four decades of remarkably rapid transformation, the PRC has emerged as the world's second-largest economy, the top trade partner for most countries, and a global leader in scientific and technological innovation. Its conventional and strategic forces have also rapidly modernized and continue to grow in scale and capability. The CCP is expressly hostile

to the United States and US interests, and it is increasingly confident in its expressions of this hostility. Taiwan is the most imminent but not the only potential flash point for direct Sino-US confrontation. And unlike the Soviet Union in the Cold War era, the PRC is deeply integrated into the economies of the United States and all its allies, affording the CCP opportunities for domestic political leverage against its adversaries that the Soviet Union never enjoyed.

- Finally, these four avowedly hostile actors—Beijing, Moscow, Pyongyang, and Tehran—are increasingly operating in concert. In 2022, Russia and China released a joint “no limits” declaration of their new partnership, just weeks before Putin’s decision to invade Ukraine.³² North Korean leadership has backed the Russian occupation of Ukrainian territories at the United Nations and contracted to supply ammunition to the Russian army, with Kim Jong Un publicly toasting Putin to wish for Russian victory in Ukraine.³³ Tehran is also supplying drones and possibly other military matériel to Russia for its war in Ukraine.³⁴ Iran relies on support from China, North Korea, and Russia not only diplomatically but also in its weapons of mass destruction development program. And in the wake of the October 7, 2023, pogrom in Israel by Hamas terrorists—Iranian proxy forces—these states revealed something like a four-way diplomatic coordination in defense of the indefensible that may be just a foretaste of what lies ahead internationally.

No NATO-style document (or doctrine) formalizes the coordination or reciprocal obligations and expectations of these four states. As historian Hal Brands observes, theirs is a much looser and more opportunistic “adversary alignment.” Even so, Brands cautions,

If an alliance is a group of states that cooperates to achieve shared objectives, then relations among America’s adversaries *already*

have alliance-like qualities and generate important, alliance-like effects. . . . Relationships that don't look like U.S. alliances can still magnify dangerous threats.³⁵ (Emphasis in original.)

A Scoop Jacksonian Approach to Today's World

Although our post-Cold War security landscape is increasingly complex—and strikingly different from the international environment with which Scoop Jackson contended—Scoop's "old-fashioned" approach nonetheless lends itself to application in today's world.

Now, just as 40 years ago, the fault lines in geopolitics separate the powers that respect and promote personal freedoms and human rights from those opposed to them in principle. More than that, to make the world safe for themselves, states like the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the PRC, and the Russian Federation must suppress human rights—not only at home but overseas as well.

We are not talking about classic great-power rivalry in our contests with these states. An analysis that overlooks the intrinsically ideological character of the struggle between the US-led order and those states attempting to overturn it misses the essence of geopolitical conflict today, wherein regime type and regime nature play powerful predictive roles.

For these reasons, national security and human rights were inseparable concerns for Jackson back in the era of *détente*. And to the Jacksonian eye, mistaken approaches to the human rights question from US foreign policy in the 1970s still have their advocates in Washington and the academy, half a century later.

On one side is the new generation of "realists," who regard small, endangered democracies like Taiwan and Israel—and now Ukraine too—as inconvenient and costly claimants on American power. Some of these realists go even further, arguing that the United States' entire system of military alliances constitutes a disadvantageous encumbrance for US national interests. Scoop

Jacksonians would hold that such “realists” are the ones being unrealistic, that the world and democracy are both safer thanks to the “force multipliers” incumbent in the US international security architecture, and that abandoning democratic friends overseas would have incalculable adverse implications for our country’s security.

On the other side are the descendants of the confused and superficial Carter-era approach to human rights, legatees whose contingents are represented in force at the moment in the Biden administration. The unwitting narcissism at the heart of human rights policy for the Carter administration was in taking a 1970s-style New Left critique of American society and projecting it internationally, with domestic arguments morphing into State Department *démarches* to allies and aid recipients on the receiving end.

Today’s human rights narcissists, for their part, strive to impose their position on internal US debates about sexual identity and personal autonomy onto a global “human rights” canvas. This performative, self-referential miscasting of international human rights campaigning was exquisitely illustrated by the Biden administration’s insistence on flying the rainbow flag over the soon-to-be-doomed US embassy in Kabul—virtue signaling pantomime, pitched toward a presumptive domestic constituency, unintentionally prefiguring the calamity of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan.

A Scoop Jacksonian no doubt would be mindful of the unintended consequences of domestic “therapy” masquerading as international human rights policy—and (I suspect) would cleave rather closer to fundamentals laid out in such foundational documents as the US Constitution and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.³⁶

The Scoop Jacksonian begins by observing that the greatest force for human rights in the contemporary world is American power, especially when that power is harnessed to support the Pax Americana—the postwar architecture of trade, finance, and military and security arrangements that the United States

maintains with friendly nations and treaty allies. As the sway of the United States and its friends and allies waxes, the fortunes and prospects improve for the little people all around the world—the individuals who aggregate into “global humanity.” The reverse is true for setbacks to the Pax Americana, since this almost always means a decline in rule of law, individual protections, and governmental accountability for populations in the regions affected. The ghastly fate that befell the people of Afghanistan after the Biden administration’s impulsive 2021 pullout is only the latest reminder of that truth.

To be sure, the international network of human rights non-governmental organizations, journalists, activists, lawyers, and jurists all have their honored place in advancing that cause across the world. But most of this work today is only possible because of the space that US power has opened for it via the Pax Americana, whose direct and indirect contributions to that cause are of an entirely different scale.

For the Scoop Jacksonian, therefore, the first task at hand for national security and human rights would be attending to the Pax Americana—repairing current cracks and strengthening foundations. This would entail recommitment to expanding free trade and finance with the West, attention to existing US defense alliances, and patient attention to the potentialities for cultivating new security friendships with countries not currently in the US treaty system—states in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and elsewhere.

Attending to the Pax Americana would also demand a focus on US power. US defense capabilities relaxed in the wake of the Soviet collapse. Natural enough—this was the “peace dividend” at the end of the Cold War. But times have changed, and our defense measures have not kept up with new global realities and threats.

A postwar US military force once structured to fight and win two major wars at once has been shrunk for budgetary expedience. The conceit among military planners today is that the United States could prevail against two major adversaries by winning against one of them first, then training all its resources on the second. This fanciful “win-hold-win” concept may look good to whiz

kids with whiteboards, but it does not take all that much imagination to see what could go wrong with it in practice.

At 3.6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP),³⁷ the US defense burden is currently at its lowest level since before the attack on Pearl Harbor.³⁸ That budget, furthermore, is larded with social and other spending that does nothing for actual defense capabilities. By one estimate, such falsely labeled defense spending amounted to over \$100 billion in fiscal year 2023 alone, nearly a seventh of our overall military allocation in that fiscal year.³⁹

At the same time, public finances look to be out of control. In fiscal year 2023—a post-pandemic peacetime year when the economy was not in recession—the federal deficit approached \$2 trillion, well over 6 percent of GDP.⁴⁰ Chronic borrowing has put America on a path toward ever more government indebtedness; the Congressional Budget Office now reports that by its latest projections, even in the absence of any future international emergency, the US ratio of public debt to GDP will exceed the peak levels from World War II within the next decade.⁴¹

The underfunded military and the incontinent federal budget are two sides of the same coin—reflecting a deep current aversion to discipline and sacrifice in public priorities. These “chosen flaws” require an urgent and deliberate course correction before the force of events imposes its own unforgiving variant.

At the end of the day, budgetary discipline is not only a national security issue but an international human rights issue. It is incumbent on American leaders to make this case to the public. The moral case, not just the practical one, will aid in the persuading. For a free people whose leaders require the consent of the governed for their statecraft, foreign policy is inseparable from morality.

The same can be said about the continuing spectacle on the US southern border, where the American government has, for the past three years, effectively ceded control of its own territory to waves of illegal entrants flagrantly violating America’s immigration laws. Untold millions of illegal aliens have “jumped the line” ahead of law-abiding foreign applicants for entrance to America. With a largely open southern border, people from all over the

world—including Africa, Asia, and the Middle East—are gaming the system to enter the US illegally.

The number of terrorists and enemy agents in this influx remains unknown, but some have already been detected.⁴² The open border has facilitated the poisoning of America with fentanyl and other deadly drugs pushed by Mexican narco-cartels, who are gaining footholds in our country. Refusing to address this problem sends a message to our citizens—and those abroad who wish us harm—that our country is not serious about protecting itself and, perhaps, others we have promised to assist as well. This dereliction of government duty is both a security problem and a moral problem, and most ordinary Americans recognize it as such.

Securing its own borders is something a serious government does, as a first order of business. There is no reason our government should not be able to secure its borders and deal with other international commitments *at the same time*. America did so during the Cold War—when national per capita wealth was only a fraction of what it is today. We could do so today as well, and in short order, if elected leaders in Washington took their basic responsibilities seriously. By abrogating these, our government has not only created a needless crisis at the border; it has broadcast a dangerous message about the current caliber of US leadership—one that all but invites additional challenges from hostile forces abroad.

A foreign policy that does not pass the electorate's moral "smell test" will be ultimately unsustainable. This is another link between human rights and US power, as Jacksonians would be the first to point out. Washington can amplify its moral power by claiming the high ground that rightly belongs to the United States and its allies at international organizations—first and foremost the United Nations, where our inattention has quite predictably occasioned the ugly rise of noxious politics and ideologies.

The UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) seats as its arbiters some of the world's worst violators—China and Cuba among them.⁴³ (Unbelievable as this may sound, UNHCR actually allowed Iran to chair its deliberations in Geneva in November 2023.)⁴⁴ In

the UN General Assembly, the secretary-general all but blamed Israel—yes, Israel—for the mass murder of Jews that Hamas terrorists perpetrated within Israel in October 2023.⁴⁵ Jews somehow always seem to be the canary in the coal mine in the international war against human rights, and the United States is once again in hostile territory at the UN when it comes to human rights, as it was back in the 1970s at the time of the UN General Assembly’s infamous “Zionism is racism” declaration.⁴⁶ Cleaning the UN stable will take work, but it should be worth the effort.

Assessing the Cases of China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia

A revitalized US policy, informed by the nature of regime type that lies at the heart of hostility to the Western order, could likewise marry power with principle in pushing back against China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia, the world’s new dictatorial “gang of four.” The Scoop Jacksonian perspective is not only relevant here today; it provides some welcome clarification to current thinking about how to deal with this gang. Let us consider each case separately.

North Korea. Colleagues from the US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea and I have already sketched the outlines of a strategy for addressing the North Korean nuclear problem that would depart from the past three decades of failed counter-proliferation efforts, placing human rights squarely at the forefront of the project to reduce the threat from Pyongyang.⁴⁷

Despite their differences, previous US approaches have commonly sought to negotiate a denuclearization with the Kim family regime. This is *Waiting for Godot* statecraft. The Kim family regime will never voluntarily relinquish its nuclear option, given its crucial role for Pyongyang’s strategy. The United States’ negotiation-oriented denuclearization policies have always sidelined human rights, since Pyongyang will never come to talks while that issue is on the table.

As we argued in this rethinking of North Korea counter-proliferation,

The Kim regime's greatest vulnerability is from within, from the alienation of its own people who suffer under totalitarian repression. While insisting on complete and verifiable denuclearization, the foundation of U.S. strategy should be a human rights upfront approach, a comprehensive information and influence campaign, and the advancement of the strategic aim of a free and unified Korea.⁴⁸

North Korea is a small and impoverished state. Its outsized influence on international security is not a natural feature of the world system but a flaw in it—a defect that exists largely due to our own failed policies. Better statecraft can progressively reduce the North Korean threat.

Iran. Regime-type diagnosis might likewise help prescribe more successful policies for confronting the imam's terrorist dictatorship. These would begin by recognizing the futility of attempting to appease an unappeasable government. Appeasement policies can work, and have worked in the past,⁴⁹ but only when the grievance in question is specific, limited, and resolvable. Tehran is a revisionist state committed to destroying Israel, subjecting the Middle East to greater Persian domination, and conducting unending jihad against the "great Satan" in Washington.

Saying no to appeasement for Tehran means ending, once and for all, international diplomatic negotiations to slow the march of Iranian weapons of mass destruction programs in exchange for tens of billions of dollars in unfrozen international cash. There are better ways to disrupt or derail Iran's homework projects in death sciences. And squeezing Iran's economy harshly and unrelentingly will dry up the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps's military resources too.

Tehran is the world's most heinous state sponsor of terrorism; its leadership needs to learn firsthand about retribution for

crimes against humanity. And Western power is capable of amputating Iran's overseas terror proxies, one after the next. Why wait? In the bargain, the destruction of Iran's terror phalanges will also mean the rescue of captive local populations, who have unwillingly served as the monsters' human shields.

Recognizing and leveraging the Iranian dictatorship's domestic vulnerabilities is a human rights project long overdue and a national security opportunity for the world's democracies. Iranians do not love the corrupt and unaccountable tyrants who preside over them. Mass protests against the regime have erupted repeatedly, and they have been repeatedly suppressed by brutal force.

Demographic data reveal that Iran is an urbanized, mass-education country with markedly sub-replacement fertility.⁵⁰ (Childbearing levels in Tehran, for example, appear to be comparable to those in Zurich.)⁵¹ Further, the Iranian clerisy is decrying steep declines in religious attendance; reportedly, two-thirds of the country's mosques have been closed.⁵² By such soundings, a largely secular society may already exist in Iran today, suffering beneath the grip of an Islamic dictatorship. These unhappy subjects need to know that time is not on the mullahs' side.

Russia. Russia's case demonstrates, as if more proof were needed, that repression at home and aggression abroad are two sides of the same coin for a would-be great power. The saga of the strangling of Russia's nascent democracy in the post-Cold War era is also the tale of the Kremlin's increasingly bold attacks on its neighbors and its ever more programmatic hostility to the West.

Russia's descent into menacing dictatorship took place gradually, over two decades. We are where we are today because of almost a generation of weakness and appeasement in the West's Russia policy. None of that would have surprised Sen. Jackson. We cannot turn back the hands of time, but the Western alliance can tilt what the Soviets used to call "the correlation of forces" against the Kremlin more sharply through concerted and steadfast action.

The first and foremost order of business in that regard must be the defense of Ukraine against Russia's invasion. Ukraine has fought bravely and well. Fortified with Western armaments and training, the Ukrainian defenders have inflicted heavy casualties on Russian forces. By some estimates, up to half the Russian army may already have been chewed up in the fighting.⁵³ Were he here today, Scoop Jackson would surely be telling Americans that supplying Ukraine with the weapons and matériel it needs to defend itself—for as long as it needs them—is a moral and strategic no-brainer.

Yet the current impasse over authorizing additional defense assistance for Ukraine is emblematic of the unseriousness of policymakers in Washington. A serious commander in chief would surely want to aid Ukraine *and* secure America's southern border—and a loyal opposition worth its name in Congress would surely have an interest in facilitating both objectives. It speaks to the pettiness and lack of vision in Washington today that a bickering officialdom is somehow managing to accomplish *neither* of these goals.

But Scoop Jacksonians would want more than stalemate in Ukraine or a war of attrition bleeding both sides. A full victory for Ukraine would include recovery of Crimea, annexed by Putin's Russia in 2014. If US and Western aid can help Ukrainians reclaim their own country, the message for all the world's tyrants would be clear.

The reverberations for Russia's tyranny would be profound. In the words of the late Zbigniew Brzezinski, "It cannot be stressed enough that without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire."⁵⁴

The struggle for Ukrainian victory may prove to be a long game. But the United States and its allies could embrace one immediate measure that would serve strategic and human rights objectives simultaneously in Russia policy. That would be a new round of Jackson-Vanik legislation, this time aimed at facilitating the outflow of Russia's skilled professionals.

The United States and other Western countries should want to welcome disaffected young Russian talent to our shores. These men and women, most of whom already speak English, will make fine citizens in their new homelands. As I have argued elsewhere, abetting the exodus of Russian intellectuals and technicians will spare them from the repression that may lie ahead in Russia, vitalize the economies of the United States and other countries accepting them, and sap the Kremlin's power by weakening Russia's scientific-military base.⁵⁵

China. The PRC and the CCP pose the most formidable security and human rights challenges to Pax Americana today—and the most difficult challenges for those of a modern American sensibility to assess analytically. This is because the West's open societies find it hard to comprehend how an absolutist government can be comfortable encouraging, and drawing on, the creative powers that the market can unleash.

Our mental coordinates about the mismatch between totalitarianism and market economies have been forged by the misbegotten performance of the Soviet Union and other Soviet-type economies during the 20th century. Their systematic economic failures led Westerners to conclude that Marxist-Leninist polities and other totalitarian dictatorships must fail economically too.

But China has long historical experience with grafting despotic governance onto flourishing market systems. In the thousands of years since the creation of the unified imperial state under the Qin dynasty, enlightened governance in China has waxed and waned. For many of those centuries, ruthlessly ambitious imperial political controls have coexisted with vibrant markets in China. There is “memory plastic” in the Chinese tradition that permits the totalitarian impulses of the CCP and the uncontrolled, seemingly chaotic creative destruction of the economic development process to interact in a way that has made both the economy and the dictatorship vastly stronger since Scoop Jackson's death.

The paradoxes of China's “totalitarianism with capitalist characteristics” expose the United States and the West to some new

and unfamiliar threats. Not only do PRC and CCP power put Western security at risk; they also create risks for Western freedoms that were unknown during the Cold War contest against the Soviet empire. These are threats from within, due to China's newfound capacities to interfere in the domestic politics of open societies and influence outcomes in international institutions the United States helped establish in the postwar era.

Over the past four decades, the Chinese economy has become deeply integrated into the world economy—not just the US economy but every other major Western economy too. The PRC likewise has a place at the table nowadays—often a highly influential one—in the organs of the United Nations and other instruments of global governance. None of this is accidental; rather, it is a consequence of deliberate, bipartisan, and long-standing US policy.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Washington bet that facilitating China's reentrance into the world economy would serve US interests.⁵⁶ That bet resulted in many important global benefits, including growth stimulation, inflation control, and poverty reduction. But an unintended consequence of expanded economic contact with the PRC was the creation of an archipelago of domestic constituency groups with their own financial reasons to carry water for Beijing at home. Epitomizing the problem is the NBA's servile self-censorship on Taiwan, China, and other matters that might displease the CCP, in order to preserve access to China's huge entertainment market. So too does Wall Street's recent unseemly clamor to jockey for position in Hong Kong's financial market, even though the CCP has been systematically extinguishing personal freedoms in that territory.⁵⁷

Suffice to say that nothing like this took place during the Cold War, because the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) lacked comparable trade and finance ties to manipulate. Further, the CCP penetrates and harms US society in ways Soviet leaders could only have dreamed of—relying on American consumers themselves to do the damage, whether via the poison of fentanyl or the poisonous propaganda trafficked on TikTok.⁵⁸

There is also the hardly trivial matter of the CCP's growing post-Cold War influence in institutions of global governance. The catastrophic global COVID-19 pandemic was made incalculably worse by the actions—and inactions—of the World Health Organization (WHO) under the leadership of a director general whose candidacy had been championed by the PRC. In the crucial early weeks and months of the pandemic, China's man at the WHO and his top team downplayed both the significance of the contagion and the Chinese government's responsibility for its spread. Later, the WHO leadership even assisted the PRC in corrupting international medical and scientific investigations into the origins of that Wuhan virus.

With help from collaborators in the UN family of organizations, the CCP has thus far managed to escape almost completely from any substantive accountability for the toxic behavior that needlessly cost so many lives around the world. Suffice to say, here again, that it would have been inconceivable during the Cold War for the CPSU to capture and pervert the workings of an agency of global governance to its own advantage in such a manner.

Today—well into the fifth decade of normalization of US-PRC diplomatic ties and over 40 years since the bipartisan consensus to encourage the PRC's integration into both the US economy and global governance institutions—American statecraft still lacks the language for describing, much less the conceptual framework for understanding, the new threats to security and freedom posed by China's "market totalitarianism."⁵⁹ We do not yet have a latter-day George Kennan or Paul Nitze to help us think through the ways the United States can protect itself against PRC efforts to influence the Pax Americana from within without sacrificing all the economic benefits that trade and investment with China have also created.

Even if the Chinese economy continues to slow and calcify under Xi Jinping's studiously repressive leadership, the scope and scale of PRC commercial and financial interactions with the United States and the West promise to expose open societies to domestic risks from the CCP that they never had to contend with from the CPSU during the Cold War era.

Notwithstanding the important aforementioned lacuna, most requirements of a national security and human rights policy for China in our time would probably look highly familiar to Scoop Jackson: credible defense, strong alliances with partners and friends in both the region and the world, and assiduous and intelligent counterpunching against CCP propaganda everywhere necessary.

Unwavering systematic crackdowns on the PRC's ongoing intellectual-property crime spree and China's worldwide industrial espionage network would also figure here. So, too, echoing the Cold War restrictions on technology transfers to Communist countries, would a discriminate policy of research-and-technology denial to the PRC so as to thwart the CCP's race to dominance in emerging fields of strategic significance.

But US efforts to reduce the global threats from China will lack a North Star if they are not guided by the understanding that the true menace in Chinese power today lies in the regime's commitment to denial of human rights, both at home and abroad. That insight would have been obvious to Scoop Jackson, yet it manages to elude some current foreign policy sophisticates and national security realists. Making the world safe for the CCP is a tall order. But if you understand that, you also know why the regime's military buildup abroad is mirrored by the development of an exquisitely intrusive surveillance state at home and why the very existence of a proud Uyghur minority in the PRC's western hinterlands and a free Taiwanese population just off China's shores are regarded as intolerable provocations by Beijing.

Tiny as it is in relation to the mainland, the Republic of China may actually pose a mortal threat to the PRC because it is the existence proof that Chinese civilization can not only support an open society with limited government and constitutional democracy but positively flourish with such freedom. Will the Taiwan example be remembered as a curious aberration in Chinese history or as the herald for its great future? Scoop Jackson's preference would have been unambiguous, and so should Washington's today. Freedom and democracy for China may be a distant objective. But Scoop Jackson had no problem with playing the long game.

Conclusion

Scoop Jackson's perspectives on foreign policy do not provide us with a Rosetta stone for all the challenges currently facing the United States. That would be too much to ask of any past leader, no matter how towering in his own time. Some features of our current global order are quite new, still unfamiliar to those of us who must contend with them here and now. The complex question of how to deal with extensive economic integration with an unfriendly state—our present conundrum with the PRC—is a matter for which Jackson's legacy offers few, if any, clues. This complex puzzle we will have to sort out for ourselves, without his guidance. It may not be the only one.

In a number of significant respects, though, the past may be prologue for current international questions and dilemmas. This report has argued that Americans today still have much to learn from Scoop Jackson's perspectives. Some of his answers to big questions in US foreign policy seem as fresh and powerful now as they were in his lifetime. More perhaps than anything else, he would tell Americans that US power and principle are indissolubly fused and that national security and human rights in an effective US foreign policy are not an either-or proposition. This lesson, now largely forgotten, is one that an unserious superpower could stand to relearn—both for America's benefit and for the world's.

About the Author

Nicholas Eberstadt holds the Henry Wendt Chair in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute, where he researches and writes extensively on demographics, economic development, and international security. Eberstadt is also a senior adviser to the National Bureau of Asian Research and a founding director of the US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my colleagues at the National Bureau of Asian Research, with whom I enjoyed three decades of a happy collaboration, for permission to publish this report. Thanks also to my thesis adviser, Dwight H. Perkins, who served as a sometimes adviser for Sen. Henry M. “Scoop” Jackson (D-WA), for some clarifying discussions and to Patrick Norrick for his research assistance. Any remaining errors in the text are my own.

Notes

1. This report is adapted and extended from a treatment originally prepared for the National Bureau of Asian Research in memory of Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-WA) on the 40th anniversary of his untimely death.

2. George F. Kennan's landmark 1946 cable to the State Department from the US embassy in Moscow on the ideology and thought animating Josef Stalin's Kremlin is now known as the "Long Telegram." In 1947, it was adapted into the seminal *Foreign Affairs* essay, "Sources of Soviet Conduct." From the telegram, see George Kennan, telegram to US Department of State, February 22, 1946, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/george-kennans-long-telegram>. For the famous "Mister X" essay, see George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1, 1947, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/george-kennan-sources-soviet-conduct>.

3. NSC-68 (National Security Council Paper 68), produced in early 1950 under Paul Nitze, then director of policy planning at the Department of State, lays out the strategy of "containment" that guided American foreign and security policy over the Cold War era. See US Department of State, Office of the Historian, "NSC-68, 1950," <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/NSC68>.

4. Beijing's post-1972 alignment with the US after Richard Nixon went to China attested to Beijing's weakness and fear of Moscow—not to strength. In 1984, the year of Sen. Jackson's death, China's global export totals were comparable to Iran's or Norway's. The Netherlands was exporting over three times as much as China. But China was also the world's most populous country back then. The contrast is a profile in economic backwardness. See World Bank, World Development Indicators, <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators>.

5. Quite the contrary, as polymath futurist Herman Kahn famously argued in the early 1960s, thinking through the threats and risks from a possible nuclear confrontation would actually lessen the likelihood atomic weapons would ever be used. His book-length essay on “thinking about the unthinkable” appeared months before the Cuban missile crisis. See Herman Kahn, *Thinking About the Unthinkable* (New York: Horizon Press, 1962).

6. See Kate Bachelder Odell, “What Time Is It at the Heritage Foundation?,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 5, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-time-is-it-at-the-heritage-foundation-regan-war-ukraine-military-funding-taiwan-invasion-9a3f8ece>.

7. US Census Bureau, “National Population by Characteristics: 2020–2022,” December 18, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/pepst/2020s-national-detail.html>.

8. A personal note may be in order here. Though I did not know Sen. Jackson personally, my exegesis on his approach to foreign policy is not based on book learning alone. As a young man, I knew Jackson’s friend and ally Sen. Daniel P. “Pat” Moynihan (D-OK), whose thinking on international issues aligned closely with Jackson’s. Further, as a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in the 1980s and 1990s, I had the privilege of working among quite a few of Sen. Jackson’s comrades in arms, including Jeane Kirkpatrick, Joshua Muravchik, Michael Novak, Richard Perle, and Ben Wattenberg. I also came to know others among his supporters and admirers through friendships forged at neoconservative strongholds such as *Commentary* magazine and the storied Committee for the Free World (1981–91). Though I had no direct contact with Jackson, I was able to partake of some of what we might call the “atmosphere” that surrounded him.

9. Joshua Muravchik, “‘Scoop’ Jackson at One Hundred,” *Commentary*, July–August 2012, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/joshua-muravchik/scoop-jackson-at-one-hundred>.

10. During the Cold War, not all neoconservatives were human rights proponents—or even supporters of America’s Cold War security alliances. Irving Kristol, often described as the godfather of neoconservatism, remained skeptical, even mistrustful, of the concept of human rights and used the term with quotes around it when he wrote of it. Kristol likewise remained wary of NATO and other US postwar military alliances, fearing

these discouraged our allies from making proper preparations for their own defenses.

Note that Kristol founded a foreign policy journal during the Reagan years and called it the *National Interest*. His thinking on questions of defense, strategy, and national security in some ways prefigured the current tendency known as “national conservatism.” See Irving Kristol, “Human Rights’: The Hidden Agenda,” in *The National Interest on International Law and Order*, ed. R. James Woolsey (New York: Routledge, 2003), 368–80, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351323642-27/human-rights-hidden-agenda-irving-kristol>; and Irving Kristol, “What’s Wrong with NATO?,” *New York Times*, September 25, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/09/25/magazine/what-s-wrong-with-nato.html>.

11. In 1974, Sen. Jackson and Rep. Charles Vanik (D-OH) sponsored legislation that conditioned “most favored nation” trade status on the establishment of freedom to emigrate for nonmarket economies. See Wilson Center, Kennan Institute, “U.S.-Russian Relations: The Legacy of Jackson-Vanik,” March 2, 2010, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/us-russian-relations-the-legacy-jackson-vanik>.

12. Jeff Bloodworth, “Senator Henry Jackson, the Solzhenitsyn Affair, and American Liberalism,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 69–77, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40492080>.

13. For better or worse, Dr. Henry Kissinger, who lived to the ripe old age of 100, was still offering advice on “managing” the Kremlin into his late 90s. Thus, in May 2022, just months after Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, he floated a proposed “solution” to that conflict at the World Economic Forum. According to the *Washington Post*, “Kissinger said that Ukraine should cede territory to Russia to help end the fighting . . . and urged the United States and the West to not seek an embarrassing defeat for Russia in Ukraine.” Timothy Bella, “Henry Kissinger Says Ukraine Should Concede Territory to Russia to End the War,” *Washington Post*, May 24, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/24/henry-kissinger-ukraine-russia-territory-davos>. Yet as the trajectory of the war turned in the following months, so did the “great realist’s” position on the conflict. Almost exactly a year later, he had reversed himself and, inter alia, was even arguing in favor of extending NATO

membership to Ukraine. *The Economist*, “Kissinger: For the Safety of Europe, Get Ukraine into NATO,” May 17, 2023, <https://www.economist.com/kissinger-highlights>.

14. Jimmy Carter, “Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame” (speech, University of Notre Dame Athletic and Convocation Center, Notre Dame, IN, May 22, 1977), <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-commencement-exercises-the-university-notre-dame>.

15. Jackson’s friend and ally Kirkpatrick made this point to withering effect about the Carter policy in her 1979 essay “Dictatorships & Double Standards.” Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships & Double Standards,” *Commentary*, November 1979, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/jeane-kirkpatrick/dictatorships-double-standards>.

16. Estimates derived from World Bank, GDP per Capita (Constant 2015 US\$), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.KD>; World Bank, Trade (% of GDP), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.TRD.GNFS.ZS>; World Bank, GDP (Constant 2015 US\$), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD>; and World Bank, Population, Total, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>.

17. Nishant Yonzan et al., “Estimates of Global Poverty from WWII to the Fall of the Berlin Wall,” World Bank Blogs, November 23, 2022, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/estimates-global-poverty-wwii-fall-berlin-wall>.

18. International Energy Agency, “World Air Passenger Traffic Evolution, 1980–2020,” December 3, 2020, <https://www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/charts/world-air-passenger-traffic-evolution-1980-2020>.

19. Rohit Shewale, “Internet User Statistics in 2024—(Global Demographics),” Demandsage, January 19, 2024, <https://www.demandsage.com/internet-user-statistics>.

20. Josh Howarth, “How Many People Own Smartphones (2024–2029),” Exploding Topics, December 14, 2023, <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/smartphone-stats>.

21. Derived from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Households and Nonprofit Organizations; Net Worth, Level (TNWBSHNO), <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/TNWBSHNO>; Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Personal Consumption Expenditures: Chain-Type Price Index (PCEPI),

<https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/PCEPI>; and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Population (POPTHM), <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/POPTHM>. At a bit over \$150 trillion, real private net worth in the third quarter of 2023 was 4.9 times higher than it was 40 years earlier (using the personal consumption expenditures deflator). Real per capita private net worth in the third quarter of 2023 for the US was a remarkable \$450,000—over three times its inflation-adjusted per capita level of roughly \$140,000 40 years before.

22. In the *Times Higher Education* 2024 World University Rankings, seven of the top 10 universities and 13 of the top 20 were American. *Times Higher Education*, “Best Universities in the World 2024,” September 27, 2023, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/best-universities-world>. Other global ranking efforts come up with broadly similar evaluations of US predominance in listings of top universities. See, for example, Mark J. Drozdowski, “Are American Universities Still the Best in the World?,” BestColleges, November 9, 2023, <https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/2021/10/27/is-us-higher-education-still-the-best-in-the-world>.

23. More specifically, the dialect of American known as English. Estimates here are necessarily imprecise but nonetheless informative. Berlitz, for example, reckons that English is the top global language today, with almost 1.5 billion speakers. Berlitz, “The Most Spoken Languages in the World in 2024,” February 8, 2024, <https://www.berlitz.com/blog/most-spoken-languages-world>.

Tellingly, well over a billion people speak English as a *second* language—roughly four times as many as the runner-up in this regard (which might be Hindi or Arabic). By way of comparison, Berlitz estimates that slightly under 200 million people speak Mandarin as a second language.

As for Russian, its usage is in steep decline, with one Russian scholar estimating the number of Russian speakers worldwide may have dropped by about a third since the breakup of the Soviet Union. See Paul Goble, “100 Million Fewer People Will Speak Russian Next Year Than Did in 1990, Arefyev Says,” Window on Eurasia, January 27, 2024, <https://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2024/01/100-million-fewer-people-will-speak.html>.

Further, of all content on the internet today, close to 60 percent is said to be written in English. And finally, so many of the publications in leading scientific journals are written in English—around 75 percent for all fields and well above 90 percent for some of them—that scientists themselves are now wondering whether their disciplines have an “English problem.” Statista, “Languages Most Frequently Used for Web Content as of January 2023, by Share of Websites,” January 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262946/most-common-languages-on-the-internet>; Anees Bahji et al., “Exclusion of the Non-English-Speaking World from the Scientific Literature: Recommendations for Change for Addiction Journals and Publishers,” *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 40, no. 1 (February 2023), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/14550725221102227>; and “Scientific Publishing Has a Language Problem,” *Nature Human Behaviour* 7 (2023): 1019–20, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-023-01679-6>.

24. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987).

25. Yoshikazu Imahori, Hirofumi Takeuchi, and Kensaku Ihara, “U.S. Nears Half of Global Stock Market Cap as Alibaba, Tencent Falter,” *Nikkei Asia*, February 6, 2024, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Markets/U.S.-nears-half-of-global-stock-market-cap-as-Alibaba-Tencent-falter>.

26. World Bank, Market Capitalization of Listed Domestic Companies (Current US\$), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/CM.MKT.LCAP.CD>.

27. Martin Wolf, “The US Retains the Economic Advantage in Its Rivalry with China,” *Financial Times*, November 28, 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/28f0f57a-df50-442c-9f8e-75672d012742>.

28. See, for example, this troubled inventory by historian Niall Ferguson. Niall Ferguson, “America’s Longtime Sources of Power Have Turned Weak,” Bloomberg Opinion, January 12, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2024-01-14/us-has-grown-weak-on-immigration-technology-education-rule-of-law>.

29. For what we might call a “Team B” evaluation of some of these vulnerabilities, see David Goldman, “Saving America’s Future from the Blob,” *American Mind*, February 14, 2024, <https://americanmind.org/salvo/saving-americas-future-from-the-blob>.

30. World Population Review, “Military Size by Country 2024,” <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/military-size-by-country>.

31. At the end of 2023, in an important change to its long-standing official “reunification” policy, Pyongyang renounced its “one Korea” position and declared that North Korea and South Korea were “two belligerent states.” However, since North Korea’s new stance officially envisions contingencies for “completely occupying, subjugating and reclaiming the ROK [Republic of Korea] and annex[ing] it as part of the [North Korean] territory,” unconditional unification by conquest and absorption would seem to remain the heart and soul of the Kim family dynasty’s objectives on the Korean Peninsula. Chun Sig Kim, “Decoding North Korea’s Changing Policies: A South Korean Perspective,” 38 North, February 28, 2024, <https://www.38north.org/2024/02/decoding-north-koreas-changing-policies-a-south-korean-perspective>.

32. Chao Deng et al., “Putin, Xi Aim Russia-China Partnership Against U.S.,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 4, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-vladimir-putin-meets-with-chinese-leader-xi-jinping-in-beijing-11643966743>.

33. Alona Mazurenko, “Kim Jong Un Toasts to Putin’s Health and Wishes Him Victory in War,” *Ukrainska Pravda*, September 13, 2023, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/09/13/7419615>; and American Enterprise Institute, “Coalition Against Democracy,” November 8, 2023, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/one-pager/coalition-against-democracy>.

34. Aamer Madhani, “White House Says Iran Is Helping Russia Build a Drone Factory East of Moscow for the War in Ukraine,” *Associated Press*, June 9, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-iran-drone-factory-ukraine-war-dfd4602fecbofe65935cb24c82421a>.

35. Hal Brands, “Understanding Adversary Alignments: Historical Models and Future Possibilities,” unpublished paper prepared for the US Department of Defense, Office of Net Assessment, December 2023, 14, 18.

36. The US Constitution is of course our own model for individual rights under rule of law in a democratic republic. But the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights offers important guidance on the desiderata for protection of individual rights, especially for territories and countries where limited constitutional governance and democratic rule are not yet firmly established. Even in places where democracy or independence

have not yet been established, the declaration makes clear, protection of the individual under law—including protection of personal property—can and should be expected.

37. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Shares of Gross Domestic Product: Government Consumption Expenditures and Gross Investment: Federal: National Defense (A824RE1Q156NBEA), January 25, 2024, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/A824RE1Q156NBEA>.

38. Price Fishback, “World War II in America: Spending, Deficits, Multipliers, and Sacrifice,” Centre for Economic Policy Research, November 12, 2019, <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/world-war-ii-america-spending-deficits-multipliers-and-sacrifice>.

39. Elaine McCusker, *Defense Budget Transparency and the Cost of Military Capability*, American Enterprise Institute, November 9, 2022, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/defense-budget-transparency-and-the-cost-of-military-capability>.

40. Congressional Budget Office, “Monthly Budget Review: September 2023,” October 10, 2023, <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/59544>; and White House, Office of Management and Budget, “Table 1.3—Summary of Receipts, Outlays, and Surpluses or Deficits (–) in Current Dollars, Constant (FY 2012) Dollars, and as Percentages of GDP: 1940–2028,” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/historical-tables>.

41. Congressional Budget Office, *The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2024 to 2034*, February 2024, <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2024-02/59710-Outlook-2024.pdf>.

42. Eileen Sullivan, “More Migrants on Terrorism Watch List Crossed U.S. Border,” *New York Times*, November 15, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/15/us/politics/immigration-terrorism-watch-list.html>.

43. UN Human Rights Council, “Membership of the Human Rights Council for the 18th Cycle, 1 January–31 December, 2024,” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/current-members>.

44. Emma Farge, “Iran’s Appointment to Chair UN Rights Meeting Draws Condemnation,” Reuters, November 2, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/irans-appointment-chair-un-rights-meeting-draws-condemnation-2023-11-02>.

45. *Wall Street Journal*, “The Disgrace of the United Nations on Israel,” October 25, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/antonio-guterres->

united-nations-israel-palestine-hamas-gaza-c4adf77a.

46. UN General Assembly Resolution 3379, November 10, 1975, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-181963>. For then-US Ambassador to the UN Daniel Patrick Moynihan's ringing denunciation of the vote, see UN Watch, "Fighting the 'Zionism Is Racism' Lie: Moynihan's Historic U.N. Speech," November 10, 2015, <https://unwatch.org/moynihans-moment-the-historic-1975-u-n-speech-in-response-to-zionism-is-racism>.

47. Robert Joseph et al., "National Strategy for Countering North Korea," National Institute for Public Policy, January 23, 2023, https://nipp.org/information_series/robert-joseph-robert-collins-joseph-detrani-nicholas-eberstadt-olivia-enos-david-maxwell-and-greg-scarlatoiu-national-strategy-for-countering-north-korea-no-545-january-23-2023.

48. Joseph et al., "National Strategy for Countering North Korea."

49. One example is Britain's postbellum propitiation of the United States with respect to Washington's Monroe Doctrine ambitions. See Stephen R. Rock, *Appeasement in International Politics* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), chap. 2.

50. Data from UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2022, <https://population.un.org/wpp>; and Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital, Wittgenstein Centre Human Capital Data Explorer, <https://dataexplorer.wittgensteincentre.org/wcde-v2>.

51. Maryam Hosseini, Udoy Saikia, and Gouranga Dasvarma, "The Gap Between Desired and Expected Fertility Among Women in Iran: A Case Study of Tehran City," *PLoS ONE* 16, no. 9 (September 2021), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8439469>; and Eurostat, Fertility Indicators by NUTS 2 Region, February 23, 2024, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/demo_r_fnd2__custom_9373977/default/table?lang=en.

52. Iran International, "Fall in Mosque-Goers in Iran Now 'Highly Alarming'—Minister," December 12, 2023, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202312124517>.

53. As measured by "combat effectiveness," according to British and American political leaders briefed by their own militaries. See *Financial Times*, "Russia Has Lost Half Its Combat Effectiveness in Ukraine, Says UK Armed Forces Chief," <https://www.ft.com/content/8cd1c388-6fb9->

497b-a8a9-14b6ea21ede2; and New Voice of Ukraine, “Ukraine Used 3% of US Defense Budget to Destroy Half of the Russian Army—Lindsey Graham,” August 23, 2023, <https://news.yahoo.com/ukraine-used-3-us-defense-203500822.html>.

54. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

55. Nicholas Eberstadt, “Operation ‘Brain Drain’: Help Russian Talent Flow West,” AEIdeas, March 25, 2022, <https://www.aei.org/foreign-and-defense-policy/operation-brain-drain-help-russian-talent-flow-west>.

56. Dan Blumenthal and Nicholas Eberstadt, *China, Unquarantined*, American Enterprise Institute, February 16, 2021, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/china-unquarantined>.

57. *Wall Street Journal*, “Wall Street Kisses John Lee’s Ring,” October 29, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/john-lee-hong-kong-u-s-sanctions-investment-summit-8c48b744>. Note as well the unseemly jockeying among leading US CEOs for a seat at the “coveted” main table at the Xi Jinping dinner in November 2023 after the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meetings in San Francisco. Jacob Gu, “Fink, Schwarzman Get Coveted Seats at Xi’s Dinner Table in US,” Bloomberg, November 15, 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-11-16/dalio-cook-citadel-s-zhao-win-coveted-seats-at-xi-dinner-table>.

58. For just one example, see Donie O’Sullivan, Catherine Thorbecke, and Allison Gordon, “Some Young Americans on TikTok Say They Sympathize with Osama bin Laden,” CNN, November 16, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/16/tech/tiktok-osama-bin-laden-letter-to-america/index.html>. At this writing, US legislators are attempting to sever the connection between TikTok and the Chinese Communist Party, but some political actors are resisting these efforts. Former President Donald Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, has reversed his earlier position and is now opposing the sale of TikTok to US ownership, and some other Republicans seem to be wavering on this national security issue as well. This is an exquisite example of how the People’s Republic of China regime can attempt to influence US foreign policy from within. For more details on the lobbying effort in question, see Lydia Moynihan, “Republican Billionaire with \$33B TikTok Stake

‘Bullies’ Lawmakers to Stop Bill Forcing Chinese ByteDance Sale,” *New York Post*, March 7, 2024, <https://nypost.com/2024/03/07/us-news/billionaire-tiktok-investor-bullies-lawmakers-to-stop-sale>.

59. This is a term I may have coined in 2018. See Nicholas Eberstadt, “China’s Demographic Prospects to 2040: Opportunities, Constraints, Potential Policy Responses,” Hoover Institution, October 29, 2018, <https://www.hoover.org/research/chinas-demographic-prospects-2040-opportunities-constraints-potential-policy-responses>.