UNDERSTANDING NORTH KOREA

TENSIONS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA ESCALATE

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Hope and Havoc in THE MIDDLE EAST

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Ambassador James Dobbins, a senior fellow at RAND, takes readers behind the scenes at the Vietnam peace talks; the reunification of Germany; the collapse of the Soviet Union; the U.S. military interventions in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, and Somalia; and more.
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2. The Appalachia Partnership Initiative
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3. Money’s Worth?
3. Money’s Worth?
European parliaments are increasingly scrutinizing funds marked for international aid to ensure that such funds provide “value for money.” But such value is hard to demonstrate. According to RAND Europe researchers, limited information on how programs achieve impact—and how impact is defined—is part of the problem.
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Tensions on the Korean Peninsula “There is no such thing as a surgical strike against North Korea,” according to senior defense analyst Bruce Bennett ... so what are the world’s options?

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The Prevalence of Depression in Adolescent Girls

More than one-third of all teenage girls in America will struggle with depression before they’re old enough to graduate from high school, RAND researchers found in a recent study.

In fact, girls as young as 12 are already far more likely to experience depression than boys their age, the study found.

It’s long been known that girls face higher rates of depression than boys. Previous studies have sought to explain that gender gap through the social and biologic changes of adolescence. But the RAND study suggests the risk factors for girls start building even earlier, in late childhood.

The researchers looked at data from in-person interviews of thousands of young people conducted as part of a national health survey. They found that, by age 12, nearly 4 percent of the girls had already experienced an episode of major depression, compared with around 1.5 percent of the boys.

The gap only grew from there. The researchers estimated that, by age 15, a quarter of the girls had experienced at least one episode of depression, while 8.2 percent of the boys had. By age 17, the rate for girls had reached 36.1 percent; for boys, it was 13.6 percent.

Those rates are higher than previously thought, for both boys and girls. But there’s reason to think they’re also more reliable. The researchers used survey questions that only asked respondents about their experiences in the previous year. Other studies have used longer time frames, which can throw off the accuracy of recall.

The study did not look at what might be causing such high rates of depression, especially among adolescent girls. More research is needed to better understand the course of depression during that all-important transition from childhood to adolescence, and to better identify adolescents who need clinical treatment. That research, the study showed, will have to look even earlier than thought for those answers.

For more, see

J. Breslau et al., “Sex Differences in Recent First-Onset Depression in an Epidemiological Sample of Adolescents,” Translational Psychiatry, Vol. 7, 2017
Rolling Back the Islamic State

The Islamic State is crumbling. A RAND analysis found it has lost more than half the territory it held just a few years ago, when its black-clad foot soldiers swept across Syria and Iraq. Millions of people have escaped its rule. The group is “on a path to collapse” as a so-called state, RAND experts concluded. Yet even as it gives up the ground of its self-proclaimed caliphate, the group is morphing into a clandestine terrorist organization, inspiring and directing attacks around the world. For that, it still has safe haven in its provinces from Syria and Iraq to Afghanistan to Libya and Nigeria.

Countering that threat is going to require years more effort and leadership from the United States and its allies, the RAND experts concluded. That means continued air strikes and special-operations missions, but also economic support to allies on the ground and a diplomatic push to better address local grievances in Iraq and Syria and improve governance in Libya.

Such a rollback strategy could cost up to $77 billion a year across the globe for the foreseeable future, the experts estimated. But stepping back would be a high-risk gamble. It’s possible the Islamic State will burn itself out, they wrote, but that outcome is far from certain, and distant at best.

The other alternative, sending in large numbers of American troops, could stir up local resistance and would likely leave the United States responsible for managing the aftermath in territory cleared of Islamic State control.

The RAND experts advocated a middle road, a “light rollback” strategy, with modest military reinforcements in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia and a renewed effort to counter the Islamic State online. The focus, they wrote, should be on supporting local police and soldiers, and helping local governments address the grievances that helped give rise to the Islamic State in the first place.

Well-Adjusted

Spinal manipulation—the back-popping most associated with chiropractors—is about as effective at treating short-term back pain as over-the-counter drugs like ibuprofen, a recent study found.

Medical doctors are sometimes hesitant to send their patients for spinal manipulation, in part because it’s still not clear how the adjustments relieve pain. They often turn to drugs instead; back pain is one of the most common diagnoses listed on prescriptions for opioids.

Researchers led by Paul Shekelle, codirector of the Southern California Evidence-Based Practice Center at RAND, aggregated the results of more than two dozen prior studies on spinal manipulation. They found that it reduced short-term lower back pain by the equivalent of about one point on a ten-point pain scale. It also delivered small improvements in function and mobility.

The results were similar to those seen from nonsteroidal, antiinflammatory drugs like ibuprofen or naproxen. Those drugs can cause kidney or stomach problems over time; spinal manipulation caused discomfort or transient pain in more than half of the patients studied, the researchers found, but no serious or lasting harms.

The researchers did not find enough high-quality evidence to judge whether spinal manipulation lowered opioid use, reduced disability claims, or got people back to work quicker. And, while they found modest benefits overall, the outcomes for individual patients ranged widely—differences they could not explain by patient or clinician characteristics or by the type of manipulation used.

The study was published in the April issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association. An accompanying editorial noted that its findings suggest spinal manipulation could be an effective treatment for patients with uncomplicated lower back pain: “This is an area in which a well-informed patient’s decisions should count as much as a practitioner’s preference.”
The Post–Arab Spring Experience

Shelly Culbertson’s research has taken her to the cheering streets of Tunisia on election day, to the desperate neighborhoods of Iraq, and to a classroom of Syrian children in one of the world’s biggest refugee camps. As a policy researcher at RAND, she focuses on education, workforce development, international development, and the Middle East. Several of her reports, translated into Arabic, are available on RAND’s Arabic-language website, an initiative of the RAND Center for Middle East Public Policy that offers Arabic-speaking policymakers and citizens access to RAND research and analysis. In 2016, St. Martin’s Press published Culbertson’s The Fires of Spring: A Post–Arab Spring Journey Through the Turbulent New Middle East.

Q You wrote that your new book was an act of both love and frustration. How so?
A I’ve been involved with the Middle East since I was in college, and did my first study abroad in Israel, followed by Egypt. I lived for seven years in Qatar, worked for five years on Iraq. It’s a place that I’ve been connected to for many years, and I have found the work there very meaningful.

At the same time, it is deeply frustrating, because there is so much potential within the region. The Arab Spring was about trying to access that potential—people rising up in a societal upheaval to improve their government—and a lot of it fell flat. So it was a lot of frustration with where things are going, but also hope for it as well.

You argue in the book that it’s too early to say whether the Arab Spring will turn out to be a success or not. What did you hear from the people on the street, in the region? Are they optimistic or pessimistic?

It very much depends on the country. Some are mired in very ugly and violent civil wars, and I think there are probably few people in those places—such as Syria, Libya, Yemen—who are optimists right now. But there are other countries that have made a number of changes along the lines of the goals of the revolutions. So, for example, in Tunisia, there is a new constitution, a new parliament. Islamist and secularist political parties have been collaborating together. Jordan also made moderate changes. But it is too early to tell. The Arab Spring was about people in the region deciding what they did not want and rising up against it, but they hadn’t worked out what they did want. The region was lacking in the education systems to prepare people to fully participate in democratic societies. I think the full impact won’t be understood for another couple of decades, as people have time to step back after the initial upheaval and then work some of those ideals into institutions.

You mentioned Tunisia. It’s often viewed as a success story from the Arab Spring, but is it a model or an outlier?

In a lot of ways, it’s an outlier—but it’s also an important model. What’s impressive is that it crafted a new constitution that blended both democratic values and
Islamist values, and then codified that into a governmental system. That could very well prove to be a strong model for other places. But I do want to say that Tunisia remains very fragile. It sent the largest number of foreign fighters to ISIS, it’s had some very large terrorist attacks, so it’s not an unqualified success story. But it’s the only country where the political elites of different parties are establishing a foundation of working together to try to address some of those underlying problems.

You’ve also written about the danger of a lost generation of children from Syria.

Almost 50 percent of Syria’s people have been displaced by its civil war, whether that’s inside Syria or as refugees outside Syria. RAND studies have looked particularly at refugee education. Our overarching recommendation is to integrate the Syrian refugee children into the education systems of the countries where they are: Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Iraq. Then use foreign humanitarian assistance to help the ministries of education in those countries increase their capacity with additional buildings, teachers, and training. That’s very different from the prevailing assistance model, which uses humanitarian assistance for temporary education programs, with the assumption that children will go home soon. Our conclusion is that the refugee situation may last for a number of years, and therefore it needs at least medium-term thinking and planning, rather than emergency response.

You also just did a study on the challenges of stabilizing Mosul, Iraq, after ISIS. What did you find?

ISIS has been defeated in Mosul. But ensuring that ISIS doesn’t return, and ensuring that the people of Iraq have a decent future, requires a number of steps. Otherwise, Iraq runs the risk of devolving back into violence within a matter of months. We presented a set of recommendations for the first year after military operations: First, get displaced civilians home. Second, invest ample assistance to get public services back up and running. Third, ensure that there are enough police and hold forces, and that they have adequate training. And fourth, put significant effort into both national and local reconciliation efforts. A lot of these steps depend on U.S. diplomatic leadership in addition to the Iraqi government and the UN system.

Is there a single moment that really sticks with you as emblematic of the trends and forces you write about?

I was visiting Jordan’s Zaatari refugee camp, doing school visits. The camp is a really difficult place to live—rows of tents, some buildings, it’s hot, it’s dusty. I visited a classroom of high school girls and asked them, “What are the most difficult things you’re dealing with here?” Nobody would raise their hand. They didn’t want to talk about the difficulties they were facing.

Then I asked a second question: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Hands around the room shot up. Everybody had an answer, and they were all so hopeful and excited about their futures. These girls wanted to be doctors and lawyers, architects, a soccer coach. One girl said she wanted to be a lawyer so she could help Syria. They were filled with so much hope—even with the backdrop of living in a refugee camp and being displaced and probably having had family members killed.

So I think, even despite these situations, the people who are living through it still have hope. And as policymakers or researchers, that is something we should bear in mind. The region is not hopeless.
A FOCUS ON THE RESEARCH OF
Bruce W. Bennett


DIANE BALDWIN/RAND PHOTOGRAPHY

The phone rang just as Bruce Bennett sat down to dinner. He didn’t recognize the number, which was a clue that something big had happened. He turned to his wife: “I wonder if this is a North Korean missile test.”

UNDERSTANDING North Korea

By Doug Irving, Staff Writer

The phone rang just as Bruce Bennett sat down to dinner. He didn’t recognize the number, which was a clue that something big had happened. He turned to his wife: “I wonder if this is a North Korean missile test.”
LEFT: THE MONUMENT TO PARTY FOUNDING IN PYONGYANG, NORTH KOREA, WITH HAMMER, SICKLE, AND CALLIGRAPHY BRUSH, IS MEANT TO SYMBOLIZE WORKERS, FARMERS, AND INTELLECTUALS.

RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: CONCRETE BLOCKS SET TO DROP AND BLOCK NORTH KOREAN ARMORED VEHICLE MOVEMENTS DOWN ROADS INTO SOUTH KOREA; WORKERS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE HARVEST HAY BY HAND; PEOPLE WATCH A GIANT SCREEN SHOWING THE TEST LAUNCH OF AN INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILE IN JULY 2017.
Bennett has spent his career at RAND becoming one of the leading experts on the world’s most reclusive country. He has visited the Korean peninsula 107 times, talked strategy with top generals, and meets regularly with some of the most senior defectors to ever escape North Korea.

One radio host introduced him as someone who has forgotten more about North Korea than most people will ever know. When something alarming happens there, his phone rings. On that evening in July, it was a producer with CNN, looking for a quote on the intercontinental ballistic missile—capable of hitting Alaska—that North Korea had just fired into space.

Raising the stakes

Bennett has a story he likes to tell as a stage-setter in his briefings. Tensions were running high in the early 1990s. The leader of North Korea at the time, Kim Il Sung, called together his senior military officers and asked if they could win a war against the United States.

“Now remember,” Bennett says, “these were North Korean military people. What would they say? ‘We’re gonna win, yeah!’ But then he asked them: ‘If we lost, what do we do?’

“The North Korean military guys were all smart enough to know that was a really good time to keep your mouth shut. But his son, Kim Jong Il, the father of the current leader, spoke up and said, ‘If we lose, I will be sure to destroy the earth. What good is the earth without North Korea?’”

Bennett is a soft-spoken man, unfailingly polite; one colleague described him as Mr. Rogers-esque. He came up through the ranks at RAND as a specialist in nuclear deterrence and defense strategy; he’s now a senior defense analyst. He’s been studying the inner workings of North Korea since the closing days of the Cold War, when the Pentagon asked for an assessment of it as a potential hot spot in 1990.

He recognizes North Korea’s nuclear strategy as a Cold War throwback in part, a concept known as decoupling. If North Korea can threaten mainland America, then it can raise the stakes for any American intervention on behalf of South Korea. As Bennett puts it: “Are we prepared to trade San Francisco for Seoul?”

He also sees in North Korea’s young dictator, Kim Jong Un, a weak leader consumed by paranoia. To Bennett, the assassination of Kim’s older half-brother earlier this year—by two women who dabbed VX nerve agent on his cheeks—was especially troubling. Kim had already murdered everyone who knew his half-brother and thrown their families into the gulags. The only threat the brother posed was in Kim’s mind.

“That’s important for interpreting what’s going on,” Bennett says. Kim’s subjects are taught that the earth revolves around North Korea, that the humanitarian aid they receive from other countries is really tribute paid to their great leader. “For a guy who’s got what might generously be called a third-world economy, he’s got to do something that makes him look like he’s succeeding,” Bennett says. “Nuclear weapons are one way he can demonstrate that he’s a god.”

Prepared North Korean Elites for Unification is available for free download at www.rand.org/t/RR1985

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Insider insights

Bennett’s research has looked at what would happen if the Kim regime collapsed; he showed, for example, that the United States and South Korea might have to airlift 7,500 tons of food a day to avert a humanitarian catastrophe. He also has identified the North Korean elite as the real gatekeepers of their country’s future, a powerful and privileged class that must be convinced it will not face ruin—or summary execution—without Kim there to protect them.

He likes to say that he has been inside North Korea twice, “ kinda, sorta.” He once accompanied a U.S. colonel into a newly discovered tunnel the North had dug under the demilitarized zone, the rock walls scratched with graffiti extolling its “wonderful” leader. The second time was less exciting: A few steps across the border in the negotiations building at the “peace village” that straddles the two Koreas, past the armed guards grimacing at each other outside.

Bennett has had good access to senior leaders in South Korea, thanks in part to his father-in-law, who was a well-connected expert on Korea at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C.

He can thank television for many of his contacts in the defector community from the North: In 2016, he delivered an hour-long lecture on what it would take to reunify South and North Korea, in primetime, on the biggest television station in Seoul. He got an email a few days later: I have someone that would really like to meet you. This guy is someone I think you will really want to talk to.
“This guy” was one of the most senior defectors to ever escape North Korea, a top official from its military-industrial complex. Over the course of a few hours in an out-of-the-way restaurant, and many subsequent conversations, the man filled Bennett in on the development of North Korea’s nuclear program—and told him the North had purchased “many, many, many tons” of chemical weapons from a part of the former Soviet Union. “That came as news to me,” Bennett says.

He now has regular contact with around a dozen elite North Korean defectors—scientists, diplomats, merchants, military officers. Those meetings sometimes require precautions that most RAND research does not. Bennett was once so unnerved by the thought of a set-up that he agreed to meet a defector only in a crowded restaurant, in a crowded mall; he brought a colleague with him, just in case, and parked far enough away that he could run if he had to.

Those defectors tell Bennett that they think a regime collapse could happen in the coming years—that Kim Jong Un is a brutal and unpopular dictator, but one who will not go down without a fight. He has the words of his father—“What good is the earth without North Korea?”—posted at various places in the capital city of Pyongyang as a rallying cry.

That kind of insider insight has helped make Bennett a reliable source whenever news breaks of another nuclear test or missile launch. The phone call that interrupted his dinner in July, for example, was the start of a hectic two days of interviews and media appearances.

The question is almost always the same: How should the U.S. respond? His answer: With full appreciation for the stratospheric stakes involved in any confrontation with Kim—and knowing that even the best military options could be cataclysmically bad. “There is no such thing as a surgical strike against North Korea,” he says. “We don’t really know where all their weapons are,” he says. “Almost all of their aircraft are stored underground, in caves. Even some of the runways are underground, so that just as you’re taking off, you’re leaving the underground facility.”

Bennett has another idea, a non-military option to convince Kim that the costs of his provocations outweigh any benefits: Let him know that the next time he tests a nuclear weapon, the United States will drop thousands of leaflets on his nuclear facilities, offering money and a good life to anyone who defects. Even one defection would damage Kim’s credibility at home, weaken his claim to power—and expose whatever nuclear secrets he has. That would hit him where it hurts.

And if that doesn’t work? Bennett would send another message to Kim: “Oh, by the way, we know that at 2:30 in the afternoon on the day you did your nuclear test, you were exactly here.”

“We’ve tried strategic patience with North Korea, we’ve tried to wait it out,” he says. “They’re pressing ahead with their tests, they’re pushing. If we’re going to get on top of this, we’ve got to get on top of it now.”
The Future Workspace Is Here

By Doug Irving, Staff Writer
Take heart, cubicle dwellers. Rub your eyes against the fluorescent lights and you will see that the American workspace is undergoing a period of profound change.

More and more, companies are starting to experiment with new ways to make the workplace work better in an economy that increasingly values ideas over tasks. They’re breaking down their office walls, scrapping the very idea of a nine-to-five—and yes, even doing away with all those cubicles.

A RAND initiative is putting some of those ideas to the test. It shows how a modern workspace can better serve the needs of employees and create a better environment for collaboration, without sacrificing heads-down solo work. The subject of this pilot project? RAND itself.
The work environment

In 1969, the British Broadcasting Corporation looked to the future of work and imagined an “automated executive,” alone in his office except for a videophone and what appeared to be a robotic filing cabinet. “No distractions,” the automated executive enthused, “just me and the work, alone and efficient.”

That was the era of the corner office, when your place in a company was directly related to how much space you had when you closed the door. It was followed by a countermovement—the “open office” revolution—as companies tried to remove barriers and maximize efficiency. That particular pendulum swing landed us in the cubicle farm.

Today, the adjective Americans use most often to describe their workplace is “stressful,” one survey found. A Gallup poll released earlier this year found that 43 percent of American employees now work remotely at least some of the time. And sales of “systems furniture”—mostly cubicles—have fallen from a high of $4.9 billion in 2000 to around $2.8 billion today.

But it’s also become clear that putting people back into offices isn’t necessarily the answer, either. An increasingly rigorous body of research has shown that people work better the more they interact with other people. One study of pharmaceutical executives, for example, found that their sales improved by 10 percent when they increased their face-to-face encounters with other team members by 10 percent.

Empty offices

RAND was once at the forefront of collaborative office design. It built its original Santa Monica headquarters with almost mathematical precision to create chance encounters between people from different divisions. A defense analyst could not get to work without running into an economist or a social scientist.

In recent years, though, its North American offices had come to resemble a more typical American workplace: long corridors of offices interspersed with banks of cubicles. Most employees could close the door and never interact with anyone except by email and phone; the only thing missing was the robotic filing cabinet.

In 2016, RAND decided to rethink one wing of its Washington, D.C., office. And it did it in the most RAND way possible.

It studied employee data and found that, on any given day, 40 percent of its research staff were off-site, their offices empty. It conducted a deep dive into the research literature of office design (sample titles: The Organization and Architecture of Innovation and The Impact of Light and Colour on Psychological Mood). It recruited a test group to work in the new office space for at least six months—and, for the sake of statistical comparisons, control groups from the existing offices.

Rand.org | September–October 2017
A ‘rich mixture’ of workspaces

The new space has the feel of a slightly futuristic library, a quiet, open area of workstations with glass-walled offices along the sides. One of the planning principles at work here: lower barriers so that people can see each other, and they unconsciously lower their voices.

Nobody owns an office here. Most employees reserve their workspace by the day or the week, or just take what’s available when they arrive. Only a few administrative staffers have assigned desks.

Walk through the area, and you might notice that there are no visual dead-ends, no workspace cul-de-sacs, and many different ways to get from point A to point B. The old coffee room is gone, traded out for a café-style area with booths and tables. The glass walls let natural light in but also let people see each other.

The idea was to create a sense of community while also meeting workers where they are on any given day. Senior managers expecting a day of project meetings and phone calls can reserve a private office; a more junior staffer plowing through a 300-page research report can take a workspace in the quiet area instead. And if they’re on vacation or visiting a client, there’s no office sitting empty.

The new workspace cost roughly the same as what RAND would have to spend to replicate its older office design in a new space, said Eric Peltz, the executive director of Research Services and Operations. But it has the added benefit of increasing capacity, from 27 staffers on an average workday in the area before the redesign to 38 in the new space. That gives the area a more social feeling, a community buzz that helps make casual interactions a part of the daily routine.

“It’s a rich mixture of open and closed, individual and group spaces, and people can choose,” said Margaret Gilchrist Serrato, a design architect with Herman Miller who consulted on the project. “We used to design workspaces by just asking for a head count: ‘How many offices do you need?’” she added. “That’s not the way to do it anymore. What you really have to find out is, How often are people here, and are they working alone or in groups when they’re here?”

What RAND found

This kind of workplace experimentation has always been perceived as a little risky. One paper in the 1970s cautioned that doing away with personal workspaces in particular might “provoke a good deal of fear or even panic” among the workers.

RAND being RAND, it partnered with a team of researchers from Cornell University to evaluate how well the pilot workspace met the needs of the staffers working there—and to publish the findings in a scientific journal. The Cornell team collected survey data on how the new
RAND designed its “future workspace” pilot project around three main goals:

1. PRESERVE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT ENABLES DEEP CONCENTRATION AND SOLO WORK

2. FOSTER GREATER OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION, TEAMWORK, AND UNPLANNED INTERACTIONS

3. IMPROVE WORKSPACE EFFICIENCY

A team from Cornell University is conducting a rigorous evaluation of how well the workspace met those goals. Its initial findings suggest the design and management of the workspace achieved all of those goals; it expects to publish its final results in a peer-reviewed journal as a case study for other companies.

office was performing, conducted interviews with the researchers working there, observed their day-to-day routines, and kept logs of their interactions.

The initial results suggest the redesigned workspace performed as hoped, making it a potential model for other organizations with similar work needs. Around 90 percent of the workers in the pilot said the new configuration supported individual, high-concentration work at least as well as their old workspaces had. The same number said it provided better, or much better, opportunities for collaboration.

Day-to-day headcounts showed that the new configuration also increased the use and efficiency of the workspace—and with it, that community buzz. More than two-thirds of the people working there said they had more unplanned interactions with their coworkers than they did before.

“RAND is taking an exceptionally scientific approach toward this,” said Ying Hua, the leader of the Cornell study and codirector of the university’s International Workplace Studies Program. “That’s important, because every organization and every group of people is different; there’s no ubiquitous workplace solution that works for all.”

A changing workforce

There’s a broader context to this, and it’s been a focus of RAND research for well over a decade. The very nature of work in America is changing, driven by technology but also by tectonic shifts in the workforce. People who once would have left the workforce—older employees, new parents—are now staying in and trying to balance work and life. At the same time, globalization has put ever-increasing value on the production of ideas and innovations.

RAND’s workplace experiment—balancing flexibility, collaboration, and individual work—is “entirely consistent with what many companies are experiencing,” said Lynn Karoly, a senior economist at RAND and one of the leaders of its workforce research. “Everything we talked about 10, 12 years ago is now coming into play.”

RAND now plans to expand its “future workplace” to a newly acquired floor in its Washington office. Of all the numbers it crunched, one in particular stands out: 2. That’s the number of employees, out of 63, who requested a transfer back to their old offices when the six-month trial period was over.

“This was a big change,” said Nicholas Burger, a senior economist at RAND who was part of the pilot—and was emphatically not one of the two who left when it was over. “It’s very different from the way this office had been managed; it’s very different from how other offices are designed and managed. People were understandably nervous about it.

“It may not be a good fit for everyone,” he added, “but I think we’ve found it’s a pretty good fit for a large number of people.”
Restaurants can fight childhood obesity by right-sizing kids’ portions

Finding a kids’ meal that’s not too big and not too small can be a struggle—just ask Goldilocks. Some restaurants follow calorie guidelines for bundled meals (entrée, sides, drink) offered to kids up to age 13, but until now such guidelines didn’t exist for single servings. RAND researchers, with an expert panel, developed single serving guidelines to help kids avoid eating too much when eating out.

**Guidelines**

When restaurants serve right-sized portions, kids can choose single serving items to build a healthy meal under 600 calories.

- **ENTRÉE**
  - 300 calories
- **SIDE**
  - 150 calories*
- **MILK** (unflavored)
  - 130 calories

Mix and match 2 to 3 right-sized servings to stay under 600 calories.

*No calorie limit on fruits and vegetables with no added sugars or sauces.

**Current Portion Sizes**

Portions in most restaurants are too large, pushing their calorie count over the recommended limit.

- **ENTRÉE**
  - 551 calories
  - 2X guidelines
- **ENTRÉE**
  - 459 calories
  - 1.5X guidelines
- **FRIED POTATO**
  - 287 calories
  - 3X guidelines
- **DESSERT**
  - 361 calories
  - 2X guidelines

**Calories Matter**

Trimming restaurant portions is important because food prepared away from home accounts for almost one-third of the calories Americans eat.

In a May 2017 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, National Security Advisor General H. R. McMaster and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn proclaim a basic fact of world politics as they see it: “The world is not a ‘global community,’ but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors, and businesses engage and compete for advantage.” This timeless principle, they suggest, reflects the “elemental nature of international affairs” and points to the need for a foreign policy devoted to the self-defined pursuit of U.S. interests.
McMaster and Cohn’s emphasis on safeguarding U.S. interests is entirely appropriate, and they offer some important reassurances about a desire “to develop relationships and foster cooperation.” But on the broader point, there is powerful evidence that many countries do consider themselves part of an emerging global community—and that this reality represents America’s most powerful competitive advantage. U.S. foreign and national security strategy is much stronger when it works to reflect and build such a community.

The concept of a community is somewhat elastic. There can be strong or weak communities, formal or informal, political communities, or interest-based ones. We commonly speak of a “Korean community” or an “African-American community,” for example, without any sense that they require a government. Definitions
of human communities thus tend to focus on a few broad factors: social linkages and communal activities; the perception of a shared fate and joint vision or set of values; and collective institutions and rules.

By these standards, an embryonic international community has definitely arisen. The globalized international system involves hundreds of shared activities: Economies and societies are deeply interlinked by flows of trade, capital, technology, and labor; companies rely on global supply chains; businesspeople and students and artists interact on a worldwide basis; music, movies, media, and fashion are truly global. Nations collaborate on mutual concerns like climate, terrorism, disease, and international crime.

Partly as a result, if measured by polling results and public statements, a healthy majority of governments and people have come to appreciate the value of multilateral problem-solving and the reality of an emerging community. The theme lies at the heart of national security statements by governments and leaders of all the major European and Asian democracies, and many other countries as well. When Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January, he put it simply: “Mankind has become a close-knit community of shared future. Countries have extensive converging interests and are mutually dependent.” Public opinion polling shows consistent support for the basic principles of multilateralism.

Powerful renewed evidence for this sensibility is apparent in the global reaction to the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris climate accord. Rather than run for the exits, many countries, including China, India, Germany, and especially France, pledged to continue working for the deal—precisely out of an appreciation of mutual interests. That is the behavior of members of a shared order, not selfish anarchists.

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The international community is also characterized by a growing web of institutions and rules, ranging from the United Nations system to trade and development organizations to thousands of issue-specific organizations. It reflects shared values—imperfectly, with many exceptions and violations, but in ways ranging from human rights conventions to the rise of open economies and democratic governments to shifts in public opinion favoring liberal values.

None of this means that the international community is a finished product or can shape states’ behavior on its own. It remains fledgling, fractious, and prone to conflict in areas such as openness to investment and human rights. It doesn’t prevent bitter arguments, such as the tensions between Japan and Korea over disputed islands or the ongoing debate over climate treaties. It is not a substitute for U.S. power and leadership. It could collapse under the assault of populist nationalism or the ambitions of rising regional powers. But it is real and meaningful—and a powerful benefit to the United States.

One prominent analyst and practitioner of national security affairs recently described the emergence of an “inexorably expanding cooperative order of states observing common rules and norms, embracing common economic systems, forswearing territorial conquest, respecting national sovereignty, and adopting participatory and democratic systems of governance.” That sounds a lot like a community—and this seemingly idealistic claim comes from the uber-realist Henry Kissinger, writing in his book World Order. The existence of such a “cooperative order,” Kissinger explains, means that U.S. power is more legitimate, and thus effective, when deployed in service of shared goals and values.
Specific elements of this embryonic community have also had measurable value in helping to keep the United States safe and ease the burdens of global leadership. Multilateral alliances have kept the peace in key regions and encouraged friends to contribute to U.S.-led military operations. Formal and informal economic institutions have stabilized the international trading system and helped manage financial crises. United Nations peacekeeping efforts have tamped down conflicts. It was the consensus of an emerging “new world order” that lent special force to the U.S. response to Iraq’s aggression in 1990; after 9/11, the world community, again sensing shared interests, boosted its collaboration on counterterrorism.

All of this shows the great wisdom of the choice, from 1945 onward, to lash U.S. national security and foreign policy to the idea of a rules-based international order and the embryonic but very real community it reflects. This order represents America’s most potent competitive advantage: It embodies and spreads U.S. values and often supports U.S. objectives. It is no exaggeration to say that the United States simply would not be able to lead the international system in the way that it has without the supporting architecture of a nascent community. U.S. power would encounter too many headwinds without it, and the price of leadership would become too onerous to bear.

To be sure, rivalry is growing, and the connective tissue of the international community is fraying. Managing the ever-present tension between competition and community is becoming more challenging. But the lesson of the last 70 years is clear: The United States is more powerful, effective, and safe when it pursues its interests in part by nourishing a deepening community of states, and the institutional order that supports such a community. That idea is not merely supported by the evidence. It reflects the very concept of who we are as a nation.

Michael J. Mazarr is a senior political scientist at RAND, where he serves as associate director of the Strategy, Doctrine, and Resources Program in the RAND Arroyo Center.

A version of this commentary originally appeared on The Cipher Brief in June 2017.
RAND researchers have launched an ambitious effort to think through how we might break our reliance on carbon. They’re doing it with help from a philanthropic fund whose name, in ancient Greek, could translate as “repent.”

Private investor Frederick M. “Ralph” Taylor established the Metanoia Fund nearly 30 years ago to support environmental causes and search for solutions to our warming climate. He was a student at Harvard Divinity School at the time, but chose the name less for its fire-and-brimstone biblical use and more for its meaning in the original Greek: “To change your way of knowing.”

“For me, it’s much more a matter of a deeper insight, a shift in perspective,” he said. “Becoming more complex and nuanced in our thinking. That’s really what we need now to confront these challenges to our environment.”

That means solving our carbon problem. The fossil fuels that generate carbon power our cars, our electricity plants, and around 80 percent of worldwide economic activity. The international community, meeting in Paris in 2015, acknowledged that worldwide carbon emissions will have to approach zero by 2050 to avoid climate conditions that humanity has never witnessed.

There are ways to do that, at least in theory. Cars can run on something other than gasoline. Wind farms, solar arrays, and nuclear plants can replace coal-fired power generators. Emerging technologies can even capture carbon emissions at the source and then store them deep underground.

But none of those is an answer alone. It will take worldwide action along many pathways—technological, political, societal—to even approach the level of decarbonization that we need. And that requires a new way of thinking, a shift in perspective that brings together those many pathways and provides at least some direction through an uncertain future.

Taylor has built his investment portfolio around such social and environmental causes. He was an early supporter of community-development efforts in the 1980s and provided seed funding in the 1990s for a pioneering effort to measure and manage greenhouse gas emissions. He and his brother Jack also provided the start-up funding for Root Capital, a nonprofit that helps finance small farmers in Latin America and Africa.

He was drawn to RAND because of its work on making decisions even in the face of deep uncertainty. RAND researchers use computer simulations to test policy options against hundreds of future scenarios, to find those most likely to make a difference.

“ RAND is well-positioned to contribute to environmental research,” Taylor said. “RAND’s sophistication in generating models will be a great support for people who want to do something about climate resilience.”

His Metanoia Fund partnered with the RAND Frederick S. Pardee Center for Longer Range Global Policy and the Future Human Condition to begin identifying and assessing those many pathways to carbon-zero. Its $170,000 commitment is funding a series of workshops that bring together researchers, philanthropists, policymakers, and innovators.

Those “Decarbonization Dialogues” have a bold agenda: to produce a roadmap of actions and investments that would transform our global system of energy.

“We are in a race against time,” Taylor said. “There needs to be a better way to focus our efforts, to generate the technologies and interventions we’re going to need.”
If your kids can’t get enough *Yo Gabba Gabba!* you might want to send RAND a thank-you note (or some hate mail).

In the late 1960s and early ’70s, RAND released a series of reports that helped cable television spread far and wide. At the time, cable systems weren’t allowed to broadcast distant TV stations for fear that they would compete with local broadcasters. The FCC relaxed the restrictions in 1972, and the industry as we know it was born.

Of course, the researchers’ vision for cable TV wasn’t exactly a nation of couch potatoes binging on the boob tube. In fact, their interactive vision sounds an awful lot like the Internet.

“The new systems will mean that television can be used for many new services,” researchers Paul Baran and Martin Greenberger wrote in 1967. As examples, they cited the ability to shop, bank, and vote without leaving your home, and they envisioned two-way communication for “group dialogues” that would turn residents, governments, schools, and other institutions into “one happy electronic clan.”

Clearly, the researchers didn’t foresee the swamp now known as Internet comment sections—or that future RAND research would study the effects of televised violence, sex, and advertising on young viewers.

A few decades later, Bruce Springsteen voiced the complaints of a multitude of critics with the song “57 Channels (And Nothin’ On).” You may remember that the protagonist shoots his TV. And he hadn’t even seen *Yo Gabba Gabba!*!

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