

region grounded in the deployment of American hard power while recognizing that there are no military solutions to the problems of the South China Sea. Important U.S. policy steps taken since the book went to press, especially in the tightening of military relations between the United States and the Philippines, closely follow his recommendations.

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*On Shedding an Obsolete Past: Bidding Farewell to the American Century*

BY ANDREW BACEVICH. Haymarket Books, 2022, 368 pp.

Bacevich followed an over 20-year career as a U.S. Army officer with another as a professor, a prolific author, and a leading critic of an overly militarized, overly interventionist American foreign policy. His great literary skill and willingness to write what others are reluctant to say in public have made him one of the country's most notable advocates of a foreign policy of restraint. He argues that the United States left World War II not only with a determination to push back communism but, more important, with the goal of preserving "ideological, economic, political and military primacy" globally—the disease of American exceptionalism. This imperative produced what he calls the "very long war," stretching from Vietnam to Afghanistan and encompassing nearly 50 years. Allotting the conflicts in this span to separate wars—namely, the Cold War and the global war on terror—leads to the error of missing their intimate connection. American misadventures during those two long wars and "serial misuse of military power" in many

places—he lists in chronological order Panama, Iraq (three times), Somalia (twice), Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Serbia, Afghanistan (twice), Sudan, the Philippines, Libya, various West African countries, and Syria—not only cost lives and vast sums of money but also contributed to the domestic disorders that plague the United States today.

## Western Europe

ANDREW MORAVCSIK

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*Iron and Blood: A Military History of the German-Speaking Peoples Since 1500*

BY PETER H. WILSON. Harvard University Press, 2023, 976 pp.

**T**his astonishingly ambitious and detailed 900-page study of militaries in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland is not for the faint of heart. Yet Wilson's masterful history is a must-read for at least two types of readers. One type is the reader who is professionally or personally interested in military history. Wilson belongs to a new generation of historians for whom military history is far more than a chronicle of commanders, campaigns, and decisive battles. He offers an absorbing overview of how slowly changing societal forces—such as fiscal systems, scientific and technological capabilities, ideological and cultural beliefs, and the social background of soldiers—have transformed the use of military force across modern times. The other type

of reader is interested in what caused the great wars that defined European history over this period. The received wisdom is that Germany, flanked by potential enemies and imbued with a Prussian “iron and blood” tradition of militarism, developed a uniquely aggressive culture that provoked not just the two world wars but most other major European conflicts since 1750. Wilson believes this view is at best simplistic, perhaps even wrong. Historically, Germany was both more decentralized and more peaceful than aggressive imperial neighbors such as France, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Only the dominance of Prussia, a foreign power to much of Germany, and severe strategic errors by its leadership led to the two world wars that earned it a reputation for belligerence.

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*The Socialist Patriot:*

*George Orwell and War*

BY PETER STANSKY. Stanford University Press, 2023, 150 pp.

Many on the political left have long struggled to support any war, no matter how just—as some still do with regard to the one in Ukraine today. The evolution of the English writer George Orwell’s thinking about war is instructive. In this slim and readable volume, Stansky considers how four wars transformed Orwell’s worldview. Still at Eton and too young to fight in World War I, Orwell penned vulgar poems suffused with the jingoism for which his elite school was famous. Twenty years later, he became a resolved anti-fascist and anticommunist after witnessing how Moscow-backed radicals

betrayed the socialists in the Spanish Civil War. Yet he had also come to believe that capitalism was almost as bad as communism and hardly worth defending, and so he espoused pacifism. He then reversed himself after the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany agreed to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, which paved the way for World War II. Orwell supported the war effort as a British patriot, standing firm with fellow democracies. The Cold War solidified his anticommunism, as expressed in his novels *Animal Farm* and *1984*. Only democracy, he came to believe in his final years, could enable the emergence of his preferred democratic socialism—although he doubted that such politics could ever hold sway in North America.

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*Keeping Friends Closer: Why the EU Should Address New Geoeconomic Realities and Get Its Neighbors Back in the Fold*

BY VASILY ASTROV, RICHARD GRIEVESON, CHRISTIAN HANELT, VERONIKA JANYROVA, BRANIMIR JOVANOVIĆ, ARTEM KOCHNEV, MIRIAM KOSMEHL, ISILDA MARA, MARKUS OVERDIEK, THIESS PETERSEN, OLGA PINDYUK, OLIVER REITER, NINA VUJANOVIĆ, AND STEFANI WEISS. Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies and the Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2023, 104 pp.

The European Union is a significant military and cultural power, but its most important sources of global influence are economic. This uniquely detailed and data-rich study systematically

reviews the extraordinary extent to which Europe's neighbors in the former Soviet Union, the Mediterranean, and parts of Africa depend on the continent for export markets for goods and services, foreign direct investment, foreign aid, technological and knowledge exchanges, infrastructure connectivity, and labor mobility—far more than they rely on China, Russia, or the United States. Issue by issue and country by country, the team of researchers behind this study suggests ways Europe can optimize and defend its preeminence. Perhaps a second study will extend the analysis, examining when and how the EU can best deploy such influence in the form of sanctions, grants of aid and market access, and technical assistance. This is an indispensable source for anyone interested in the workings of international influence in the twenty-first century.

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*Retracing the Iron Curtain:*

*A 3,000-Mile Journey Through the End and Afterlife of the Cold War*

BY TIMOTHY PHILLIPS.

The Experiment, 2023, 480 pp.

This book traces the author's trip in 2019 along the entire length of what used to be the Iron Curtain, from the small Norwegian port of Grense Jakobselv on the Barents Sea to Sadarak, an Azerbaijani town on the easternmost point on the old Soviet-Turkish border. As he proceeds by public transport, bicycle, car, and even on foot for over 900 miles, he sprinkles his travelogue with anecdotes from the Cold War. Yet the author struggles to do more than skim the surface: a few pages treat

East German culture, for instance, a few more the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and a couple of others espionage in Vienna. And he fails to capture the surreal nature of the barrier that separated East and West decades ago or its equally surreal absence today. (For example, most of the wall that one can visit around Berlin is just a museum-like replica.) Yet the book does illustrate the ironies and paradoxes of what remains today. Russian border guards are friendlier and more lax than Western guards. Some people in the borderlands still harbor grievances about centuries-old wrongs. Others maintain strong sentimental attachments to communism, and some border cities still resemble twentieth-century communist towns more than they do twenty-first-century capitalist ones farther west.

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*Spain: The Trials and Triumphs of a Modern European Country*

BY MICHAEL REID. Yale University Press, 2023, 336 pp.

In the quarter century after the 1975 death of Francisco Franco, the long-time dictator of Spain, the country has engineered a transition to democracy, modernized its economy, suppressed Basque separatist terrorism, and entered both the EU and NATO. This book is a solid general-interest introduction to twenty-first-century Spanish politics. The author, the *Economist's* man in Madrid, asks why Spain's trajectory seems to have reversed: since 2000, it has been buffeted by economic stagnation, the rise of the far right, and political tumult in

Catalonia. Yet his answers are unsatisfying. In keeping with his work as a journalist, the book reads like a series of extended magazine articles. Driven by anecdotes and quotes, it is leavened with potted histories of topics such as Spanish nation building and Franco's rule. Little evidence backs up his central claim: that Spain suffers from the problems typical of middle-income countries such as Brazil, Poland, and South Korea. These maladies include real estate bubbles, escalating debts, income inequality, and corruption, which in turn have fostered political disillusionment, extremist politics, minority governments, and regional separatism. The book's conclusion—that if something is not done, citizens may lose patience—leaves the reader entirely in the dark about what, if anything, could address these problems.

## Western Hemisphere

RICHARD FEINBERG

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*Cuban Privilege: The Making of Immigrant Inequality in America*

BY SUSAN EVA ECKSTEIN.

Cambridge University Press, 2022, 300 pp.

**I**n this exhaustive, authoritative study, Eckstein details U.S. immigration policies that have privileged Cubans, especially in contrast to policies that have excluded Haitians. After the 1959 socialist revolution in Cuba, migrants from the island gained ready access to lawful permanent residency in

the United States and, eventually, to citizenship—and with it, the right to vote. Cuban migrants have received multiple resettlement entitlements, including cash transfers, workplace training, and access to health care—advantages that help explain their relative success once in the United States. As Eckstein documents, these exceptional benefits were repeatedly renewed and expanded by a succession of U.S. presidents and Congresses. Initially, the Kennedy administration imagined that an exodus of middle-class Cuban professionals might destabilize the government of Cuban President Fidel Castro; in fact, the mass migration removed potential sources of dissent from the island. Over time, increasingly prosperous Cuban Americans lobbied to perpetuate their community's privileges; Florida politics, rather than national security, became the main driver of U.S. policies toward Cuba. Eckstein also records the influence of Castro on migration flows, notably during the Mariel boatlift of 1980 and the rafter crisis of 1994, when the Cuban leader suddenly relaxed exit restrictions. Through their determination, ordinary Cubans seeking to reach American shores also shaped the course of history.

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*Cooperating With the Colossus: A Social and Political History of U.S. Military Bases in World War II Latin America*

BY REBECCA HERMAN. Oxford University Press, 2022, 320 pp.

Burrowing deep into the national archives in Brazil, Cuba, and Panama, Herman has produced a splendid, well-balanced history of an