

# Fair Observer

Monthly

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# Fair Observer Monthly



September 2022

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## ABOUT FAIR OBSERVER

Fair Observer is a nonprofit media organization that engages in citizen journalism and civic education.

Our digital media platform has more than 2,500 contributors from 90 countries, cutting across borders, backgrounds and beliefs. With fact-checking and a rigorous editorial process, we provide diversity and quality in an era of echo chambers and fake news.

Our education arm runs training programs on subjects such as digital media, writing and more. In particular, we inspire young people around the world to be more engaged citizens and to participate in a global discourse.

As a nonprofit, we are free from owners and advertisers. When there are six jobs in public relations for every job in journalism, we rely on your donations to achieve our mission.

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# Has the West Pacified the World Too Well and Allowed the East to Emerge as a Challenger?

Felicia Gooden

September 01, 2022

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**Democracy has softened the West, which is struggling to cope with the challenge from the East, where autocratic Russia and China believe in using brute force and deft diplomacy to challenge the rules-based order.**

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**T**he West has mastered the Roman strategy of pacification so thoroughly that the entire world is now in danger. Liberal institutions have made the global citizenry comfortable and complacent. They now lack the will to fight or engage in war.

Pacification finds its origins in the Latin *pacificatum*, the “pacifier”, which is a role that was held by the magistrates of the Roman Republic. The geopolitical concept borrows from the Latin *pacificatio*, which translates from French as “return to peace, accommodation, reconciliation.” Pacification was used as standard foreign policy by Western powers during the colonial period and has continued through democratic institutions since. Most notably, the policy of pacification was used during the Vietnam War to raze the grounds inhabited by the Viet Cong and then establish control by building schools and clinics to win the hearts and minds of locals newly under South Vietnamese control.

## A pacified West has emboldened Russia and China

Research shows that the disinterest in coercive and repressive acts that comes from democratic institutions have successfully pacified the West. Unfortunately, that pacification and illusion of widespread security have made the world less safe. US President Joe Biden faced the vitriol of a constituency that had no will or desire to continue with a war on terror in the Middle East, and Eastern great powers took that as a signal to move in their own interests. Russian President Vladimir Putin decided to launch a “special operation” in Ukraine not long after the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan by the US. China has exhibited an increasing appetite for invading or reclaiming the island of Taiwan, which has strained relations not only between the US and China but also the US and Taiwan. However, China has likely held back on taking decisive action in the likeness of Russia due to the international blowback against the Ukraine invasion. The international fallout from the war in Ukraine presents an opportunity for China to claim a moral high ground on how it moves forward in defending its sovereignty and right to territories of interest.

China’s recent flyovers in Taiwan and expanding presence in the South China Sea send the message that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is prepared to act with violence within its own territory if necessary while globally engaging in hybrid warfare tactics that remain below the threshold of armed conflict. The message shows finesse in Chinese foreign policy. Chinese President Xi Jinping is keenly aware of the peace guaranteed by the international order and seeks to



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manifest a global balance of power with China in the lead rather than outright hegemonic conquest.

### **A clash of values: democracy v autocracy**

One must contemplate the future of the international order at a time when great power competition shows sharp contrast in ideologies. A clear line has now been drawn between democratic pacification and autocratic coercion. Morality and good governance are the name of the game in these times, but the methods of achieving and showcasing both are the competition. Liberal institutions and their democratic pacification have proven to be inherent liabilities in a world where human nature continues to reign supreme, aggressor states and non-state actors continue to use violence, and great powers compete in flexing their political as well as conventional firepower.

Autocratic coercion has grown in popularity among conservative groups around the world, which is a concerning trend for liberal idealists and the state of democratic institutions. Russia's circumvention of global sanctions strikes a big blow against the narrative that democratic institutions are most effective in international relations. As it stands, coercion and brute violence reign supreme, as the East continues to weather the geopolitical storm of international isolation. With Beijing kicking off its largest-ever military exercises around Taiwan, China continues to become more troublesome. Also, while Beijing may maintain a neutral stance on Russian actions in Ukraine, it is still supporting Moscow in a measured and indirect way in the game of great power competition with the US.

The world can expect a contentious competition between the West and the East. Hybrid warfare

and information operations will increase. Violence will also continue to increase as the world witnesses one last power grab by world powers dedicated to traditional forms of culture and governance through repression, violence and coercion. Unless the West pulls off a quick and swift win for democratic pacification through institutions and diplomacy, the world will likely become a less safe, secure and equitable place for humanity.

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## **The Future of US Vice President Kamala Harris**

Atul Singh

September 04, 2022

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**In two years, the first woman of African American and Indian American heritage to become the vice president of the US stands**

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**diminished and damaged. She has topped out and is extremely unlikely to be elected president in 2024 or later.**

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**E**arly in 2022, the BBC's North America reporter Anthony Zurcher published an important story: "Kamala Harris one year: Where did it go wrong for her?"

In a well-crafted story, Zurcher argued that a tough portfolio—tackling undocumented migration and national voting reform enacting—made her an easy target as vice president. Yet this canny BBC reporter observed how Harris began her presidential campaign with a bang in January 2019 only to crash spectacularly. She failed to debate or interview well, her staff left and, for all the money she raised, Harris was unable to craft a clear message or harness a constituency. The same failings have dogged her time in office since January 2020.

If the left-leaning BBC has been critical of Harris, so has the right-leaning *The Economist*. As early as May 29, 2021, it argued that she was "a gift to the Republicans." This year, on June 23, the 1843-vintage British paper argued that Democrats should not opt for either President Joe Biden or Harris as their presidential candidate in 2024. Apparently, Biden is too old for a second run. Besides, it appears as if age is catching up with him. In contrast, Harris looks healthy, vigorous and relatively youthful but the paper deemed her "too flawed."

### **The flaws of Kamala Harris**

On November 18, 2021, Abigail Tracy of *Vanity Fair* reported: "Vice President Kamala Harris's

communications chief Ashley Etienne [was] leaving the White House." Etienne is a seasoned old hand in Washington who served Barack Obama, Nancy Pelosi and Biden in the past. Tracy reports that Etienne is leaving early "after a raft of stories on infighting and low morale in the vice president's office."

As per rumor, morale in Harris' office further plummeted after Biden and his aides told allies that he was running for a second term in 2024. In 2020, Biden was seen as a one-term president and Harris as the heir apparent. It is now an open secret that this is no longer the case.

Champions of Harris say she is a woman of color who is being set up to fail. Her boss has given her thankless messy jobs such as solving the migrant crisis. Leaks about "dysfunction and infighting" at the Harris office have been labeled as an attempt to "sabotage" her.

For admirers, Harris combines Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. An African American woman in the top job would be terrific for America's soul. Harris would smash the final glass ceiling in a country with a dark legacy of slavery and misogyny.

For others, Harris represents the worst type of politician who has no principle and resorts to identity politics to make her way to the top. They point to her record in California as a "cop," which caused many young black American men to end up in prison. Unsurprisingly, "The Sacramento Bee" called Harris a "polarizing figure" last year.

Indians who dislike Harris constantly point out that her Tamil Brahmin grandfather belonged to the elite Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and

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was an acolyte of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India. For them, good old Kamala is being disingenuous when claiming to suffer from discrimination because she is a card-holding member of the elite with an IAS grandfather.

The left-leaning Democrats find Harris a bit too close to Silicon Valley. They are also suspicious of the fact that she married a heavy-hitting corporate lawyer. At a time when these Young Turks are aligning with the economic philosophies of Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, Harris seems a bit too Clintonesque for their taste.

Many Republicans take a view of Harris that is best left unsaid. She has the same effect on them as a full moon on werewolves. In essence, Republicans do not trust Harris and view her with profound disgust.

### **What lies in store for 2024?**

Harris is an ambitious woman. She has broken many glass ceilings to get this far. Her ambition is to occupy Biden's chair. In the primaries, she gave the old man a hard time. Before one of the debates, Biden was heard remarking to Harris: "Go Easy On Me, Kid." Now, the kid is eyeing pop's chair in the White House. Politico reports that Harris is "staffing up" and has hired a top operative. Harris intends to use the 2022 midterms to propel herself into limelight and then into the top job in 2024.

The trouble with Harris is not that she is ambitious, she is seen as too ambitious. Many Americans saw her attacks on Biden's race record as insincere and cynical. For someone who had locked up black American men, she sounded a touch holier-than-thou in accusing Biden. Many

moderates and most Republicans saw Harris opportunistically playing the race card.

Even as ruthless a place as Washington is awash with murmurings about Harris's excessive ambition. These have been going on soon after she assumed office. Detractors insinuate that Harris is looking to put a pillow over Uncle Joe's face and ascend to the throne. They paint her as a modern Lady Macbeth who will stop at nothing to grasp the scepter.

It could well be the case that Harris is no more ambitious than Obama or Biden or Elizabeth Warren. However, she has forgotten a cardinal rule in politics: "Caesar's wife must be above suspicion." Too many people suspect Harris of being unprincipled, dishonest and scheming. After two years in office, the vice president is now damaged goods. She has been weighed, measured and found wanting. Harris is extremely unlikely to become president in 2024 or later.

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\***Atul Singh** is the founder, CEO and editor-in-chief of Fair Observer.

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## **Peace Talks Essential as War Rages on in Ukraine**

Medea Benjamin, Nicolas J.S. Davies  
September 06, 2022

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**The US and the UK torpedoed peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine in**

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**March. They have continued to adopt a hawkish policy against Russia but misgivings against the war are on the rise not only in Europe but also in the US. Negotiations are the only way forward.**

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**S**ix months ago, Russia invaded Ukraine. The US, NATO and the EU wrapped themselves in the Ukrainian flag, shelled out billions for arms shipments, and imposed draconian sanctions intended to severely punish Russia for its aggression.

Since then, the people of Ukraine have been paying a price for this war that few of their supporters in the West can possibly imagine. Wars do not follow scripts, and Russia, Ukraine, the US, NATO and the EU have all encountered unexpected setbacks.

Western sanctions have had mixed results, inflicting severe economic damage on Europe as well as on Russia, while the invasion and the West's response to it have combined to trigger a food crisis across the Global South. As winter approaches, the prospect of another six months of war and sanctions threatens to plunge Europe into a serious energy crisis and poorer countries into famine. So it is in the interest of all involved to urgently reassess the possibilities of ending this protracted conflict.

### **Russia-Ukraine Negotiations Almost Succeeded**

For those who say negotiations are impossible, we have only to look at the talks that took place during the first month after the Russian invasion, when Russia and Ukraine tentatively agreed to a fifteen-point peace plan in talks mediated by Turkey.

Details still had to be worked out, but the framework and the political will were there.

Russia was ready to withdraw from all of Ukraine, except for Crimea and the self-declared republics in Donbas. Ukraine was ready to renounce future membership in NATO and adopt a position of neutrality between Russia and NATO.

The agreed framework provided for political transitions in Crimea and Donbas that both sides would accept and recognize, based on self-determination for the people of those regions. The future security of Ukraine was to be guaranteed by a group of other countries, but Ukraine would not host foreign military bases on its territory.

On March 27, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told a national TV audience, "Our goal is obvious—peace and the restoration of normal life in our native state as soon as possible." He laid out his "red lines" for the negotiations on TV to reassure his people he would not concede too much, and he promised them a referendum on the neutrality agreement before it would take effect.

Such early success for a peace initiative was no surprise to conflict resolution specialists. The best chance for a negotiated peace settlement is generally during the first months of a war. Each month that a war rages on offers reduced chances for peace, as each side highlights the atrocities of the other, hostility becomes entrenched and positions harden.

### **The US and UK Torpedoed Chances of Peace**

The abandonment of that early peace initiative stands as one of the great tragedies of this conflict, and the full scale of that tragedy will only become

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clear over time as the war rages on and its dreadful consequences accumulate.

Ukrainian and Turkish sources have revealed that the UK and US governments played decisive roles in torpedoing those early prospects for peace. During the then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's "surprise visit" to Kyiv on April 9th, he reportedly told Zelenskyy that the UK was "in it for the long run," that it would not be party to any agreement between Russia and Ukraine, and that the "collective West" saw a chance to "press" Russia and was determined to make the most of it.

The same message was reiterated by US Defense Secretary Austin, who followed Johnson to Kyiv on April 25th and made it clear that the US and NATO were no longer just trying to help Ukraine defend itself but were now committed to using the war to "weaken" Russia. Turkish diplomats told retired British diplomat Craig Murray that these messages from the United States and United Kingdom killed their otherwise promising efforts to mediate a ceasefire and a diplomatic resolution.

In response to the invasion, much of the public in Western countries accepted the moral imperative of supporting Ukraine as a victim of Russian aggression. But the decision by the US and UK governments to kill peace talks and prolong the war, with all the horror, pain and misery that entails for the people of Ukraine, has neither been explained to the public, nor endorsed by a consensus of NATO countries. Johnson claimed to be speaking for the "collective West," but in May, the leaders of France, Germany and Italy all made public statements that contradicted his claim.

Addressing the European Parliament on May 9, French President Emmanuel Macron declared, "We are not at war with Russia," and that Europe's duty was "to stand with Ukraine to achieve the ceasefire, then build peace."

Meeting with US President Joe Biden at the White House on May 10, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi told reporters, "People... want to think about the possibility of bringing a ceasefire and starting again some credible negotiations. That's the situation right now. I think that we have to think deeply about how to address this."

After speaking by phone with President Vladimir Putin on May 13, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz tweeted that he told Putin, "There must be a ceasefire in Ukraine as quickly as possible."

But American and British officials continued to pour cold water on talk of renewed peace negotiations. The policy shift in April appears to have involved a commitment by Zelenskyy that Ukraine, like the UK and US, was "in it for the long run" and would fight on, possibly for many years, in exchange for the promise of tens of billions of dollars worth of weapons shipments, military training, satellite intelligence and Western covert operations.

### **Misgivings About the War Increase in the US**

As the implications of this fateful agreement became clearer, dissent began to emerge, even within the US business and media establishment. On May 19, the very day that Congress appropriated \$40 billion for Ukraine, including \$19 billion for new weapons shipments, with not a single dissenting Democratic vote, The New York

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Times (NYT) editorial board penned a lead editorial titled, “The war in Ukraine is getting complicated, and America isn’t ready.”

The NYT asked serious unanswered questions about US goals in Ukraine, and tried to reel back unrealistic expectations built up by three months of one-sided Western propaganda, not least from its own pages. The board acknowledged, “A decisive military victory for Ukraine over Russia, in which Ukraine regains all the territory Russia has seized since 2014, is not a realistic goal.... Unrealistic expectations could draw [the United States and NATO] ever deeper into a costly, drawn-out war.”

More recently, warhawk Henry Kissinger, of all people, publicly questioned the entire US policy of reviving its Cold War with Russia and China and the absence of a clear purpose or endgame short of World War III. “We are at the edge of war with Russia and China on issues which we partly created, without any concept of how this is going to end or what it’s supposed to lead to,” Kissinger told The Wall Street Journal.

US leaders have inflated the danger that Russia poses to its neighbors and the West, deliberately treating it as an enemy with whom diplomacy or cooperation would be futile, rather than as a neighbor raising understandable defensive concerns over NATO expansion and its gradual encirclement by US and allied military forces.

Far from aiming to deter Russia from dangerous or destabilizing actions, successive administrations of both parties have sought every means available to “overextend and unbalance” Russia, all the while misleading the American public into supporting an ever-escalating and unthinkably dangerous conflict between our two countries,

which together possess more than 90% of the world’s nuclear weapons.

After six months of a US and NATO proxy war with Russia in Ukraine, we are at a crossroads. Further escalation should be unthinkable, but so should a long war of endless crushing artillery barrages and brutal urban and trench warfare that slowly and agonizingly destroys Ukraine, killing hundreds of Ukrainians with each day that passes.

The only realistic alternative to this endless slaughter is a return to peace talks to bring the fighting to an end, find reasonable political solutions to Ukraine’s political divisions, and seek a peaceful framework for the underlying geopolitical competition between the United States, Russia and China.

Campaigns to demonize, threaten and pressure our enemies can only serve to cement hostility and set the stage for war. People of good will can bridge even the most entrenched divisions and overcome existential dangers, as long as they are willing to talk — and listen — to their adversaries.

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co-authored *War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict*, available from OR Books in November 2022.

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\***Nicolas J.S. Davies** is an independent journalist and a researcher for CODEPINK. He is also the author of *Blood On Our Hands: The American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq*. Davies and Medea Benjamin have co-authored *War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict*, available from OR Books in November 2022.

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## **Egypt's Foreign Policy Under Al-Sisi and Its Relationship with Saudi Arabia**

Juan Carlos BC  
September 09, 2022

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**Since coming to power after the coup against the Mursi government, General Al-Sisi has sought to re-establish the foreign policy lines drawn in pre-revolutionary Egypt.**

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**E**gypt's foreign policy after the Arab Spring  
In the context of the Arab Spring,

In the context of the Arab Spring, where popular uprisings brought down various regimes in the Middle East, the fall of the Egyptian President

Hosni Mubarak was the most spectacular in the region.

Muhammad Mursi, from the Muslim Brotherhood party, was elected as the first civilian president of Egypt in June 2012. Yet his short year in office did not bring about a radical shift in Egypt's foreign policy, due to the effort to avoid provoking counterproductive reactions under the new government. Despite this, certain nuances Mursi introduced revealed a moderate commitment to reshaping some features of Egyptian foreign policy. In contrast to the close ties between Hosni Mubarak's regime and Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey became preferred allies, as they supported the revolution and the subsequent political transition, with Doha providing \$8 billion in economic aid.

On the one hand, the new post-revolutionary government was keen to show its willingness to play a responsible role in international affairs, maintaining the peace agreements with Israel, and thus securing its annual \$1.5 billion in aid from Washington. In addition to this, Mursi was the first Egyptian president to travel to Tehran after 33 years, to participate in the 16th Non-Aligned Summit in August 2012, signaling a moderate attempt to balance the relationship with Iran. On the other hand, one of his first steps was to open Egypt's border with Gaza to bring relief to its inhabitants, showing the usefulness of his good communication with Hamas in Gaza, in stark contrast with the Mubarak regime. It helped the US achieve a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel in November 2012.

**Al-Sisi's arrival and the reconfiguration of Egyptian foreign policy**

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The reforms undertaken by the new government, coupled with various internal disputes concerning the new constitution put forward by the Muslim Brotherhood, led to a coup led by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Under the new regime headed by al-Sisi, the link with Saudi Arabia was not only re-established but was intended to create a huge political and economic dependency.

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE and Kuwait, provided Cairo with \$12 billion in economic aid, rising to \$42 billion in the following years. Among the reasons why these Petro monarchies were interested in supporting the new al-Sisi government, it is relevant to mention the fact that they shared a common interest in putting an end to Arab Spring governments in the region and opposing the Muslim Brotherhood, declared to be a terrorist movement. In payment for their support, Riyadh demanded unwavering subservience to Saudi leadership and its regional objectives.

Egypt under al-Sisi has shown its allegiance to Saudi Arabia by joining the boycott of Qatar initiated in June 2017, as well as by transferring sovereignty over the islands of Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia. Likewise, concerning Libya, which has been without a stable unified government since the fall of Gaddafi in 2011, Egypt is one of the main supporters of General Khalifa Haftar, who has installed a self-proclaimed government in Tobruk against the government in Tripoli, which is supported by Qatar and includes the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood. For Cairo, along with the UAE, the elimination of the Muslim Brotherhood is a priority governing both its domestic and foreign policy.

## **Egypt's growing dependence on Riyadh and its impact on its quest for regional leadership**

The heavy dependence of Egypt's current foreign policy on Arab financial help constrains the nation's leadership in the region. Besides, there is a need to maintain unwavering US support for Egypt, which remains strongly dependent on his alliance and cooperation with the two main allies of the US in the Middle East: Israel and Saudi Arabia. This is also coupled with the cooperation between Riyadh and Cairo on the Palestinian dossier, of great value to Israel, as well as the common interest in curbing Iran's growing influence in Sudan and Eritrea.

Nonetheless, the points of friction are multiplying. Egypt supported maintaining the regime of Sudanese leader Omar al-Bashir, who was subjected to an intense wave of protests calling for his ouster in December 2018, whereas Saudi Arabia and the UAE backed the idea of resolving the crisis by seeking a reliable successor to al-Bashir, such as Sudanese intelligence chief Salah Gosh. That solution would allow Riyadh to continue to peacefully deploy its influence in the Horn of Africa. In conclusion, Egypt's dilemma in its vacillating foreign policy lies in its aspiration for leadership and its limited capacity to develop it. Egypt has lost its historical potential for leadership, but it has also lost the capacity to come up with the kind of initiative that could restore it. This is a source of frustration widely felt in a nation with a strong nationalist sentiment. The current regime under Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, while trying to maintain an image of leadership in an instrumental sense, with a view to confirming its legitimacy, is too afflicted by its evident weakness



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and dependence to be able to decisively influence events in the Arabian region.

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## **With Queen Elizabeth gone, a New Elizabeth Takes Center Stage**

Peter Isackson  
September 10, 2022

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**For decades royalists feared the end of the monarchy if the succession passed to Charles. The limited intelligence and lack of charisma of the new Elizabeth installed at Downing Street may bolster Charles III's shaky quest for legitimacy.**

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**H**as such a thing ever happened before? Within a few days, the English nation witnessed the departure of a jovial but notoriously mendacious prime minister – prone to create the kind of political chaos to which he himself fell victim – and a beloved queen. Boris Johnson was forced to make an undignified exit. Elizabeth died peacefully after having lived for the past seven decades as the emblem of a culture

defined by its most dignified tradition. In both cases, the change is felt as monumentally significant and disruptive, given the mythical substance created in the media around those two personalities, Boris Johnson and Queen Elizabeth II. In both cases, there had grown up a widely shared fear of the void that would be left in the wake of their disappearance.

Could the straightlaced Conservative party produce any personality outside the world of pure entertainment to take his place of the hyperreal, arrogant toff with the permanently managed tousled mop of blond hair, adept at selling his boyish narcissism to the media while bulldozing through politics? Like a gutless Hollywood studio addicted to remakes of past blockbusters, the Tory establishment worked out its plan. Its producers wondered, “Who, on this island can repeat and carry out for another two years the equivalent of Meryl Streep’s performance as the one true British Wonder woman, Maggie Thatcher?” Liz Truss auditioned and, with limited competition, obtained the starring role of her career thanks, not to her ability to emulate her model’s iron will and aptitude for wielding the reins of power, but to her mindless loyalty to a sclerotic version of the now thoroughly discredited antisocial economic ideology that Thatcher formerly embodied.

For seventy years, Queen Elizabeth played her public role to perfection. It wasn’t an easy role to play. It required exceptional patience. She had nothing to do, no impact on events. But she quickly learned the art of turning her actions, or inaction, into a form of public theater exploitable by the media. At the very moment of the British empire’s global dismantling, she symbolized what the empire had once been, keeping it implicitly

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present in her subjects' minds and in the world's awareness. Succeeding to the throne in 1952, as colony after colony was declaring its independence, her presence, her demeanor and her image allowed the empire to continue a fantasized existence, liberated from the annoying task of having to manage anything in the real world. The American cousins had taken over that task and had become experts working in the shadows.

### **An example of quantum logic on a human scale**

In a curious configuration resembling the phenomenon of quantum entanglement, at the precise moment when the British government toggled from male to female leadership, the British state is toggling from female to male. A curious and possibly necessary balance is thus restored. No one knows how Charles III will conduct his reign, but he may have an easier time establishing his regal style with an inept and unreflecting female at 10 Downing Street than with the unpredictable BoJo, who sometimes showed a greater aptitude for emulating Idi Amin Dada than the Winston Churchill he so vociferously claimed as his model. In a certain sense, Boris himself was a cheap remake, whose box office earnings fell far short of his promise.

For the past three years, the irrepressible Boris has dominated headlines in the UK thanks to his exaggerated antics that as often as not resembled a music hall act built around a comically obsessive one-liner: "Get Brexit Done." He hypnotized his party, if not the population, into believing that once it was done, all would fall back into place and Britain would be great again. His recent militaristic activism as a highly visible supporting actor in Joe Biden's proxy war on Russia, which included using his bulk, if not his moral authority, to give

orders to the suffering victim never to negotiate with the evil master of the Kremlin, will be a hard act for Truss to follow.

### **Can Charles wield the scepter at 73?**

Unlike politicians who rely on other people's votes to achieve their ambitions, the designated but yet uncrowned King Charles III, has had decades to prepare for this. But he has also had 73 years to craft his image as a crown prince, scion of an impeccably performing mother, with low expectations of ever becoming king before reaching an exceptionally advanced age. There must have been moments when, as some in the public wondered out loud, whether it was worth the wait. The public had "elected" his fairytale wife, Lady Diana Spencer, to a level of royalty that he couldn't hope to attain, even though it was his heritage. She was "the Princess of the people" in a monarchy that had, over the previous century, politically transformed into a modern democracy.

Not only did Diana rise to become a mythic celebrity, thanks to her beauty and sense of style, neither of which he could claim to share, she utterly eclipsed the crown prince's image as the future king. The idea of a future Queen Diana had far more appeal than that of King Charles. When their visibly uncomfortable marriage quickly began exposing its fragility, leading eventually to divorce, the public appeared to take her side, considering Charles to be unworthy of Diana. To some extent, this correlated with a longer-term trend as males on the throne in the 20th century had never made a strong impression, especially Edward VIII's abdication after a very unroyal marriage to an ambitious American divorcee and Elizabeth's father, George VI's embarrassing stutter. And that is without mentioning the

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embarrassing question for Elizabeth herself of the behavior of her “favorite son,” Andrew, who was also one of Jeffrey Epstein’s favorite friends. As a stay-at-home queen, raising her children and especially her dogs in her various palaces and castles, Elizabeth successfully turned the role of monarch at the head of the state into one that, in post-war Britain, clearly better befitted a matriarchy.

The British people and especially its media have never had strong confidence in the character and personality of Charles as a potential king. Many have suggested that to preserve the dignity of the office – really meaning the “media appeal” of the office – he should simply allow his more glamor-minded and family orientated son, William, succeed in his place. He has not chosen to do so. That means that he, and presumably his PR team, will be hard at work crafting his royal image in the weeks and months to come. It’s up to the media to respond appropriately. The future of the British monarchy depends on their effort.

### **How will the media manage the drama to come?**

The media will now be very busy tracking and shaping the evolving images of two personalities that have never inspired the kind of interest – positive or negative – that Boris and Eliza, the two actors exiting the stage have managed to build throughout their careers. Will they go off on two separate tracks or will there be interaction between them. Charles has had a reputation for occasionally drifting towards expressions of opinion deemed dangerously close to political issues. Will he rein them in without his mother there to hold him back? Or will he be tempted to use the vestigial moral status associated with a fatherly monarch to subtly or blatantly rein in what he might feel are the

possible excesses of the Elizabeth now reigning at Downing Street?

The real question for Charles is what will he need to do to appear kingly rather than princely? He may even have the intelligence to understand that in the midst of growing crises in every direction – the crises of democracy itself, of proxy wars, the climate, energy supply, nuclear threat, pandemics, looming economic collapse, social conflict, and the obvious transition towards a multipolar world (though though consciously ignored by the media) – some new form of leadership is needed, if only to restore some sense of balance in the face of the hyperreal excesses that now dominate politics in the West. Can a newly crowned British king define a role that could push humanity in the direction of sanity? That seems unlikely if, as is customary in the UK, respect of tradition routinely trumps the quest for creative innovation. But these are strange times. One final bit of irony may serve to sum up the high level of uncertainty that exists as this new double transition begins the inevitable process of remodeling the global image of the British national identity. Last week footage emerged of Liz Truss at the age of 19, as a Liberal Democrat activist, expressing her contempt for the royal family as she called for the abolition of the monarchy. Now, as the leader of the party, “elected” not by the British electorate but by only an estimated 80,000 votes of members of her party, she represents the established government, at least until the next election or someone or group of people from her own party call for her abolition, just as they did to her predecessor.

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## **Supply of 5G Dives Demand for This Technology, Ignoring Downsides**

Mansoor Hasan Khan  
September 12, 2022

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**Most people are served well by 4G technology and do not need 5G. Besides, this technology seems to have adverse health effects and needs closer examination before mass adoption. Instead, 5G is being quickly marketed in the same way as smoking was in the past.**

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**I**f we read the news, we constantly read about 5G. A key question arises: do citizens need 5G?

Those working in certain sectors, such as space technology, medical industry and national security, gain benefits from 5G technology. However, many of us function perfectly well with 4G technology. For surfing the internet, e-commerce or using social media, 4 G suffices perfectly well. Prima facie, most consumers do not need 5G just as healthy persons do not need to pop multivitamin supplements.

When I think of 5G, I cannot help but think of iodized salt. Growing up in India, most of us have

eaten this form of salt. Salt was iodized in the country to avoid goiter among the population. This condition commonly develops because of iodine deficiency and leads to irregular growth of the thyroid gland. In poor households, this disease was common. So, the government pushed iodized salt as a public health measure. It was immaterial that healthy people did not need more iodine. They had to consume it.

Today, 5G is being rolled out around the world. In India, Reliance Industries Limited is rolling out 5G technology this year on Diwali, the iconic festival of lights. Millions will adopt 5G with enthusiasm. Some will spend hours watching cricket or Bollywood on YouTube. Others will video chat with family and friends. Still others will use 5G for every conceivable purpose.

Yet is there really a need for 5G in India right now?

As per the old adage, necessity is the mother of invention. Today it seems that invention is the mother of necessity. This is not a new idea. In 1803, Jean Baptiste Say took the view that supply creates its own demand. Say's Law has come to define classical economics and holds that the production of goods creates its own demand. As per this law, if we manufacture televisions, demand for televisions will appear. Supply-side economics favored by the Republicans in the US is based on this law.

It might be fair to say that this law often holds in most economies. If you introduce something in the market, the masses often get addicted to it. In the US, cocaine is a classic example. A hundred years ago, few people snorted this fine white powder. Today, it is a drug of choice for Wall

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Street traders and anyone with money. People rarely apply their mind about the need or utility of a product.

In the case of 5G, there have long been doubts about its effects on human health. As of now, there is limited research on the subject. We know that 5G technology uses higher-frequency bandwidths, right across the radio frequency spectrum. Two types of electromagnetic fields come into being thanks to 5G technology: ionizing and non-ionizing radiation.

We know that ionizing radiation can damage human cells and cause cancer. Non-ionizing radiations are not supposed to cause any harm to health. However, a 2019 study concluded that electromagnetic frequencies (EMF) from mobile phones are linked to DNA damage in mice and rats. Another 2016 study concluded that electromagnetic radiation of any frequency can harm the nervous system. A 2020 research review also examined how electromagnetic frequencies affect organisms like snails and frogs. The researchers were unclear if these frequencies have negative effects on animals. It is clear that more research is needed.

The World Health Organization launched the International EMF Project to assess the health and environmental effects of exposure to static and time-varying electric and magnetic fields in the frequency range 0-300 GHz. Lennart Hardell, an oncologist from Sweden, was critical of this EMF project. In a 2017 research review, Hardell revealed that five of the six members of EMF's core group were affiliated with the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). This hinted at the project's members having a conflict of interest.

Hardell also pointed out that many members of ICNIRP are affiliated with industries that use wireless networks. This raises questions about the organization's legitimacy. The Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks of the European Parliament, has concluded that the scale, urgency, and interactions of EMF with ecosystems and species are potentially hazardous. Like smoking, 5G seems to have adverse circumstances that will take years to come to light.

Already, 4G technology has caused much harm. People are increasingly addicted to their phones. In India, it is not uncommon at family gatherings for everyone to be glued to their cellphones and ignore each other. Filter bubbles and echo chambers have damaged journalism. Many live in a post-truth world thanks to 4G technology.

We have also slipped up on simple things. Many have no sense of direction because they rely on Google Maps to get somewhere. At airports, planes, trains, buses and the metro, people are increasingly glued to their screens. They are no longer looking each other in the eye or striking up a conversation. Myopia is on the rise. Late night screen exposure causes eye pain and poor sleep. Screen addiction is also causing a decline in reading habits, attention spans and critical thinking.

In such a situation, should we be rolling out 5G or do we need a cost-benefit analysis first? The argument that people are demanding 5G technology does not hold. Supply is creating its own demand and perhaps society or at least not everyone in society, needs 5G.

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## **A Modern Indian Medical Student Rationalizes Trauma**

Maanas Jain  
September 17, 2022

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**A fourth year medical student after a visit to an emergency ward examines his craving for productivity during a clinical rotation in this ward.**

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I have a problem. I'm calling it a problem because I'm no longer sure it's beneficial for me as I used to feel – I constantly feel the need to do something productive. What I consider productive is something that's taken time for me to wrap my head around. But in general, it seems to consist of acknowledgement from an authority I can consider respectable. However, sometimes the "productivity" branches out into other forms and I'm unable to include these outliers in my generalization.

For quite some time I didn't feel like reading a book, or writing. And there most of my list of

feasible productive activities ended. So I decided to try out something new, going to the hospital emergency.

Lots of students go to the emergency ward to spend time, look at cases and learn some basic skills. I'd always wanted to, but hadn't been going because I felt it would eat up time that I'd rather use in studying for my upcoming USMLE exam. This wasn't a very logical excuse since there were plenty of occasions when I wasted my time just lazing around on the pretext of 'taking a break'. So this time I talked to one of my friends and he agreed to go to the emergency block with me.

I'd only ever visited the emergency ward before with my friends when something went wrong for them: thorns in the feet, hypersensitivity reactions, finger fractures, a complete tibial and fibular fracture, cannabis overdose, sprains, and once, an attempted suicide. It almost felt strange to be here in the emergency ward for personal reasons unrelated to the welfare of my friends. However, despite this moral mismatch, nothing about the environment was different.

All the beds were occupied by patients, with doctors, residents, nurses, and the patients' relatives hovering around them. There was an overload of patients and so extra beds were lined up at the entrance with worried family members reassuring their loved ones. There must have been crying, sadness, anxiety, and other negative emotions in the atmosphere, but I couldn't sense any of it explicitly. It must have been there because I remember I had been shocked at the amount of suffering I witnessed during my first time in the emergency ward. But after having attended so many clinical postings, and getting accustomed to the hospital, everything just seemed

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normal. This is the best justification I can find for my lack of an emotional response, which could be categorized as tolerance.

The other option is that I'm selfish and don't care enough about people. I don't know which is true. I want to believe that it's the first hypothesis, and statistical evidence would show that most medical personnel eventually get accustomed to the pain and fear their patients experience, but since I feel that this justifies something that seems morally wrong, I want to leave the option open where this could be due to my lack of competence. Maybe it's a personal problem, and the rest of the world isn't this way. In that case, hopefully it's something I can fix myself.

### **Dealing with ragging**

Back in my first year of medical college, when ragging was prevalent and popular and my batchmates voluntarily threw themselves into acts that stripped away their dignity, the reasoning was that if we bent to the seniors' wishes, they would acknowledge us and help us later on in various aspects of medical life, such as mentoring us in the hospital. I hadn't voluntarily given in to ragging by the seniors, and a part of me had been worried that maybe I wouldn't be able to build connections with them. All that changed when I started playing football and realized that through the interaction I had with seniors that I met on the playing field, I had far more connections than all the supposed hot shots of my batch.

And so upon entering the emergency ward, I immediately spotted a senior who recognized me with a smile and asked why I was there. I told him I had come to learn something and he immediately asked me if I wanted to insert a ryle's tube. I

nodded enthusiastically and he led me towards a patient.

The ryle's tube, or nasogastric tube, is a flexible pipe that's inserted through the nose down to the stomach. In fact, I had inserted one before, back at the time when one of my batchmates had tried to commit suicide. I'd been sitting on a bench in the emergency ward, a mixture of emotions playing out in my mind. That was when an intern had called out to me. In a daze, not knowing what I was doing, I walked over to him and he told me he was going to teach me how to insert a ryle's tube. Maybe he hadn't known what I was going through and just wanted to teach me something. Maybe he'd just wanted to lighten his workload by getting me to help, or maybe, as I like to imagine, he'd sensed how distraught I was and thought that this activity could help take my mind off things. Whatever the case was, his strategy had worked and I'd been temporarily relieved. However, perhaps because this incident happened over a year ago, or because my mind had been fuzzy during the whole crisis, I couldn't recall the procedure now.

It didn't matter, the procedure wasn't too complicated, and the senior stood beside me the entire time, though there wasn't much for him to oversee. My patient was conscious but wasn't opening her eyes. She was old, obese, and clearly from a backward milieu, judging by her family members grouped around her. I told her that she'd need to swallow as I inserted the tube, but she gave my words no acknowledgment. My friend had warned me that since the patients were from remote villages and illiterate, they seldom understood instructions, or even if they did, they didn't follow them. He'd told me that in such

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cases, we should just shove the tube in forcefully and keep going.

### **Bullying patients into obedience**

Now recently I've been studying ethics as a part of my preparation for the USMLE exam, in which informed consent and such is a big deal. That's not the case in India. For big procedures like surgeries, it works just fine, but for minor procedures and examinations, bullying works slightly better. Here we scold the patient and berate them for making 'illogical' decisions. I guess it is morally unethical, but at least it's for the good of the patient. However, this justification doesn't even make me feel better.

And so without waiting for my patient's response, I inserted the tube into her nose. My senior told me that this was a difficult patient and yesterday it had taken 10 tries to get the tube placed correctly. I got anxious for a few seconds, wondering how I'd be able to get it right on my first try (technically second) when experienced interns had failed. I managed to get the tube through to her nasopharynx after poking around a few times, then I kept pushing. I wasn't sure if my patient was choking, retching, or trying to swallow, but I decided to follow my friend's advice and kept pushing the tube in. After some time I reached the mark on the tube that I was supposed to go to that I'd measured earlier, 60 centimeters. My senior handed me his stethoscope and I placed its diaphragm below the patient's costal margin. My senior then attached a syringe to the open end of the tube and pushed forcefully, and I heard a gush of wind through my stethoscope, indicating that it was correctly placed in the stomach. After securing the tube to her nose with some strong

adhesive tape, I thanked my senior and he left to get back to his busy workload.

My friend had told me that on most days, half of the patients who came to the emergency ward were people who had been involved in road traffic accidents. The statement hit hard. Fractures, lacerations, internal bleeding, and the more deadly injuries like head trauma and even diffuse axonal injury, many of these were just the byproduct of rash driving, especially on two-wheelers. It made me think of a story I'd been thinking of writing a while ago, where in a futuristic society when all diseases had been cured, the only thing left were injuries from drunken violence, road traffic accidents, and assaults due simply to living in unsafe times. I had been thinking of entertaining the conclusion that what doctors in those futuristic times will be doing is just treating the symptoms of a sick society. There would be nothing 'noble' left to do, they would just be mechanics prolonging the meaningless lives of machines being played upon by the aristocratic forces above them.

What I hadn't considered was that something about this story of mine might pertain to our current world. If road traffic accidents were half the cases in the emergency, this would almost inevitably be the same situation in the rest of India and maybe even the world. Half of the consumed resources, energy, and manpower were being spent on extremely preventable injuries, notably due to a lack of helmets, the prevalence of two-wheelers, and faulty transport. And even with all the abundant death and destruction it wrought, no one was taking it seriously enough to try and stop it.

Road traffic accidents in themselves were just a major symptom of a sick society, a sign we could observe before drawing a deeper conclusion. It



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reminded me of the movie ‘Zeitgeist’, which made the claim that the more a country spent on healthcare, the more sick its inhabitants were. Maybe the conclusion didn’t hold for low-income countries whose medical infrastructure was so below the mark that they didn’t have even basic commodities. But past a certain threshold, I could begin to see the logic in the statement. After all, half our resources were being used for driving-related injuries weren’t they?

I went into the pediatric section of the emergency department where children of varying sizes lay on beds, most of them with ventilators attached to their faces. One of the patients was a small girl. She looked around 7 or 8 years old, and she was gripping her ventilator tightly as she breathed through it. She looked calm, and I was impressed by her stoic demeanor. I glanced at her medical file. She had aspergillosis, a fungus that had infected her lungs on top of her genetic condition of cystic fibrosis. That made me glance at her age, which was listed as 13. I’d seen cystic fibrosis patients before, but it was always strange to see them. Their growth was so stunted that it was impossible not to misread their age on sight.

Another girl wasn’t doing so well on her ventilator. She was breathing and wheezing heavily, letting out moans of pain intermittently. Two doctors were in front of her, discussing her case. They were trying to get her to lie down so that they could get an arterial blood sample, but she was resisting them because lying down would exacerbate her difficulty in breathing. I glanced at her file, too – she had type 2 respiratory failure, which meant that despite her forceful efforts at breathing, she wasn’t getting enough oxygen or expelling adequate amounts of carbon dioxide. It

was the first time I was seeing a patient like this, and I wondered how scary it must be, more than painful, to be trying to breathe, but being unable to do so.

Suddenly drowning didn’t seem like the scariest way of suffocating anymore. Perhaps a drowning person would have the hope that if they could just break through the surface, they would survive. But suffocating in the open, with adequate oxygen, while on a ventilator, not knowing why, and with no viable solution in sight – that was beginning to sound more painful. She had primary ciliary dyskinesia, which had led to bronchiectasis, and an exacerbation that produced her symptoms. I briefly wondered what her life would be like, even if she recovered from this acute attack. She had a genetic condition and would always be at risk of her symptoms worsening. She had an increased chance of catching infections, and she was most probably infertile. What was the life that patients like her would lead?

### **Looking for drama**

My friend and I were called over by a resident who told us to take a quick history of the latest patient to arrive. The patient was a young female, probably in her twenties, in a wheelchair and seemingly unconscious. We asked her attendant what had happened. She told us the woman had a lot of chest pain. Allegedly, three days ago the woman’s husband had died and since then she’d been vomiting a lot and today began complaining of chest pain.

Chest pain immediately made me think of the possibility of a myocardial infarction, but I knew that couldn’t be the case because the patient was too young. We told the resident the brief history

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and she came over to ask the attendant further questions. She asked if the patient had been eating food to which the attendant replied that she hadn't eaten since her husband's death. The resident then scribbled a prescription for pantoprazole and ondansetron injections.

That surprised me. Ondansetron was a medication for vomiting and pantoprazole was for acidity. I asked the resident what the diagnosis was and she said that it was most probably gastritis.

I was disappointed. Then I felt surprised that I was disappointed. Then I felt guilty that I had felt disappointed. I'd been expecting something more...dramatic. Maybe I was feeling this way because I liked the TV series House MD where each episode featured the lead doctor's diagnostic prowess. Most episodes included a complicated medical diagnosis interwoven into the patient's history and personality. I'd been thinking that with this patient's history of losing her husband, maybe she'd attempted suicide, thus causing her symptoms. Perhaps she'd overdosed on NSAIDs which caused a gastric ulceration and hence the pain and vomiting. Or maybe she'd been so emotionally afflicted that she'd gotten a rare condition like the broken heart syndrome. But fasting due to emotional trauma, leading to gastritis was just so...bland an explanation. However, if that was the case, shouldn't I have been relieved that the patient's condition wasn't serious? Wasn't it wrong of me to have been hoping for an interesting but concomitantly more deadly diagnosis?

But this wasn't a feeling that was exclusive to me. I'd heard plenty of times that residents in other departments got excited when one of their patients was diagnosed with a rare disease. And of course,

there was the story I'd been told a few days earlier of how some of my batchmates had visited a rural public health center and they'd encountered a patient with testicular atrophy. Everyone wanted to inspect him and examine his testicles, and in the end, the patient ran away from the center angrily, claiming that he wouldn't get any treatment there. Perhaps wanting interesting cases wasn't abnormal for doctors or medical students, but something about it didn't seem right.

We watched a resident try to insert a cannula in a few-month-old baby. But she couldn't get the veins, which would be predictably difficult since the baby was so tiny and hence the veins too thin. The baby was crying with each jab and his mother was restraining him. The resident seemed frustrated and was clearly fatigued. Perhaps her hands were shaking slightly, or maybe I was just imagining it. She even asked the baby in frustration if he had any veins. Maybe she said it to relieve some of her tension, maybe it was meant to be humorous, but it was just kind of sad.

One of the nurses informed us that the patient in bed 10 needed a urinary catheter placed. We gathered the required equipment and walked over to the bed. I'd done this procedure before, on the occasion of my batchmate's pill overdose, but like with the ryle's tube, I couldn't remember the procedure at all.

My friend told me that he'd need someone to assist him and I was glad to do so. When we reached bed 10, the patient's attendant greeted us. He asked us which batch we were in. That unnerved me. The patient seemed educated. He probably wouldn't want to know that we weren't doctors, not even interns. But I didn't think lying was a good option either. I told the attendant the

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truth, that we were fourth-year medical students, and he informed us that he was a resident in the department of dermatology and that the patient was his father. He asked us if we'd inserted a foley's catheter before. My friend automatically replied yes, which was a good thing, since I doubt the resident would have allowed us to experiment on his father had it been our first time. Forget the first time, if it had been my father, I doubt I would have let anyone less than an intern perform the procedure. I had to respect the resident, and probably his faith in the teaching regime, or whichever virtue it was that permitted him to allow students to do the procedure. Inserting a urinary catheter was a little more difficult than a ryle's tube since strict asepsis had to be maintained to prevent the chances of urinary tract infections, which were quite common.

The patient, like most patients, was only semiconscious and was making vague sounds occasionally. We pulled down his pants and I provided my friend with povidone-iodine laced cotton wads so that he could clean the perineal region. When my friend retracted the patient's penile foreskin to clean it, the patient must have felt it and grabbed my friend's hand to stop him. The dermatology resident pulled the patient's hand back and let us continue. The patient resisted more vigorously, however, when my friend began inserting the tube in his urethra after squeezing lubricant in it. There were two simultaneous modes of feeling that I could indulge in. One was where I could try to imagine what the patient was feeling, with a tube being pushed into my urethra. I didn't know what it felt like, having never experienced it, but even thinking about it felt painful and gave me an extremely strange feeling. But the other mode was where I could shut off this empathy and just

watch blankly as the tube was pushed further through the patient's urinary tract. This duality, with an off-and-on switch, fascinated me and I found myself switching between it during the procedure. However the patient's aversion to the procedure left me wondering about cases I'd read concerning people who presented to the emergency after having shoved electronic charging cables all the way into their bladder as a sexual perversion.

It turned out that inserting the foley's catheter had led to some urethral injury and there was some blood leaking out of the patient's urinary meatus. For a moment I was scared that the resident would shout at us, but he just calmly asked us to call a senior. As we went to find an intern, my friend told me that this type of injury was very common and that he was only calling a senior because the resident worked at this hospital and that had it been a normal patient, he would have just walked away.

### **The deeper ethical question**

After another hour we decided to leave the emergency ward. While leaving I saw one of my batchmates come in, who had his clinical postings here at the time. He was a typical gym freak, a wannabe cool dude, belonging to a category that my friends liked to call toxic masculinity. He'd thrown away his self-respect to be accepted by the 'cool' gang of our batch, which he'd failed to do. He kept trying to come up with witty remarks on our WhatsApp batch group, and he'd kept pursuing a girl who'd made it abundantly clear she wasn't interested in him. I didn't need more evidence to label him as more towards the pathetic side.

People like him spawned doubts in my mind about how doctors could do good for the world and

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the public, and yet be such idiots in their personal life. This wasn't just related to my 'wannabe cool' batchmate anymore, but to the rest of the medical fraternity, especially those who relished ragging and scolding students for no logical reason. It was a duality I'd been trying to wrap my head around since my first day of entering medical college. And if I accepted that such hypocrisy might exist, did the good they did for the public justify their incredible shortcomings as human beings? Perhaps I needed to accept that things could exist on a gray scale, but gray scale reasoning has always sounded to me like an excuse for not being able to come up with a good enough answer.

But what about incompetent doctors? Surely they were unequivocally bad, right? My friend snapped me out of my thoughts by asking me if after retracting the patient's foreskin, we'd returned it to its position. I thought back and concluded that we hadn't. That left me with an extremely weird feeling, which consisted of me imagining what it would feel like to have my foreskin permanently retracted. Hopefully, someone would notice what we'd messed up with the patient. If the foreskin was left retracted for too long, it could lead to paraphimosis which would need to be treated surgically. Thank god since we were just students we wouldn't be held liable in case something did happen, but still...it did sound painful...

I assessed my feelings to see if I was satisfied with respect to what I'd come to achieve – my productivity. It certainly felt that I was satisfied – I was feeling good, I'd learned some stuff, seen some interesting cases, and had fun. Was I going to come back again sometime soon? I scanned my mind, but there wasn't a very distinct positive

response. I sighed. That was part of my problem, everything became mundane so fast. Consistency always became a chore, no matter how fun the activity was. I needed to experience rapid stimulation and acknowledgment to prevent passive tolerance from developing. It would probably take some time for the high of the emergency to wear off, until which I'd have to search for something else that I could delude my brain into classifying as productive.

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## **To Save Ukraine, America Must Help Europe**

Gary Grappo  
September 18, 2022

**U**kkraine's recent gains in the eastern sections of the country underscore the critical importance of continued Western support for Ukraine. The oncoming winter will test the West's, and most especially Europe's, commitment to maintain that support in order to provide Ukraine the political, economic and

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military backing indispensable to Ukraine's ultimate victory.

Ukrainians are rightly ebullient over their forces' recent impressive victories over Russian occupying forces, primarily in the east but also in the south near Kherson. These triumphs prove what many military planners and strategists have known for centuries: invading forces are no match for the resilience, courage, determination and utter doggedness and grit demonstrated by the forces and the people fighting to preserve their nation's sovereignty and their own dignity.

It is also just as true that even intangibles like superhuman courage and determination require very tangible weapons, equipment, resources and money to carry the fight to the enemy. Ukraine has thankfully been able to rely on a steady flow of all that from the United States and its NATO allies. It's no exaggeration to say the combination of unflinching Ukrainian will and unrelenting Western support has turned Vladimir Putin's grandiose dreams of conquest into a hellish nightmare of defeat and humiliation.

Russia is no stranger to invasions, the two most notable having been Napoleon's disaster of 1812 and Germany's (aka Operation Barbarossa) of 1941-1942. Both ended in ignominious defeats for both invading forces and ultimately to losing those respective wars.

Long, unsustainable and indefensible supply lines were major factors in Russia's ultimate defeat of the French and German armies. Today, poorly maintained and uncoordinated supply lines are compounding Russia's task of subduing Ukraine. Ukraine, on the other hand, can count on a reliable

flow, if not always the most desired, of necessary weapons and supplies to repel the invader.

### **Is Winter Russia's Ally?**

In a rather strange turn of history, however, Putin is counting on winter, a major factor in the French and German defeats, to change his fortunes, less because of a chill in Ukrainian determination but rather a cooling of European will to continue its support at current levels. He is wielding one of the few major weapons he has left, oil and gas. Europe is now belatedly learning what it means to depend on a single energy supplier, especially an aggressive and manipulative one. The EU and individual European countries have taken impressive measures to reduce and ultimately eliminate the continent's dependence on Russian oil and gas. Europe's reliance on Russian gas has been reduced from nearly 42% to the mid-to-low twenties, with commitments to eliminate all Russian gas from Europe, with a few notable exceptions like Hungary, by early 2023. Oil dependence is falling as well.

However, that dramatic progress will not be without pain and sacrifice on the part of European businesses, factories and people. In Putin's demonic fever dream, he is expecting European will to weaken if not collapse as factories must either shut down periodically or operate at reduced hours. And he expects European popular support for continued backing of Ukraine will ebb as they huddle in homes and apartment buildings in heavy sweaters and jackets with thermostats turned low to conserve energy. Will shivering Europeans undergoing a distressed economy suffer for their

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struggling European colleagues to the east? Vladimir Putin thinks not.

### **Enter America**

And this is when the US must go even beyond what it has done to date on Ukraine's behalf. It must show that it, too, is willing to suffer some pain in order to ensure Ukraine's continuing gain in the battlefield.

First, considerable headway has already been made. US LNG exports to Europe through June of this year were at 39 billion cubic meters (bcm) versus 34 bcm in all of 2021. The stepped-up flows will continue. However, several obstacles stand in the way. LNG contracts are negotiated with customers for as long as a 20-year period. Exporters are bound by these and have limited leeway for modifying them. Additionally, infrastructure on both sides of the Atlantic are impediments. LNG terminals in the US are already at capacity and Europe lacks sufficient receiving terminals. Businesses and governments on both sides are rushing to overcome these. For the US, however, the US administration and energy exporting companies should work cooperatively, e.g., perhaps minimizing bureaucratic and even some environmental standards on the production as well as the shipping side to ensure LNG flows continue and even increase. European governments, heretofore hesitant to take such un-green actions, should consider similar steps as well.

Second, Europeans, who already pay considerably more for their energy than their American counterparts, may want to see Americans taking steps to show solidarity not only for Ukrainians but also for Europeans. For

example, today the least expensive gasoline in Europe is still considerably more expensive, sometimes by as much as two-three dollars per gallon, than the most expensive gasoline in the US, which is in California. The natural gas price differential is even greater, sometimes by as much as 40-50 times more, than what a typical American consumer might pay.

There are many ways this might be done. For one, a simple voluntary program asking Americans to lower their thermostats this winter. The natural gas saved would then be available for European customers. Another likely more controversial approach – especially in the run-up to this November's midterm elections for Congress, in which the Biden administration is most keen to preserve its slim majorities – is a one-time gasoline surcharge. The revenue from such a tax could be used both to reimburse low-income consumers dependent on commuting for their livelihoods and also to continue US economic support for Ukraine. The additional supply generated by the tax-induced consumption reduction is also available for export to Europe to help mitigate their anticipated shortages.

Clearly, these would be tough measures for the American public to swallow right now. Inflation and the concomitant slowing economy remain uppermost on the minds of Americans today. While American public support for Ukraine is still generally strong, it has softened since the early days of the invasion. But there is a continuing strong belief that failure to turn back Putin's invasion will only encourage the Russian bear to seek prey elsewhere in Europe. Stopping the bully Putin means continuing American and European

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support for Ukraine through the tough winter months.

The more important point is less the actual measures taken than America's demonstration to Europe that America, too, is prepared to suffer some pain in order to save Ukraine.

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## **The EU Faces Major Challenges This Autumn**

John Bruton  
September 20, 2022

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**The European Union is facing some pretty severe challenges this autumn.**

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**T**he biggest challenge the EU will face starting this autumn will be the high price, and insufficient supply, of natural gas. This will have a disproportionately damaging effect on Germany and Northern Italy, the two manufacturing hubs of western Europe. Recession in China has hit these hubs hard as they have lost export markets.

I have always taken the view that, without Germany, there would be no EU. Germany provides the financial backstop on which all the EU's ambitious plans, including the Green Deal, and the recently acquired capacity of the EU to borrow, rest. Without a healthy German economy, and a Germany that is prepared to think of its neighbors as well as of itself, the EU would wither. So, it is important that other EU states demonstrate energy solidarity with Germany during this autumn and winter, when the economic model of the EU's powerhouse is under particular stress.

In addition to the German economic crisis, the EU is facing other threats that could also become existential. One comes from Poland, and the other from the UK.

**Poland's not-so independent judiciary**

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In Poland, the courts system there has been politicized, to suit the agenda of the ruling Law and Justice Party. In effect, Polish Courts are rejecting the primacy of EU over Polish law, in disputes around issues that are within the competence of the EU under the treaties.

This principle of the primacy of EU law, to be authoritatively interpreted by the European Court of Justice, is not new. It dates back to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) decisions of 1964 and 1970. By having a single ultimate interpreter of EU law, namely the ECJ, we have been able to create a single market with consistent rules, consistently interpreted, and more or less consistently applied, across all the 27 countries of the Union.

The Polish government has interfered with the independence of its courts by putting in place a disciplinary tribunal for judges. Some judges, disliked by the government, were sacked. Such actions encourage a nationalistic and eurosceptic interpretation of the position of Polish law within the EU.

Cases on the interpretation of EU laws, as applied in Poland, are not being referred to the ECJ for authoritative interpretation, as is the normal procedure in most EU countries. Thus, the primacy of EU law in Poland is being slowly eroded. If a big country, like Poland, gets away with this, other countries like Hungary, which is even more eurosceptic, will follow suit, and the EU will begin to decay.

Despite Poland's undermining of the EU, the country was allotted €36 billion in EU funds in June 2022. The country is yet to dissolve the disciplinary tribunal as required by previous EU

decisions. Poland has also not addressed the issue of the primacy of EU law at all.

In a split vote, the European Commission (EC) led by Ursula von der Leyen voted to release the funds on the understanding that Poland would meet certain "milestones." These include the abolition of the disciplinary tribunal but not the affirmation of the primacy of EU law. The EC decision to release funds was influenced by the burden Poland has borne in aiding Ukraine. However, this decision is fundamentally damaging to the EU. The rule of law is one of the EU's core values for which Ukrainians are sacrificing their lives. It is also a key reason why countries like Ukraine want to join the EU as full members.

For small countries like Ireland, the EU offers a great benefit. Decisions in the EU are made based on clear rules, not raw power. Ireland and other small countries cannot be indifferent to the precedent Poland is setting for the EU. It is also true that Brussels should be conservative in asserting what comes within the legal competence of the EU. Any overreach could be damaging.

### **British tactics on Brexit**

Not only Poland but also the UK is challenging the primacy of EU law. The UK is also threatening the integrity of the single market. British tactics on Brexit are to blame.

Under the Northern Ireland Protocol, Northern Ireland has unfettered access to both the EU and the UK markets. This avoids the need for customs controls on the land border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. The UK does not want the ECJ to be the final interpreter of EU rules, as applied in Northern Ireland. The UK also wants Northern



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Ireland exempted from EU state aid and value added tax (VAT) rules. Such a precedent would undermine the level playing field essential to the EU single market.

UK Prime Minister Liz Truss seems to be willing to provoke a major crisis on this matter. Truss seems to believe that, if she stands strong, the EU will cave in. Truss represents a deeper problem. The UK has never taken the EU seriously and has a patronizing attitude towards it.

The EU should not wait until the UK has started to flout the Northern Ireland Protocol to propose trade sanctions. Once the protocol disapplication bill reaches the committee stage in the House of Lords, the EC should publish the full list of its proposed trade sanctions on the UK. These sanctions should be imposed on the day the UK legislation is implemented. Such advance notice by the EU would allow cooler heads to assert themselves in London.

I still have no doubt that practical compromises can be reached on the implementation of the protocol. In July, the Europe Committee of the House of Lords published a very interesting report, with the evidence it received, on the protocol. The report concluded that the protocol had adversely affected the retail sector but advantaged manufacturing investment in Northern Ireland.

I drew two conclusions from the report and its underlying evidence.

First, the UK will lose its court cases governed by EU law for flouting the Northern Ireland Protocol. Under the Vienna Law on Treaties, the UK would have to show it had been suffering from “coercion” or “improper process” when it signed

and ratified the protocol. Given that the UK has been negotiating with the EU for over a year, the UK would not be able to claim either ground to wriggle out of the protocol.

### **The EU and the US must collaborate on Northern Ireland**

Second, the best way to find solutions to practical problems would involve officials of the UK and the EU meeting key people from Northern Ireland from various sectors of the economy. Sadly, this cumbersome format is not conducive to constructive thinking or to problem solving.

Michael Gove, a key Brexiteer, suggested a joint EU-UK consultative group of officials who could talk to each other and with relevant economic actors. If Liz Truss wants to keep open the option of a negotiated agreement, as she says she does, she should activate Gove’s proposal. A breakdown in EU-UK negotiations would cause unnecessary trouble at a time of much trouble.

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# Is the US-Iran Nuclear Deal Worth the Hassle?

Syed Zain Abbas Rizvi  
September 26, 2022

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**A renewed US-Iran nuclear deal is on the cards. Yet the changing regional dynamics, perpetually diverging positions as well as resistance from domestic critics and foreign allies have made the last mile treacherous, raising questions whether such a deal is possible.**

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**T**he deal with Iran has been on the precipice since US President Joe Biden assumed his office last year. It has been a tortuous ride from partisan resistance in Washington to a change of regime in Tehran. On multiple occasions, the European mediators have intervened to prevent deviation in the talks. A ‘final draft’ is now the object of current negotiations that could pave a path to economic appeasement for Iran and a semblance of security for the broader Middle East.

The time has come to ask the following questions: Can this deal play a successful role in curbing regional insecurities? Could it prove to be an economic panacea for Europe? And would it reinvent the animus between Iran and the United States?

## **The Iran Nuclear Deal 2015**

The nuclear accord between Iran and the European Union (EU) alongside the P5+1 - a strategic coalition of five permanent members of the UN

Security Council and Germany - was a pragmatic arrangement. It crafted a nexus of economic pressure and diplomatic coercion that weaved a balance of power aiming at ensuring a binding commitment. Also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the plan was signed in 2015 after years of deliberations. It waived sanctions on Iran in exchange for a framework that placed curbs on its nuclear program and gave tentative access to Iran’s declared nuclear sites for international inspections. The deal symbolized a landmark victory for the Democrats and Barack Obama’s administration, despite critical opposition within and without.

Things went awry when Donald Trump, a rightist Republican, became president and nixed the nuclear deal in 2018. While his legacy is still heavily debated, marked by domestic political and social turmoil and his attempt to isolate American interests in an increasingly globalized world, the unilateral exit from the Iran deal stands as one of his least rational foreign policies. Nicholas Burns, an American Diplomat and US Ambassador to China, termed the decision of withdrawal “reckless and one of the most serious mistakes of his presidency.” According to the Pew Research Center, a centrist American think tank, 94% of US international relations scholars opposed the US departure from the deal. Their prescient fears materialized the very next year.

By 2019, Iran had enriched its Uranium stockpile to 60% concentration, up from around 3% before the US withdrawal. This meant it was mere weeks away from developing a nuclear weapon. While the economic sanctions further deteriorated the social fabric of Iranian society, the nation’s impressive adaptability in the face of financial

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hardship continues to this day. In fact, it is a case study often employed as a testament to the failure of sanctions without appropriate complementary diplomatic policies.

The absence of economic relief, despite adhering to the nuclear deal, shifted power from moderates under former Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to hardline theocrats under the current leadership of President Ebrahim Raisi. Now after a dismal exit from Afghanistan and rapidly alienating allies in the Persian Gulf, Biden is determined to reshape the deal amidst fierce criticism from the Republicans. From the suspension of talks to heated exchanges between American forces and Iranian proxies in Syria, the indirect negotiations have continued, inching closer to a resolution. But the questions asked in 2018 are still unanswered!

### **A Middle Eastern Resolve?**

When Donald Trump reneged on the agreement, the Gulf states voiced overwhelming support for the decision. The UAE Foreign Ministry urged the international community "to respond positively to President Trump's position." Saudi Arabia backed the move that severed economic gains and prevented Iran from "developing ballistic missiles and supporting terrorist groups in the region."

Four years later, the UAE recently revived diplomatic relations with Tehran, reinstating its ambassador to Iran after a six year hiatus. Saudi Arabia has visibly distanced itself from American influence and appears to be gradually moving towards a diplomatic connection with Iran. The reasons are manifold. From Biden's aversion to supporting the Saudi offensive in Yemen to Iran's continued support to Houthi rebels despite harsh

sanctions, the Arab states have become disenchanted. The attacks on Saudi oil facilities against a backdrop of receding American military support have disillusioned the monarchy from the supposed effectiveness of a strategy that consists of cornering Iran and trusting US policies amid a patent polity divide in America.

The regional concerns regarding the deal that shaped Trump's rhetoric to withdraw are still elusive. While Iran has backed away from its demand to remove the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) from US State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO), its contentious ballistic missile program remains problematic in the final phase of negotiations.

Moreover, Tehran has further developed its intelligence wing since the assassination of its IRGC Divisional Commander Qasem Soleimani in 2020. Its proxy militia forces have exponentially grown in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. And its grip on the Syrian heartland, thanks to Russian support, is nothing short of strategic leverage against its bordering arch-nemesis: the state of Israel. The core opposition from both the Republican fraction in the US Congress and the Israeli government has aligned on a singular premise. They claim that a loose nuclear deal that ignores Iran's militaristic capabilities and its allegedly extremist presence in the region would be a strategic blunder. It would eventually allow Iran to cash in on oil revenue and streamline support to its proxies threatening regional stability.

In August, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid underscored his opposition to any deal with Iran that leads to windfall profits for Iran's hardline leadership. While planning closed-door discussions with the P5+1 nations to rethink the

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elements of negotiations, he bolstered Israel's Mossad spy agency in order to "prepare for any scenario" if the deal is revived. Israeli leadership has maintained throughout the negotiations over the past year that promises made to Iran would not prevent Israel from launching its covert operations against the Islamic Republic.

Traditionally, Israel has focused its shadow policies on disrupting the military infrastructure of Iran, ranging from acts of sabotage against its nuclear facilities to assassinating its nuclear scientists. Hence, there is no reason to believe that a successful nuclear deal would lead to a prosperous Middle Eastern landscape. Even if Iran returns to compliance and normalizes relations with the Arab states, the eternal strife over Palestine would likely have a spillover effect sooner or later through indirect confrontation, whether with Hezbollah in Lebanon or with Hamas in Gaza. Thus, framing this deal as a prelude to regional harmony is unrealistically ambitious. And highly unlikely!

### **Economic Advantage to Europe?**

In 2018, when Trump's sanctions kicked in, Iran reduced its oil production to a third of its capacity. However, despite bearing a cost of over \$200 billion in lost oil revenue, Iran managed to curb production while minimizing damage to its oil fields. Currently, Iran exports about 800,000 barrels per day with a capacity to rapidly scale up to around 2.5 million barrels per day, according to shipping estimates compiled by Bloomberg. Since 2018, Iranian output has predominantly poured into China. A nuclear deal, however, could allow Iran to supply twice what it exports now. And according to energy analysts, Iran could even reach

its 2017 production level of 3.8 million barrels per day in just a few months.

Nevertheless, contrary to mainstream beliefs, waivers on Iranian crude exports would not ease the energy crisis in Europe. Admittedly, the flow of Iranian oil would mitigate pressure on global oil prices. It could even alleviate the pains of inflation for oil importing countries in Asia. Yet we need to understand the basis of the soaring energy costs in Europe. It is not oil; it is natural gas. Electricity in Britain, the chemical plants in Germany, and the industries in all of Europe thrive on natural gas piped in from Russia. Disruption of the gas supply that arrives via the Nord Stream 1 (NS 1) pipeline has debilitated the commercial and domestic equilibrium in European countries. While oil transit is seaborne, gas supply relies on a complex pipeline network. Europe is dependent on the Russian grid, which is impossible to replace in the short term. Even alternatives like coal would not be enough, as most systems run on natural gas while compatible substitutes like LNG are limited in supply. Thus, while normalizing oil prices may fetch some relief to transportation costs and consumer prices, it would not quell fears of a chilly winter ahead.

Even if we assume that the nuclear deal with Iran allows roughly two million barrels per day into the global oil market, we should also consider that sanctions would not disappear overnight. Instead, sanctions would be phased away gradually over a set time frame. Moreover, many countries would be reluctant to trade with Iran even after the sanctions are completely relieved. There are no US sanctions against Russian grains, fertilizers, and energy supplies. Still, many countries have scaled

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back imports from Russia to avoid retaliation from the United States.

Given the historical context of tensions between Iran and the US, investors and neighboring countries would likely be wary of the consequences of engagement with Iran. After all, the US administration has offered no guarantees of an ironclad deal beyond Biden's presidential term, which ends in 2024. The deal clearly does not enjoy bipartisan support. Thus, while I can foresee ebbing pressure on the global oil market, I am also aware that the OPEC+ alliance would likely cut production to accommodate the Iranian oil supply and maintain elevated oil prices in the international market. Therefore, in the short run, oil supply from Iran could ease the burden on neighboring oil-importing countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan. But the bane of energy costs in Europe would still largely depend on the stage of the conflict with Russia.

### **A Thaw in US-Iran Relations?**

Since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, with the exception of the George W. Bush administration, every US government has tried to engage with Iran and failed. Bush launched the Iraq war in 2003, which (ironically) proved to be a pivot to Iranian theocracy, spreading through militias in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. Trump tried an unorthodox approach by pressuring Iran via sanctions, assassinations, and diplomatic isolation. Instead of a weakened Iran, however, those policies made Iran more hard-skinned with newfangled nuclear facilities and a sophisticated Combat Drone Program.

The American policies in the face of a resilient Iran offer insights that many commentators have

overlooked. Iran is an Islamist theocracy that promotes hardline governance, draconian and conservative policies, and a political system embedded in a religious hierarchy. Its Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is a vocal critic of American imperialism and has held tightly to the revolutionary ideology of his predecessor, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Anti-Americanism is central to Iranian orthodox identity, which is continually apparent in its narrative concerning foreign policy issues ranging from the Russian invasion of Ukraine to the Chinese intimidation of Taiwan.

The recent visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Iran offered another example of Iran's characteristic opposition to American incentives. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei blamed the "Mafia Regime" of the US for the war in Ukraine, alleging that NATO would have eventually started the war. Successive American administrations have consistently failed to reach a balance of diplomacy and coercion that is pivotal to engaging Iran.

William J. Burns - Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) - recently wrote that the 2015 Nuclear Deal was a product of "tough-minded diplomacy, economic and military leverage, and International consensus." Today, US diplomacy has become a mockery of statesmanship, whether in Ukraine, the Asia-Pacific, or the Middle East. American economic sway is becoming subtly diluted with the emergence of global duality due to China's ascendancy. And the traditional international cohesion, that the US once knew how to rally, has now become a visible chasm that has compromised the effectiveness of the Western offensive against Russia and China. India's deviantly neutral foreign

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policy is one of the myriad examples and a throwback to the era of non-alignment.

Ultimately, the US should acknowledge its blunders and recalibrate the scale of its diplomacy. Over the years, it should have learned that Iran is hawkishly lethal, resilient to sabotage, diplomatically adept, and thrives under isolation. It is now high time that the US establishes a base of mutual trust by either holding firmly onto the agreement or scrapping the deal entirely before it's agreed upon. Because any sane mind would realize that a repeat of Trump's escapade would be even more catastrophic this time around. My colleague Karim Sadjadpour aptly sums up my argument in his opinion piece for The New York Times: "The Iranian regime has shown it's too influential to ignore, too dogmatic to reform, too brutal to overthrow, and too large to [fully] contain." Hence, either make a deal for the right reasons or maintain the status quo. The third option is too inimical to even put into words.

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