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those who knew Holbrooke what they have lost and allows others to learn something about one of the great men of our time.


Isaacson’s magnificent, gripping biography of the Apple founder Steve Jobs is more than the life of the business visionary who created the world’s most valuable company and changed the lives of millions of people. It is also a demonstration of the continuing vitality of American culture. Jobs—a vegan, antiestablishment, LSD-taking college dropout—ultimately created a series of products that helped reshape American industry. Like many great entrepreneurs, Jobs had a personality and views that were quirky, eccentric, and sometimes off-putting. But American society proved flexible and hungry enough to enable Jobs and his insurgent band of obsessives and dreamers to find the financing and make the deals needed to put Macs, iPods, iPhones, and iPads into the hands of eager customers all over the world. The ability of Isaacson to write books that capture an age as well as a man makes him one of our best and most important biographers. *Steve Jobs* shows Isaacson at his best.


Parmar’s flawed but important study of the role of foundations in American foreign policy during the last 70 years brings needed attention to a subject that has not received nearly enough scrutiny. Parmar’s most valuable insight is that although foundations have often failed in their stated objectives of promoting democracy and reducing poverty in developing countries, they have succeeded in creating networks of scholars and activists who have helped recast global intellectual life in the pragmatic American mold. These networks, along with the globalization of the American university and nongovernmental organization models, are among the most striking and important aspects of the post–World War II world, and Parmar does well to highlight their rise. But his book is too polemic to provide a full account of the phenomena it investigates; worse, Parmar seems to think that Americans could have easily reduced poverty and made the world a utopia had they only been less interested in their nefarious networking agenda. Still, students of this important topic will appreciate this pioneering work.

Western Europe


The late Judt was among the West’s leading public intellectuals and among the greatest intellectual historians of the West. His gift was to meld the two: his history captured the excitement of past intellectual debates, and his commentary was infused with the perspective of a master historian. The magnum opus he never wrote would have been a grand intellectual history placing in historical
context the modern ideologies he studied—
socialism, nationalism, conservatism,
liberalism, Marxism, Zionism, European
federalism, religious fundamentalism—and
maintaining their relevance for future
generations. The closest he came are the
series of testimonial conversations con-
tained in this book, conducted with the
Yale historian Snyder during the final
months of Judt’s battle with Lou Gehrig’s
disease. The book highlights his status as
a perpetual insider-outsider in France,
the United Kingdom, and the United
States, which seems to have afforded him
a keen appreciation of the peculiar cultural
and historical circumstances of each.
Yet most moving for the reader are
Judt’s fierce commitment to history as
an indispensable key to understanding
the present and his ability, even when
speaking his final thoughts through a
breathing tube, to express himself in clear,
forthright language. Despite a sometimes
meandering conversational form, the result
is a volume filled with memorable insights
that any educated person will enjoy.

The French Way: How France Embraced
and Rejected American Values and Power.
BY RICHARD F. KUISEL. Princeton
University Press, 2011, 544 pp. $49.50.
This book captures France’s deep am-
bivalence toward American economics,
politics, and culture. After a scholarly
lifetime explaining French attitudes
toward liberal values, free markets, and
foreigners, the political scientist Kuisel
is uniquely suited to the task. Many
French find the United States’ inequality,
materialism, populism, and global militar-
ism deeply distasteful. Like so many
things French, this response remains
paradoxical: Americanization and anti-
Americanization coexist together. The
French flirt with transatlantic fashions
and ideas, from free-market economics
to California Cabernet. Some of it sticks,
as Euro Disney, 1,000 McDonald’s, and
many successful American TV shows attest.
The French are more willing to use military
force, support high technology, and oppose
both communist and Islamist extremism
than most other Europeans. Yet in the
end, the French remain firmly wedded
to views of democracy, family, work,
and lifestyle that diverge from those
of Americans, and there is little sign of
change. These views are particularly
pronounced on the left, but even French
business is ambivalent about the United
States, seeking more freedom from
regulation but remaining suspicious
of moving toward what is perceived as
an underregulated U.S. model. Kuisel
unpacks all this, making this book
required reading for anyone interested
in relations between the world’s two
oldest republics.

After the Fall: The End of the European
Dream and the Decline of a Continent.
BY WALTER LAQUEUR. Thomas
Laqueur is a commentator about whom
it is hard not to feel ambivalent. On the
plus side, as a widely published scholar
of twentieth-century history, now retired
from Georgetown and London’s Institute
of Contemporary History, he brings
formidable intelligence and historical
erudition to the task of putting Europe’s
current predicament into perspective. In
contrast to commonplace conservative
critics of Europe, Laqueur, when he
cites Brooks Adams or Raymond Aron,
Prince Klemens von Metternich or Jean
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Monnet, sounds as though he knows what he is talking about. On the negative side, this book repeats a set of one-sided criticisms about continental Europe typical of the Anglo-American right: it is militarily weak, demographically feeble, economically incompetent, fixated on human rights, overly critical of the United States, morally relativistic—and, above all, too Muslim. Laqueur searches in vain for the causes of these alleged problems, obsessing about demographics and non-Christian immigration even while admitting they are not the primary factors. When Laqueur advances such arguments, the subtlety and factual basis so evident in his more general analysis desert him. Still, this jeremiad will surely be discussed widely.


Great historical figures generate their own myths, often deliberately. One task of the historian is to recapture, as much as possible, things as they actually were. Few modern politicians have generated more fictions than—and few so deliberately as—the American and British conservative revolutionaries of the 1980s, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. According to their overlapping myths, they were idealists who stood together for freedom, robust militaries, and a firm hand against terrorism. Yet looking back, the truth seems more complex and subtle. Thatcher’s inimitable Churchillian persona was the result of careful coaching by political professionals, and Reagan was far more pragmatic than most who invoke his name would have one believe. Aldous’ startling conclusion is that Reagan and Thatcher clashed repeatedly over issues such as the Falklands, Grenada, sanctions against the Soviets, the Strategic Defense Initiative, nuclear arms control and missile policy, the Middle East (especially Lebanon and Libya), and the West’s relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev—all the while crafting an image of conservative unity for the media. In reality, the Anglo-American relationship during the 1980s was weaker in many ways than U.S. relations with France or Germany. This brilliant book reminds readers of the simple lesson that in diplomacy, interests often trump ideology—and spin trumps both.

Western Hemisphere

Richard Feinberg


Forget the misleading title: this engrossing political memoir tells the inspiring story of how during the 1980s, a determined political opposition managed to outmaneuver an entrenched military dictatorship and restore democracy to Chile. As a tenacious leader of that opposition, Lagos built a strategy that eschewed violence, forged unity among quarreling factions, and lent courage to a fear-stricken population—timeless lessons for pro-democracy movements fighting authoritarian regimes everywhere. As minister of education and minister of public works, and later as