

AEI Enterprise Report

Restoring Liberty, Opportunity, and Enterprise in America



Defending Our Values, at Home and Abroad

By Robert Doar

Humility can be a virtue in foreign relations. That is one conclusion I drew from a recent trip to Taiwan and Japan.

This past October, I led an AEI delegation that included three trustees and four scholars to learn more about some of the US's closest partners in Asia. In Taipei, we met with a range of Taiwanese leaders and academics, who provided invaluable perspective on the strength of Taiwan's institutions and character. The high point was an hour and a half spent with President Tsai Ing-wen. This unassuming but tough president expressed a soft-spoken satisfaction with her country's economic achievements, while also being careful about drawing unflattering comparisons to her much larger neighbor across the strait.

Everywhere we went in Taipei we saw a bustling and prosperous, though not affluent, city filled with people pleased with their independence and freedom but wary of boasting too much for fear of riling up the People's Republic of China.

Tokyo was different. It was striking how much more well-developed it was compared to Taipei. The Japanese people were far less self-conscious, and I detected a new kind of toughness emerging—at least relatively speaking after decades of defense passivity.



Robert Doar and AEI delegation greet President Tsai Ing-wen

Photos courtesy of the Office of the President, ROC (Taiwan)

It's a much-needed change as Japan finds itself on the front lines against our two biggest rivals—Russia to its north and China to its south.

Speaking with top Japanese officials, including the foreign secretary and national security adviser, we learned more about how they understand these threats and the military buildup they've launched in response. Japan is significantly increasing its defense spending; adding new capabilities, like long-range counterstrike missiles; and increasing its cooperation and integration with the US military. If Japan follows through on this long-term vision, as I trust it will, it will be a formidable partner against threats to peace in the region.

Everywhere we went, our scholars—**Dan Blumenthal**, **Zack Cooper**, **Nicholas Eberstadt**, and **Kori Schake**—were welcomed like longtime friends and colleagues. It was an important reminder of how much the people of Taiwan and Japan value their countries' friendship with the United States. We obviously have shared strategic interests in the face of Chinese aggression, but beyond that, our countries have in common profound commitments to democracy, capitalism, and the liberal international order.

I ended the trip with a deeper sense of the importance of AEI's work in strengthening these relationships. Without closer cooperation and increased aid for our regional allies, it will be difficult to deter aggression from China, and our Foreign and Defense Policy scholars and Coalition Defense of Taiwan program are making that case to policymakers and the public every day.

After returning from Asia, I visited Auburn University at the invitation of Vini Nathan, the university provost. I was very impressed with Dr. Nathan and Auburn's president, Christopher Roberts, who was not above reading me the school's creed in full. I was particularly struck by the closing words:

I believe in my Country, because it is a land of freedom and because it is my own home, and that I can best serve that country by "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with my God."

And because Auburn men and women believe in these things, I believe in Auburn and love it.

President Roberts's humility and strength were such a refreshing contrast to other college presidents. Across our universities, we are witnessing administrators equivocate or excuse open bigotry against the Jewish people—not just in thought but in action—while defenders of Israel find themselves threatened or their speech suppressed. This is just the latest, and most revolting, chapter in the long history of free speech double standards in our institutions of higher learning. President Roberts, in contrast, has the strength to stand up to those threatening free speech in the name of "social justice" or "equity" and the humility to welcome a genuinely free and tolerant academic life at Auburn—one with lots of viewpoint diversity and no place for fear, violence, or bigotry.

Since October 7, AEI has been focused on Hamas's terrorist attack on Israel and the resulting conflict in Gaza. Our scholars have been at the forefront of the public debate (and working behind the scenes)—defending Israel's right to defend itself and resisting the rising tide of antisemitism. In a complicated and confusing factual environment, AEI's Critical Threats Project analysts are providing reliable real-time information and daily updates that, much like their Ukraine work, is a vital resource for policymakers and media outlets. And scholars like **Hal Brands**, **Matthew Continetti**, **Danielle Pletka**, and **Kenneth M. Pollack** have explained the moral and strategic necessity of strong US support to defeat Hamas and prevent a wider regional conflict.

These are messages we put front and center at our Annual Dinner in November. I encourage you to read both my remarks and Paul Gigot's address if you haven't already. As Gigot reminded us, **"Israel is an outpost of the West, a descendant of Athens and Jerusalem, among neighbors who would destroy it precisely because of that heritage. . . . In helping them defend themselves, we are also defending our values."**

This is a difficult and challenging moment, but I'm confident that with strong leadership and moral clarity we can meet it. I'd like to leave you with the closing words of the Passover Seder, words that evoke the suffering of yesterday and the hope of tomorrow: Next Year in Jerusalem.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "R. Doar".



New Project Commemorates the 250th Anniversary of the American Founding



In November, AEI scholars **Yuval Levin** and **Adam J. White** hosted the inaugural symposium in AEI's "We Hold These Truths: America at 250" project, which is dedicated to commemorating the 250th anniversary of American independence on July 4, 2026, and sparking new interest in the American Revolution and the founding.

In the first of eight planned conferences, renowned historians and political scientists explored what the idea of democracy meant to the participants in the American Revolution. Sessions included:

- I "America's Novel Democracy" with Levin and Gordon Wood (Brown University);
- I "The Democratic Declaration" with Danielle Allen (Harvard University) and Gregory S. Weiner (Assumption University), moderated by White; and
- I "Freedom and Democracy" with Peter Berkowitz (Hoover Institution)

and Bryan Garsten (Yale University), moderated by **Gary J. Schmitt**.

Over the next two years, AEI will host seven more scholarly conferences, each devoted to a particular facet of the character and legacy of the American Revolution. Following each conference, AEI Press will publish a book of essays on that subject, intended for students, teachers, scholars, and citizens and widely distributed as an educational resource. There will also be a variety of wraparound products, including videos, podcasts, and a teaching curriculum.

To discuss investing in this project, please contact Jason Bertsch (jbertsch@aei.org).



AEI hosts Gathering of First-Generation College Students

In November, AEI hosted more than 50 students and university administrators for the first-ever First-Generation Student Forum. Selected from an application pool of nearly 250 students, participants were all the first in their families to attend college. Students hailed from 31 colleges and universities across 20 states, including Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Ohio State University, University of Texas, and Vanderbilt University.

Programming was focused on the American dream and aimed to connect students with AEI scholarship on opportunity and why American involvement abroad matters to the American dream. AEI scholars including **Kevin Corinth**, **Yuval Levin**, **Brent Orrell**, **Ramesh Ponnuru**, **Rob Portman**, and **Christine Rosen** participated in the programming, which included a panel of young professionals (including AEI research assistants) who were themselves first-generation college students.

A group of faculty and administrators from institutions including Baylor University, Belmont University, Boston University, Marshall University, and Western Carolina University also joined the conference. They attended a special breakout workshop with Orrell and David Staley (Ohio State University) to discuss Staley's book *Knowledge Towns: Colleges and Universities as Talent Magnets* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2023) and how universities can accelerate economic development.

To learn more about AEI Academic Programs, visit www.aei.org/academic-programs/.



AEI Honors Paul Gigot with the Irving Kristol Award



On November 7, AEI supporters, scholars, and friends gathered at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, for AEI's Annual Dinner. AEI President **Robert Doar** presented the Irving Kristol Award to Paul Gigot, an outstanding journalist, public intellectual, and longtime editor of the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page. Doar praised Gigot's stewardship of the *Journal's* editorial pages, which under his leadership **"have defended—without compromise—the American tradition of freedom and ordered liberty against all opponents, whether from the left or from the right,"** and **"stiffen our resolve, reminding us of the enduring strength and potential of America's people and its principles."**

In his remarks, Gigot addressed the decline in America's defenses—both military and political—and how this decline has left us unprepared for the challenges we face. He said:

Do you want it to be 1930s, when America watched from afar as dictators began to march? We pretended we were safe, only to be attacked with our guard down. It took five years and 400,000 American dead to in win the world war. This isn't yet the 1930s, but they will arrive soon enough on our present course.

Or would you prefer this time to be like the 1970s and 1980s, when the American right united behind a mission of rearmament, economic revival, and renewed national purpose? When we won the Cold War and ushered in two decades of prosperity.

Don't believe the downbeat pessimists who say we can't do it again. Stick with the upbeat pessimists who know we can—if we rally the political will to do it.

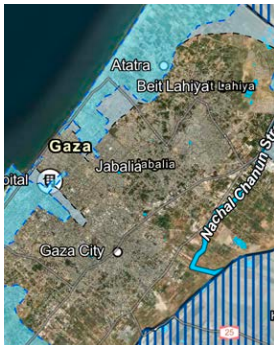
To read or watch remarks from the event, visit www.aei.org/irving-kristol-award.

AEI would like to express thanks to all who supported the Annual Dinner, especially our chairman, Daniel A. D'Aniello.



Scholars Respond to the Israel-Hamas War

Since the Hamas terror attacks in Israel on October 7, AEI Foreign and Defense Policy scholars have been at the forefront of the public debate, defending Israel's obligation to protect itself and speaking out about the rise of antisemitism in the West and on college campuses. **Hal Brands, Frederick W. Kagan, Danielle Pletka, Kenneth M. Pollack, Michael Rubin**, and other AEI scholars are writing, speaking, and working publicly and behind the scenes to formulate a path ahead for the United States and our allies. Examples of their work and influence include:



- AEI's Critical Threats Project (CTP), led by Kagan, is providing real-time information and daily updates on the war in Gaza. In partnership with the Institute for the Study of War, CTP developed an interactive map that shows detailed analysis of where fighting is happening in Gaza. They are supplementing this work with daily updates of Iran's involvement and the violence the Iranian regime is fomenting throughout Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon.
- On October 16, Pletka and Pollack hosted a public discussion with the Middle East Institute's Brian Katulis about the trajectory for the war and the stability of the Middle East.
- Pletka testified before the Senate Banking Committee on Iran's role in propping up terrorist organizations throughout the region and how Congress can prevent illicit financing to Hamas and other terrorist organizations. Pletka, Pollack, Rubin, and other scholars have met with and briefed key members of Congress and dozens of Hill staffers on the status of the war to help them think through an appropriate US response.
- AEI scholars including **Samuel J. Abrams, Matthew Continetti, Yuval Levin**, and Pletka have published more than 20 op-eds confronting the rise of antisemitism and hostility toward Israel in the West and on American college campuses. Pletka and **Marc A. Thiessen** hosted Ruth Wisse (Tikvah Fund) on their podcast *What the Hell Is Going On?* to discuss the explosion of antisemitism on the left. AEI scholars will continue to follow these trends and speak about these issues in the months ahead.

Visit www.aei.org/israel-gaza-conflict to read all of AEI scholars' work on the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Top Scholars in Economics, National Defense Join AEI



Edward L. Glaeser recently joined the AEI Economics team as a nonresident senior fellow. Glaeser is concurrently the Fred and Eleanor Glimp Professor of

Economics and chairman of the Economics Department at Harvard University, where he has taught microeconomic theory and occasionally urban and public economics since 1992.

He has published dozens of papers on cities' economic growth, law, and economics. In particular, his work has focused on the determinants of city growth and the role of cities as centers of idea transmission. His books include *Survival of the City: Living and Thriving in an Age of Social Isolation* (Penguin Press, 2021); *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier* (Penguin Press, 2011); *Cities, Agglomeration, and Spatial Equilibrium* (Oxford University Press, 2008); and *Rethinking Federal Housing Policy: How to Make Housing Plentiful and Affordable* (AEI Press, 2008).



Todd Harrison recently joined AEI's Foreign and Defense Policy team to conduct work on the defense budget, military space systems, military readiness, and military

force structure. Harrison was a senior fellow and director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies Defense Budget Analysis program and Aerospace Security Project, where he led the center's efforts to provide in-depth, nonpartisan research and analysis of defense funding, space security, and air power issues.

For more on AEI scholars, visit www.aei.org/scholars.

MEL SEMBLER, *In Memoriam*



AEI recently mourned the passing of Amb. Mel Sembler, who was a longtime leader in the AEI community and member of our Board of Trustees since 2006. AEI President Robert Doar shared a remembrance of Amb. Sembler, saying,

It wasn't Mel's loyalty or his generous support that made him a special friend to AEI. It was his spirit. He was always joyful—about America, about freedom, about politics, and also about the State of Israel and its vital importance as a homeland for the Jewish people. . . .

All who met Mel Sembler knew him as a happy warrior committed to the many causes he supported, the family he loved, and the principles he and Betty held dear. He was an inspiration to us all and will be sorely missed. May his memory be a blessing to his family, as it will be to all of us who knew him.

To read more, visit www.aei.org/mel-semblers-rip.

Teixeira and Judis Release New Book on Changing Democratic Party



In November, AEI scholar **Ruy Teixeira** and John Judis (Talking Points Memo) released *Where Have All the Democrats Gone? The Soul of the Party in the Age of Extremes* (Henry Holt and Co., 2023).

The book analyzes the tectonic changes shaping the country's current political landscape, describing how the Democratic Party has abandoned and alienated voters of the industrial working class and the newly immigrated and what the political consequences may be.

The *Wall Street Journal* published an excerpt of the book in its weekend edition, and the book informed commentary in the *New York Times*, *Politico*, *New York Magazine*, *Time*, and more.

Visit www.aei.org/where-have-all-the-democrats-gone to learn more.

"A deeply informed and beautifully written work of reportage and scholarship, this volume is brilliant, indispensable and simply the best analysis in decades of America's urgent, fraught politics."

—Thomas Edsall, *New York Times*

"In Where Have All the Democrats Gone?, John Judis and Ruy Teixeira's brilliant and levelheaded intervention into the fraught debate around identity politics and polarization, two of our best political minds make a clear and persuasive case for how and why Democrats must win back the trust and partnership of the working class."

—Thomas Chatterton Williams, *Atlantic*

AEI Celebrates the Legacy of Judge Laurence Silberman



On December 7, AEI scholars **Adam J. White** and **John Yoo** will convene scholars, judges, and legal experts for a major conference celebrating the intellectual legacy of the late DC Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Laurence Silberman. Highlights of the program include panels on Judge Silberman's views on the separation of powers, administrative law, and foreign policy, with panelists such as Viet Dinh (Fox Corporation), Judge Neomi Rao, Eugene Scalia (Gibson Dunn), and Judge Justin Walker.

Laurence Silberman Legacy Fund

AEI is establishing the Laurence Silberman Legacy Fund to honor Judge Silberman's legacy of public service and commitment to the Constitution. The fund will support AEI scholarship dedicated to recovering the integrity of American constitutionalism. Please contact Chris Grozev (chris.grozev@aei.org) if you are interested in supporting this effort.

Silberman was among the most important judges never appointed to the Supreme Court, authoring influential opinions regarding gun control, the independent counsel statutes, the Patriot Act, the Commerce Clause, and other crucial legal and constitutional questions. **His opinions were models of how to put the meaning of the Constitution and the laws above the wishes of the judge.** And it was in that mold that he also shaped generations of originalist scholars, lawyers, and judges who served as his clerks."

—Yuval Levin, AEI

AEI Hosts Enterprise Club Leaders for Special Retreat

On October 12–13, AEI hosted Enterprise Club members for a two-day retreat at AEI headquarters, featuring serious discussions on our most significant public policy challenges.

Enterprise Club members heard from AEI scholars **Matthew Continetti, Zack Cooper, Kevin Corinth, Robert Doar, Max Eden, Jonah Goldberg, Yuval Levin, Robert Pondiscio, Derek Scissors, and Adam J. White** on issues including populism, the future of American institutions and politics, China's economic slowdown, the Supreme Court, and how we can help poor Americans move up. Other speakers included Sarah Isgur (Dispatch), AEI Trustee Deepa Javeri, and former Texas Solicitor General Scott Keller.

The Enterprise Club is an invitation-only group of distinguished and rising professionals and community leaders under age 50 who are interested in serious discussions about public policy. Enterprise Club chapters in cities across the country regularly gather to hear from AEI scholars on timely issues. To learn more about the Enterprise Club or connect with a chapter in your city, contact Chris Grozev (chris.grozev@aei.org).



AEI Survey Center Releases Comprehensive Survey on Gen Z Attitudes

In November, AEI's Survey Center on American Life, led by **Daniel A. Cox**, released the findings of a major survey on the politics and priorities of Generation Z (those born between the late 1990s and early 2010s). The survey explored how the pandemic has shifted civic engagement and responsibility among young Americans and how Americans' geographic and institutional context influences their beliefs. Findings include:



- Members of Generation Z spent less time with friends in person during their teenage years than previous generations did.
- Six in 10 Gen Z adults say the pandemic influenced the course of their life.

- Nearly half of white Gen Z women consider themselves liberal.
- Most Gen Z men say they are not feminists.

The survey results were featured widely in the media, including mentions in the *Washington Post*, Fox News, NewsNation, and *Men's Journal*. Visit www.americansurveycenter.org/generation-z to read the full survey results.

Make Free Enterprise Your Legacy

For more than 80 years, AEI scholars have been tackling our nation's greatest challenges by producing work that bolsters free enterprise and innovation, strengthens our communities, defends our nation's founding values, and revitalizes America's leadership in the world. One of the best ways you can ensure that AEI can carry out this mission far into the future is by including AEI in your life and estate plans.

Planned gifts provide AEI with long-term financial stability, guaranteeing the Institute has the means to continue our important work for years to come. If you would like to learn about making a planned gift, including will or trust provisions, charitable remainder trusts, and charitable lead trusts, please visit www.aei.org/donate-about/planned-giving or contact **Chris Grozev** (chris.grozev@aei.org).



American Enterprise Institute
1789 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036

202.862.5800 | www.aei.org