

major political innovation, destined to be a model for others. After numerous manifestations in the intervening years, American exceptionalism has emerged in the past dozen years as a “state-sponsored ideology,” a full-throated “ism” seen in some quarters as an accurate litmus test of patriotism. Closely related but distinct concepts, including “the American way of life” (framing American identity in opposition to communism), “the American dream” (the opportunity for all people to achieve everything their ability and ambition allow), and “the American creed” (capturing the political values of individualism and egalitarianism), provide additional insights. A tough closing chapter examines the often gaping differences between the beliefs Americans hold regarding their country’s exceptionalism and the realities of life in the United States and American conduct abroad.

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*Wildland: The Making of America’s Fury*  
BY EVAN OSNOS. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021, 480 pp.

Osnos returned from a decade living abroad to find a drastically altered United States, whose core values—the rule of law, truth, the right and the ability to pursue a better life—appeared to be under siege. His research into what has changed and why, told principally through the stories of individuals, stretched over seven years. The resulting book captures the widening inequalities of wealth and opportunity and the hardening of class lines that Donald Trump exploited. Others have recognized these same trends, but no one has told the story with more immediacy and impact. Osnos has an eye for the telling

statistic and can make questions of policy come vividly alive. Osnos visits Clarksburg, West Virginia, and Chicago to paint the lives of the country’s poor. But his portrait of the transformation of “the Golden Triangle” of Greenwich, Connecticut, where he grew up, is the book’s high point. The town’s most influential residents were once wealthy, moderate Republicans, of the likes of the Bush family patriarch Prescott Bush, who were imbued with a strong sense of civic duty and a belief in government. Osnos finds Greenwich now inhabited by flamboyant hedge fund billionaires and private equity financiers building ever-larger mansions. These blinkered folks are libertarians who oppose taxes and regulations of any kind; they fervently believe that all they have achieved is their own doing, and they see little role for government in their lives or their communities.

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## Western Europe

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*Andrew Moravcsik*

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*Free: A Child and a Country at the End of History*  
BY LEA YPI. Norton, 2022, 288 pp.

**T**his prize-winning memoir recounts with wit, charm, and wisdom the author’s life before and after the fall of communism in Albania. Now a professor of political philosophy at the London School of Economics, she recalls her early youth in that hermetically sealed tyranny, when she embraced the cult of person-

ality established by the country's idiosyncratic despot, Enver Hoxha. It was a place where all truths were lies, including the Muslim heritage and secret anticommunist history of her own family—yet for an 11-year-old, the country was safe and reassuring. She was disappointed and displaced by the fall of communism, only to have her hopes dashed again when, as in so many postcommunist states, liberal parties advocating free markets and democratic politics allowed their ideals to be corrupted by the kleptocratic temptations of privatization. The government encouraged citizens to invest in a pyramid scheme, triggering a revolt and eventually a civil war—a process in which her family, along with many others, lost everything. After years of disorientation, she left the country and began the long path to her current position. Drawing philosophical lessons from her experience, she dismisses both socialists who cling to utopian ideals and libertarians who espouse a minimal state, opting for a more moderate commitment to social democracy.

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*Uncertain Allies: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Threat of a United Europe*

BY KLAUS LARRES. Yale University Press, 2021, 432 pp.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the U.S. government enthusiastically supported European integration. Yet under President Richard Nixon and his adviser Henry Kissinger, Washington began to view European economic and security cooperation as a threat—one Nixon characterized as “a Frankenstein monster.” Although this book does not break new historiographic ground, it summarizes

this epochal shift well, arguing that the central problem lay in divergent national interests. With a monetary crisis weakening the Bretton Woods system and a geopolitical debacle in Vietnam, the United States came to believe that the Europeans should spend more on defense, reduce their agricultural protections, accept the devaluation of the U.S. dollar, and abstain from criticism of American global priorities and actions. If Europe refused, Kissinger reasoned, the United States should seek to keep it divided. Understandably, the Europeans viewed such demands as misguided and unreasonable—and some began to question whether the United States was a reliable ally. The U.S. government has never returned to its full support for Europe, Larres argues, although he surely overreaches in treating the state of transatlantic relations under former President Donald Trump as a natural continuation of Nixon's policies.

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*Principles and Agents: The British Slave Trade and Its Abolition*

BY DAVID RICHARDSON. Yale University Press, 2022, 384 pp.

Powered by mass demand for West Indian sugar, the immense profitability of transporting slaves, and the dominance of the Royal Navy, the United Kingdom became the leading slave trader of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The British government exploited such trade to cement its dominance over its imperial rival Holland, and traders in British cities such as Liverpool reinvested their gains to fuel the Industrial Revolution. Despite the lucrative benefits of slavery, Parliament abolished slave trading in

1807 and slavery itself three decades later. Some historians attribute these reforms to the declining profitability of colonial sugar production and shifts in the economics of empire induced by the American Revolution. Others stress a powerful abolitionist movement led by members of dissenting religious denominations, who pioneered modern mass mobilization techniques still employed by activist and advocacy groups today. Richardson points instead to the high costs of sending British troops to suppress slave revolts in the West Indies and the desire of British strategic planners to shift their attention and British resources to cementing mercantilist and strategic advantages over other European colonial powers.

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*Waterloo Sunrise: London From the Sixties to Thatcher*

BY JOHN DAVIS. Princeton University Press, 2022, 600 pp.

In this book, a leading urban historian argues that London pioneered the changes, good and bad, that have transformed all world cities over the past half century. In 1960, a fine restaurant shocked the city by admitting a single male diner without a tie. Just a few years later, multicolored male clothing, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, and loose sexual mores made London “the most swinging city in the world”—a place seemingly without any remaining social rules. Classic urban problems followed. Smog and water pollution spread. Concrete highways, sterile housing blocks, and Brutalist office buildings sparked a preservationist reaction—but too late to save much more than Piccadilly Circus and Covent Garden. New immigrants

and their British-born offspring vented frustration and anger at their exclusion and discrimination. Hordes of tourists, many of them young, flooded into town. The decline of traditional industry blighted neighborhoods and weakened the established strongholds of the Labour Party. Eventually, an alliance of conservative small-business owners and suburban homeowners began to vote for the Conservative Party, ushering in the era of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

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## Western Hemisphere

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*Richard Feinberg*

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*Unleashing Central America's Growth Potential*

BY HULYA ULKU AND GABRIEL ZAOURAK. World Bank, 2021, 60 pp.

*U.S. Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration in Central America*

BY THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL. White House, 2021, 20 pp.

**T**wo policy reports probe the reasons why so many people leave Central America to come to the United States. Both advance reasonably well-integrated economic models of development grounded in recent history. Both propose comprehensive reforms; each package is reasonable in isolation but utterly daunting when considered in combination. The World Bank study dismisses the common notion that development in Central America has failed; rather, for nearly three decades, annual economic growth rates have averaged over