the weekly Standard

APRIL 14, 2008 • $3.95

SEVEN NEW DEADLY SINS
P.J. O'ROURKE

TRIBES MATTER MOST

STANLEY KURTZ on a new book you have to read to understand the Arab Middle East

Bedouins, 1942

THEY CALLED HIM A TRAITOR.

WHAT DO THEY HAVE TO SAY NOW?

LAST SEPTEMBER, GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS came before Congress as the architect of a new "surge" strategy designed to suppress violence in Iraq. Since that report, independent and military reports both show that the surge is succeeding.

In 2007, Iraqi Security Forces grew by 106,000, and some 77,000 Iraqis volunteered to help secure their own neighborhoods. Since June 2007, total civilian and Coalition casualties have dropped by more than 70 percent, and deaths from sectarian violence are down 90 percent.

Most importantly, the surge has provided the breathing room necessary for the difficult process of political reconciliation to move forward. Since June 2007, the Council of Representatives has passed key legislation, and in a recent poll, 55 percent of Iraqis responded that "their lives are good." Additionally, 80 percent of Iraqis said the U.S. should continue to fight Al Qaeda and foreign jihadists in Iraq.

General Petraeus' leadership and the sacrifices of thousands of American fighting men and women are bringing peace to a nation, hope to millions and victory to America.

Don't just take our word for it...

> **The Surge "has succeeded in dramatically reducing violence."**
> —*Washington Post,* February 13, 2008

> **"It has taken nine bloody and difficult months, but the deployment of 30,000 additional U.S. troops appears at last to have brought not just a lull in the sectarian fighting in Iraq, but the first tangible steps toward genuine political reconciliation."**
> —*Los Angeles Times,* February 18, 2008

Will the enemies of victory continue to 'willfully suspend disbelief' about the progress in Iraq?

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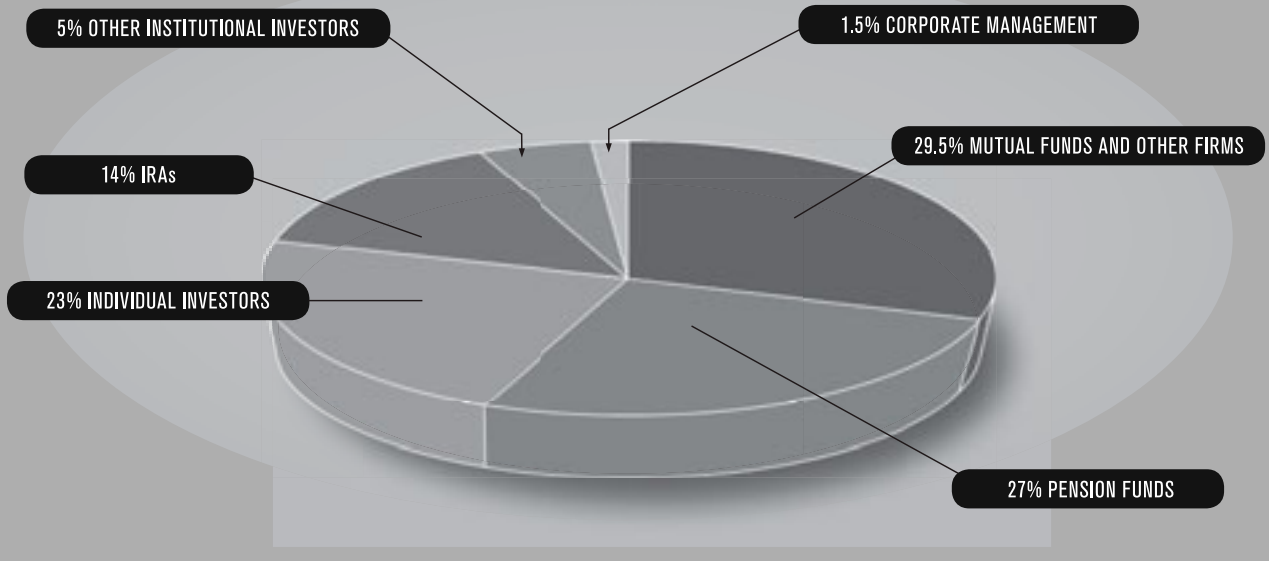

U.S. Oil and Natural Gas Company Ownership, 2007

If you own mutual funds or a retirement account, chances are you're among the tens of millions of Americans with a stake in the oil and natural gas industry. A recent study* by economist and former Clinton Administration official Robert Shapiro found the majority of oil and natural gas company shareholders are "middle-class U.S. households with mutual fund investments, pension accounts or other retirement accounts and small portfolios."

So when Congress starts talking about raising energy taxes or taking "excess profits" from U.S. oil companies, look at the facts and ask yourself, "who does that really hurt?" Read the full study at EnergyTomorrow.org.

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THE *people* OF AMERICA'S
OIL AND NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY

*SONECON: *The Distribution of Ownership of U.S. Oil and Natural Gas Companies*, September 2007

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the weekly Standard

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of News America Incorporated, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-902-563-4723 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

The Friends of Obama

There's a story, probably apocryphal, that Warren G. Harding, surveying his presidency, lamented that "in this job I am not worried about my enemies. It is my friends that keep me awake at night."

The Scrapbook is reluctant to draw parallels between the political world of 1923 and this year's presidential campaign, but we're willing to risk a low-caliber wager—say, two bits—that Senator Barack Obama might be thinking Harding-like thoughts about some of his admirers.

We need hardly remind readers about Senator Obama's spiritual mentor, the Rev. Jeremiah (God *Damn* America!) Wright; now comes novelist Alice (*The Color Purple*) Walker—"home from a long stay in Mexico"—with an "open letter" excerpted in Britain's leftwing flagship, the *Guardian*. Message: She's for Barack Obama for president.

Some of the essay is taken up with Ms. Walker's trademark lunacy—"True to my inner Goddess of the three Directions . . . this does not mean I agree with everything Obama stands for"—but in due course she gets down to business in no uncertain terms.

To begin with, she's against Obama's rival Hillary Clinton not because of the content of her character but the color of her skin. "I wish I could say white women treated me and other black people a lot better than the men did," writes Alice Walker, "but I cannot." In fact, as she explains, "white women have copied, all too often, the behavior of their fathers and their brothers"—which is not, as might be expected, good behavior.

Readers will recall Andrew Ferguson's delightful deconstruction of Senator Obama's applause line—"We are the ones we have been waiting for"—which, as he revealed ("The Wit and Wisdom of Barack Obama," March 24), is the title of a recent collection of essays by Alice Walker. In her *Guardian* piece, Ms. Walker expands on the idea in characteristic fashion: We look at Barack Obama, she declares, and we "are glad to be of our species. He is the change America has been trying desperately and for centuries to hide, ignore, kill. The change America must have if we are to convince the rest of the world that we care about people other than our (white) selves."

Ordinarily, this would be the place where The Scrapbook offers some pithy summary of the previous two paragraphs; but why bother? Like the Rev. Jeremiah Wright's sermons, Alice Walker's words speak for themselves, loud and clear. To adapt a Democratic phrase: With friends like these, Senator Barack Obama might succeed in swift-boating himself. ♦

Remembering Michael Kelly

Of the horrors of war, there is no end. But we remember this week with particular sadness the death in a Humvee accident in Iraq five years ago of the writer Michael Kelly, a friend to many of us at The Weekly Standard.

David Brooks memorialized him in these pages at the time:

> Mike never wrote for The Weekly Standard, but he knew many of us well and a few intimately. And while he was editor of the *New Republic*, he did pitch against us during our annual softball game. He wasn't exactly the best pitcher in the world. His style could be best described as energetic and amusing. But, as he did not fail to remind us later, his team won that day.
>
> When we think back on his remarkable life, we think first of endearing moments like that game. We think of his capacity for personal organization, which was nonexistent. He had a great talent for losing credit cards. When he left the staff of the *New York Times* he found he had tens of thousands of dollars of expense account receipts he had never turned in.
>
> We think, sadly and prayerfully, of his wife, Max, and their two young boys, and of his parents and his siblings, who are at the heart of a warm and glowing community on Capitol Hill. And we think finally of his enormous contributions to his profession and to his country, as someone who sought out the truth, who fought for just causes, and who never backed down. He was everything a newspaperman should be, and everything the rest of us should aspire to.

Five years later, those thoughts have dimmed not at all. Because of the kind of man he was, Mike would have been the first to insist that we remember as well the service of Staff Sgt. Wilbert Davis, 40, of the 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor, 3rd Infantry Division, who lost his life in that same accident on April 3, 2003. ♦

Hail, Bhutan

The Scrapbook sends hearty congratulations to the people of Bhutan, the tiny Himalayan kingdom bordering China that became the world's newest democracy on March 24. Two parties contested the election. Each was

Scrapbook

(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of February 12, 2001)

led by a former prime minister. There were few policy differences between them. Turnout was heavy. In the end the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (don't ask) crushed the People's Democratic party.

The birth of the new democracy is a tribute to the judgment of Bhutan's former ruler, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who called for elections and a new constitutional monarchy, before turning the throne over to his son in December 2006. It will be a while before Bhutan joins the community of nations that have an unrestricted press, a vibrant civil society, and integrated market economies. But the former king understood that free and fair elections are an important part of modernization. Bhutan's much larger northern neighbor could learn a thing or two from its example.

Speaking of which, in our last issue we wrote about Hu Jia, the Chinese dissident under trial at the Beijing Number One Intermediate People's Court for "subverting state power" ("Gold Medal in Tyranny," March 31 / April 7). While it was almost certain Hu would be found guilty, global human rights activists had hoped that the court would be lenient in sentencing him, considering the upcoming Beijing Olympic Games. Well, last week the verdict came in. Hu will be sent to prison for three and a half years. Apparently "leniency" is not in the Chinese government's vocabulary. ♦

Correction of the Week

From the March 30 *New York Times*:

> An article on March 16 profiling three sex workers in the wake of Gov. Eliot Spitzer's resignation after revelations that he patronized prostitutes misconstrued how two of the women, identified by the pseudonyms Faith O'Donnell and Sally Anderson, said they earned a living. The resulting misrepresentation of the two women's work included a headline that referred to them as "high-priced call girls" and a paragraph that said they practiced "the 21st-century version of the oldest profession."
>
> The reporter who interviewed them, one of two who worked on the article, never explicitly asked the women whether they traded sex for money or were prostitutes, call girls or escorts; he used the term "sex workers," a term they used themselves that describes strippers and lap dancers as well as prostitutes. Though Ms. Anderson advertises herself as a "dominatrix with a holistic approach," he did not ask her whether that meant she also performed sex acts for money, nor did he ask Ms. O'Donnell what her work actually was before characterizing it. He and the editors should have explored whether he had determined these things precisely.
>
> After the article was published, both women contacted The Times and said they do not perform sex for money; Ms. O'Donnell refused to be specific about what she does.

We'd call this the "holistic approach" to correcting one's errors. ♦

Casual

Advertising Weak

My friend Jody Bottum once suggested that there are three basic stories in fiction: (1) boy meets girl; (2) a stranger came to town; and (3) there once was a man a long way from home. I've long held that the same is true for advertising. Advertisements can be classified into three basic pitches: (1) Acme Widgets can cure the common cold; (2) Ed McMahon uses Acme Widgets—so should you; and (3) if you don't use Acme Widgets, your friends and family will disdain you.

In recent weeks, however, watching the NCAA tournament, I've discovered a fourth genus. The line advertisers are suddenly taking is that their product's greatest weakness is actually a tremendous strength.

The first ad to suggest the need for a revision in my taxonomy was from McDonald's, a commercial featuring ripe tomatoes and perfect eggs, all dancing and proclaiming how wonderfully fresh the chain's food is. Certainly McDonald's has improved since I flipped burgers there in the early '90s, and its fare has its virtues. But freshness isn't one of them; the quality of McDonald's produce is among its least attractive features. Yet the admen have decided to overcome this weakness by simply asserting that the opposite is true. You can't help admiring their brass.

Other advertisers have followed suit. AT&T Wireless, for example, is my cell carrier, and I'm quite happy with it. It has an extensive data network and supports the iPhone, which is my favorite gadget of all time. I'm so partial to the iPhone that I don't mind AT&T's spotty cellular phone coverage, which lags far behind industry leader Verizon. But what does AT&T tout in its ads? "The world's best coverage." (Note it doesn't say "largest," which would be quantifiable.)

Then there's delivery pizza giant Papa John's. During my bachelor days in Washington, Papa John's was the pizza of choice, terrible though it was, because you could get something like four pies for $12. On a calories-per-cent basis it rivaled straight butter for value. Today, Papa John's ads boast "Better Ingredients, Better Pizza." Which is flat untrue. Why not just tell us "Lesser Ingredients, Cheaper Pizza"? Why should Papa John be ashamed of who he is?

The ads that irritate me the most are from Lowe's, the big-box home improvement chain. Their pitch is that customer service separates them from the competition. In defense of Lowe's, they seem to have a better selection of higher quality goods at competitive prices. That's why I patronize them. But my typical trip to Lowe's involves my trekking from paint to plumbing to appliances just to find someone to answer a question about light bulbs. If I do find a Lowe's employee—not a sure thing—it's a pleasant surprise if he speaks even broken English.

Of course it's silly to be bothered by commercials of questionable veracity—one might as well complain that water is wet. But didn't advertising used to be more straightforwardly fabulous? Madison Avenue would make impossible or ridiculous suggestions: *Use Old Spice and Tricia Helfer will be yours! Your neighbors will despise you unless you drive a Cadillac!* Those weren't real ads, but a short while ago the National Association of Realtors really did claim that "It's a great time to buy or sell a home," inviting suckers—excuse me, "homeowners"—to abandon themselves to the dream of an economic-growth perpetual-motion machine. That's doing dishonesty the old-fashioned way.

By contrast, the new advertising insists on the opposite of the particulars we know. Take the latest political examples of the genus, from Barack Obama's campaign for the Democratic nomination.

Like Budweiser or Geico or any other big business, Obama has a number of different ad themes running on parallel tracks. His messages about "hope" are the classic promise that the product (Obama) will deliver all sorts of magic. He also has celebrity endorsements. His "Dip-Dive" video features dozens of beautiful, famous people mooning over Obama and inviting you to join them in their crusade for a better America.

But Obama also engages in the new advertising, presenting his liabilities as strengths. The candidate with the most startling racialist ties in decades puts himself forward as the first postracial candidate. The most doctrinaire liberal since McGovern makes a show of striking nonideological poses. And the least legislatively productive candidate puts himself forward as the bridge across the partisan divide—when it's actually his competitors who have the history of bipartisan accomplishment.

As I said, no point getting wound up. Advertising has always been like this—ever since a certain serpent started hawking apples.

Jonathan V. Last

SCOTT MATTHEWS

Balkan Brawl

In his article "Recognition Without Power" (March 31 / April 7), Stephen Schwartz joins the rest of the media in the collective international lynching of the Serbian people. For the past nine years, over 100,000 Serbs have been ethnically cleansed in Kosovo as a result of the campaign of terror that has occurred under the noses of UNMIK, KFOR, and the other observers. Over 150 Orthodox churches of immense spiritual and historic value have been systematically destroyed.

Despite all this, the international hatred of Serbia continues unabated

because the Serbs refuse to surrender and accept the role of obedient slave that the "international community" would assign them.

Let the advocates of an independent Kosovo give up their own territories to set an example for the Serbs.

Schwartz seeks to minimize the role that radical Islam has played in Kosovo. While Orthodox churches have been burned or destroyed, the Saudis have been subsidizing the construction of mosques that display the Saudi flag. Russophobia, and a disguised animosity toward Eastern Orthodoxy, go hand in hand with the venom directed against the Serbs. The Russians were blocked from placing peacekeeping troops in Kosovo in 1999, and the result has been the near eradication of Serbian culture from Kosovo.

Schwartz also fails to mention Turkey's support for Kosovo's independence that signifies the growing re-Ottomanization of the Balkan peninsula. The corruption of the foreign policies of the West can be seen by the silence that has greeted the horrific treatment of Serbs since 1999. In most other countries, international sanctions would greet any kind of governing body that treated minority groups in the vile manner in which Serbs are being treated. Among the unpleasant facts that Schwartz omits from his analysis is the infamous March 2004 pogrom that was directed against the Serbs in Kosovo. The unrelenting bullying and demonization of Serbia is the end product of a foreign policy based on political correctness that is led by a president and secretary of state who are quite ignorant of their history.

Theodoros Karakostas
Boston, Mass.

Stephen Schwartz responds: The claims that the United Nations and the Kosovo Forces in which the U.S. military participated have presided over a nine-year expulsion of Serbs from Kosovo, systematic destruction of historic Orthodox churches, and widespread Saudi-financed construction of mosques in Kosovo are lies invented by Serbian extremists.

Some Serbs fled from the now-independent republic at the end of the 1998-99 war, but, as the whole world can see from television news, Serb enclaves are maintained in Kosovo, some under U.N. and KFOR protection. While a tiny number of significant Serbian Orthodox churches were damaged in the aftermath of the war, nearly half of the mosques in Kosovo were leveled to the ground by Serbian terrorists in the prewar period. In such circumstances it is hardly surprising that a limited retaliation took place.

The charge that the Saudis have financed numerous Kosovo mosques is false; no more than a handful of Gulf-financed mosques have been built in Kosovo. The allegation that Kosovo mosques display Saudi flags could only be made by someone who has not set foot in the republic; Albanian Muslims are well-known for placing their national flag on mosques.

As for Russophobia and the rest of the recitation of Serbian propaganda provided by Karakostas, the simple facts are that the whole world witnessed the attempted Serbian genocide of the Kosovar Albanians, and the United States and the democratic Western powers made their judgment to support the rights of the Albanians as the historic residents in the territory. That decision will not be reversed by tantrums from Serbs or their sympathizers.

I regret the unintentional omission of the Turkish, as well as Albanian, recognition of Kosovo from my article. Serbia's Orthodox Christian neighbor, Bulgaria, has also recognized Kosovo, in an indication of sanity and maturity that other countries in the region would be advised to follow.

Remembering Buckley

Terry Eastland's remembrance of his friend William F. Buckley Jr. ("The Gift of Friendship," March 10) beautifully depicts Buckley's graciousness. Eastland's recollection that Buckley took such great interest in a young writer "toiling in the newspaper equivalent of low-A ball" conveyed something that those who never had the privilege of meeting Buckley simply sensed about the man. I once heard a Christian pastor say that greatness is not measured by the number of your friends, but the number that you befriended. By that standard—and many others—Buckley's was a life well lived.

Bob Myers
Doylestown, Pa.

• • •

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The price at the pump

Where does your gasoline dollar go?

In 2007, the industry earned 8.3 cents on each dollar of sales.**

* U.S. Department of Energy data for February 2008
** API calculation based on the *Oil Daily*

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the weekly Standard

Patriotism Paranoia

During an appearance in Philadelphia last month, Hillary Clinton introduced a controversial couple as part of her presidential campaign. She defended them as victims of smear attacks. "Valerie and Joe have had their patriotism questioned," she insisted. "They have been maligned as un-American because they believed … that President Bush was waging a preemptive war that was not in America's interests and now because we believe our troops should not police Iraq's civil war."

Of course this wasn't true. Both Valerie Plame and Joe Wilson were accused of being untruthful (and shameless self-promoters), not unpatriotic. Plame was a CIA official who blamed the Bush White House for revealing her identity to the media in retaliation against her husband. Wilson claimed the president lied about Saddam Hussein's efforts to obtain uranium in Africa. Actually, Bush was correct. Saddam had sought uranium in Africa. And Plame's identity had been leaked not by vengeful Bush aides but by a State Department official who was an Iraq war skeptic like Plame and Wilson.

The episode had a familiar ring, the ring of patriotism paranoia. When criticized for being soft or wrong on national security, Democrats routinely respond that their patriotism is being questioned. In fact, they're rarely if ever accused of being unpatriotic. But to the paranoid, that's immaterial.

John Kerry went so far in 2004 as to insist he knew how the Bush crowd would respond even before he delivered a foreign policy speech. "I know what the Bush apologists will say to this—that it is unpatriotic to question, to criticize, or to call for change," he said. Of course, Bush and his allies said nothing of the kind.

There's method in the Democrats' paranoia. They've figured out how to use it to their advantage: Blame someone for calling you unpatriotic, and you may blow off their legitimate criticism, even stigmatize them as smear artists, while you're seen responding more in sorrow than in anger.

Now Barack Obama has picked up the I'm-being-called-unpatriotic theme. Practically no one has questioned his patriotism, aside from a few bloggers and a stray TV commentator or two. Nonetheless, he declared after the Texas and Ohio primaries, "In this campaign, we will not stand for the politics that uses religion as a wedge and patriotism as a bludgeon." A few weeks later, Obama campaign manager David Plouffe chimed in: "Questioning patriotism is something we don't think has a place in this campaign."

Obama has taken what he calls "the patriotism thing" a step further. He's suggested the patriotism of his political opponents pales in contrast with his "true patriotism." At least that was how he explained his decision to remove his American flag lapel pin.

"You know, the truth is that right after 9/11, I had a pin," Obama said. "Shortly after 9/11, particularly because as we're talking about the Iraq war, that became a substitute for I think true patriotism, which is speaking out on issues that are of importance to our national security, I decided I won't wear that pin on my chest." In effect, Obama turned the patriotism issue on its head. If anyone was unpatriotic, it was his critics and foes, certainly not Obama.

The patriotism issue has also spread to liberal commentators. Kirsten Powers, writing in the *New York Post*, offered the conventional (paranoid) wisdom among Democrats. Insinuations of a lack of patriotism are what "the Obama campaign can expect in the future." It's the Republican way of campaigning.

There's a difference—a significant one—between being falsely called unpatriotic and having what Joe Klein of *Time* defines as a problem with patriotism. "Patriotism is, sadly, a crucial challenge for Obama now," Klein wrote. Why? Not because of Republicans, but because the Jeremiah Wright flap and Michelle Obama's comments and the flag pin incident "have fed a scurrilous undercurrent of doubt about whether he is 'American' enough." Absent the "scurrilous undercurrent" bit and Klein's silly notion that the "liberal message" is more patriotic than the "innate" pessimism of conservatism, Klein is on to something.

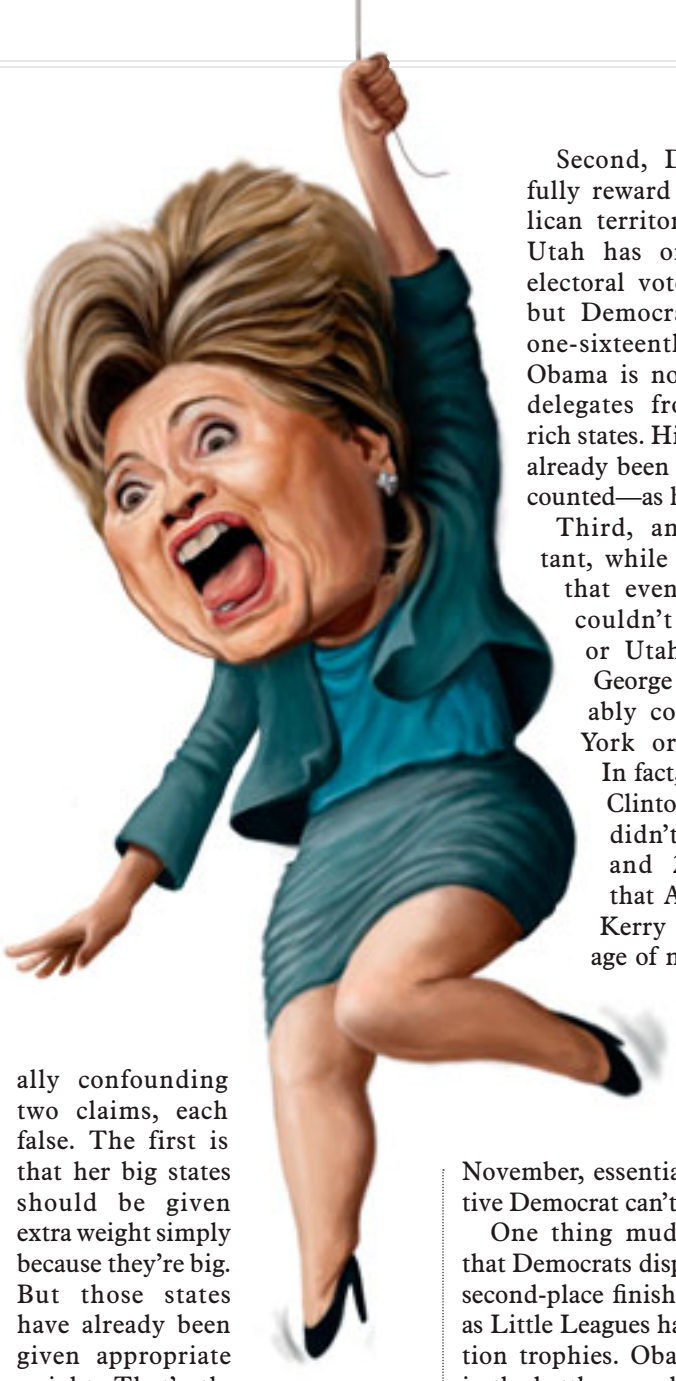
And it's not just Obama who has a problem with patriotism. "This is a chronic disease among Democrats, who tend to talk more about what's wrong with America than what's right," Klein said. Blaming Republicans is not the cure, especially since you've got to be paranoid to believe they're the problem in the first place.

—Fred Barnes, for the Editors

Hanging by a Thread

Hillary Clinton's big-state fallacy

BY JEFFREY H. ANDERSON



PAUL MOYSE

When is 1,252 greater than 1,414? Apparently, when Hillary Clinton has the 1,252 (delegates, that is). Clinton is making a strong push to convince Democratic voters and superdelegates that her big-state wins matter more than Barack Obama's assortment of smaller-state wins.

What good is it, Clinton asks, for Obama to win states like Wyoming, which no Democrat can realistically win in November? So far, Obama has failed to issue the most relevant retort: What good is it for Clinton to win states like Massachusetts, which no Democrat can realistically *lose* in November?

In emphasizing the importance of her big-state wins, Clinton is actually confounding two claims, each false. The first is that her big states should be given extra weight simply because they're big. But those states have already been given appropriate weight. That's the only reason Clinton is still in the race, despite having won only 14 states out of 40.

Clinton's second claim is that she is winning in crucial states, while Obama's wins in Republican strongholds will prove useless in the fall. This claim misrepresents reality in three important ways.

First, Obama is not the only one winning on Republican turf. George W. Bush won nine of Clinton's 14 states, in either 2000 or 2004, and seven of them both times. Her wins in Texas and Oklahoma will not be repeated.

Second, Democrats don't fully reward wins in Republican territory. For example, Utah has one-eleventh the electoral votes of California, but Democrats give it only one-sixteenth the delegates. Obama is not loading up on delegates from Republican-rich states. His wins there have already been significantly discounted—as have Clinton's.

Third, and most important, while Clinton is right that even FDR probably couldn't win Wyoming or Utah this fall, even George McGovern probably couldn't lose New York or Massachusetts. In fact, five of the seven Clinton states that Bush didn't sweep in 2000 and 2004 are states that Al Gore and John Kerry won by an average of more than 10 percentage points. Thus, most of the states Hillary Clinton has won are ones that, come November, essentially any competitive Democrat can't win or can't lose.

One thing muddling matters is that Democrats dispense delegates to second-place finishers as generously as Little Leagues hand out participation trophies. Obama beat Clinton in the battleground state of Missouri and got 36 delegates to her . . . 36. (One wonders why they bothered.) Clinton beat Obama in Texas and got 94 delegates to his . . . 99. (He won in more heavily weighted "Democratic" districts and the corresponding caucus.) This hyper-egalitarianism says a lot about the Democratic party's worldview, but it doesn't strengthen Clinton's claims.

Clinton recently opined, "I think it is significant that I have won in Ohio and I won Florida." Ohio is, in fact, her sole victory in a state among the top 30 in size that has been competitive in each of the last two presi-

Jeffrey H. Anderson is a former professor of government at the U.S. Air Force Academy and a creator of the Anderson & Hester college football rankings used in determining which teams will play in the Bowl Championship Series games.

dential elections. As for her thinking it significant that she "won" Florida—a state that wasn't contested—voters will have to wrestle with whether that statement reflects poorly on her veracity or on her judgment.

In the meantime, Obama should emphasize this point: Clinton's wins have either been in big states that won't be competitive or in small ones that won't be worth much, while he has won in decent-sized states that will be competitive in the fall. Clinton and Obama have each won exactly eight states worth double-digit electoral votes. The key difference is, in Clinton's states the average margin of victory in the last two presidential elections has been 14 percentage points, compared to just 8 percentage points in Obama's.

In 2000 and 2004, only 17 states—one-third of the electoral map—were decided by less than 10 percentage point margins each time, and those states will likely decide the 2008 election as well. Eleven states were decided by 5 percentage points or less each time. It is striking that, of those 11, the biggest, second-biggest, and fourth-biggest (Florida, Pennsylvania, and Michigan) haven't held competitive Democratic primaries. If you add Oregon (tied for seventh-biggest), then the majority of the 133 electoral votes in the 11 most hotly contested states from the past two presidential elections are from states that the Democrats have yet to decide.

Obama has won nine states to Clinton's five—worth 75 electoral votes to her 40—among the 17 states that will likely determine the Democrats' fate. His edge is clear. Still, it is remarkable that, with fully 80 percent of their primaries on the books, the Democrats have contested only one of the four most important states in the upcoming election. Consider this fact: Florida, Pennsylvania, and Michigan are worth 65 electoral votes, while Kerry and Gore lost by a combined 39.

Those 65 electoral votes—not New York and Massachusetts—will likely swing the election. ♦

Seven New Deadly Sins

Suitably updated.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

Busy times for us sinners—there are now an additional Seven Deadly Sins. The fresh abominations in the eyes of the Lord were announced by Bishop Gianfranco Girotti, head of the Vatican body that oversees confessions and plenary indulgences. This organization goes by the contrition-inducing name of the Apostolic Penitentiary. In an article in the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, Bishop Girotti detailed the seven new ways we can go to hell or, at the minimum, be sentenced to afterlife in purgatory at the Apostle Pen. The bishop's supersizing of the mortal transgression catalog is thoroughly up-to-date (as translated by the *Times* of London):

1. Drug abuse
2. Morally debatable experimentation
3. Environmental pollution
4. Causing poverty
5. Social inequality and injustice
6. Genetic manipulation
7. Accumulating excessive wealth

Not to argue theology with the Vatican, but environmental pollution is hardly among Satan's strongest temptations. Pollution is not a passion we resist with an agony of will for the sake of our immortal souls. I've been to parties where all seven of the original deadlies were on offer in carload lots. Never once have I heard a reveler shout with evil glee, "Let's dump PCBs in the Hudson River!"

If all environmental pollution were stopped forthwith—as any proper sin ought to be—wouldn't this result in "causing poverty"? Eschewing New Deadly Sin #3 forces us to commit New Deadly Sin #4. And New Deadly Sin #5 as well, since "social injustice and inequality" cannot be eliminated without global economic progress. Furthermore, that progress depends in part on New Deadly Sin #6, the genetic manipulation entailed in the bioengineering of new high-yield crop varieties to feed the hungry. Here we have Bishop Girotti, who is supposed to be leading us to God, leading us instead to a hopeless paradox and the unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost, despair.

Speaking of which, modern economists despair of any way to quit causing poverty except by accumulating excessive wealth—the excess supplying the capital needed for global economic progress. Also the Right Reverend should get out more and take a walk around Vatican City. A Mother Teresa leper hospital it ain't.

Still, one takes the bishop's point. A deadly sins addendum is long overdue. Life has changed since Pope Gregory the Great scribbled his initial list in the sixth century. For one thing modern society has turned Envy, Gluttony, Lust, Anger, Sloth, and Greed into virtues: building self-esteem, dreaming your dream, exercising gourmet tastes, having satisfying sex for life, speaking truth to power, being relaxed and centered. And Gordon Gekko said it all about greed.

Unfortunately Bishop Girotti's late-model sins make as little sense as a Jeremiah Wright sermon. They have no gravitas. Imagine the reaction in the confessional when you say, "Father, I have littered." Plus the supplementary desecrations lack a certain flair. The beauty of Pope Gregory's

P.J. O'Rourke is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

lineup was that he nailed our most devilish villainies with one word each. His seven evocative nouns produced an instant mental image: a puffed-up, shifty-eyed, fat cat furiously ripping the thong off a young intern on a slow night in the Oval Office.

I pretend to no expertise, let alone authority, in religious matters. However, I can't resist the temptation of having a go, myself, at The Seven Deadly, Part II. (I once would have felt it was prideful to do so, but that was before building my self-esteem.)

1. *Celebrity.* This is far and away the besetting sin of the 21st century. Note that the root of the word is "celebrate." What evil, pentagram-enclosed, goat-heinie-kissing ceremony are we celebrating with Kevin Federline?

2. *Communication.* In former days just Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and only one time at that. Now everybody's a know-it-all 24/7 thanks to Google, Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube, email, cell phones, text messages, and so on. A cherubim with a flaming sword is expelling us from the office cubicle of Eden, or would be if he could tear us away from the Internet. (And *you*, young man in the reading audience, take those ear buds out when your elders are addressing you!)

3. *Youth.* Talk about worshiping false gods; why would anyone pray—or pay!—for youthfulness? The young are spotty, sweaty, chowder-headed, and woefully lacking in wisdom, experience, or control over anything, especially themselves. Yet we bear witness to the eternally babyish baby boom. Men in their sixties are on Harleys and snowboards and basketball courts, from which they will proceed to damnation by way of the emergency room. The women go to and fro in the earth, mutton dressed as lamb, with liposuction well-applied to tummy, butt, and brain. And they all come to Mass, when at all, in shorts, T-shirts, and shower flip-flops.

4. *Authenticity.* Please do your best to be someone better than who you truly are. Deep down inside we're ravening beasts. This is the meaning of original sin. Everyone's authentic self is horrid. God's message to man has always been, "You can't really be good, but you can fake it. Really."

5. *Caring.* This takes so much time and effort that it necessarily results in the opposite of doing something. And notice that when someone says, "I care about the war in Iraq," he almost always means, "I want to lose it." Also there's a bullying logic among those who care. I care more about diddledydum than you do. Therefore I'm a better person than you are. Because I'm a better person than you are, I have the right to order you around. And vote for Hillary on November 4th.

6. *Opinion.* It's the reverse of fact. Listen to NPR or AM Talk Radio if you don't believe me, or, better yet, read the opinion page of the *New York Times*. (I'm talking about you, Paul Krugman.) Some people have facts, these can be proven. Some people have theories, these can be disproven. But people with opinions are mindless and have their minds made up about it. The 11th Commandment is, "Thou shalt not blog."

7. *To Spend More Time With the Family.* Alas, I couldn't get this into a single descriptive term, but it might as well be all one word. And when people say it we know that they've been doing something at least as bad as the former governor of New Jersey, his wife, their chauffeur, and Eliot Spitzer in a hot tub together. "We need to move on," is a similar phrase but with the implication of, "And I won't quit doing it until I'm actually behind bars."

No doubt our venial sins could use a do-over as well, but my sanctimoniousness reserves are nearly exhausted. Nonetheless I'll wager that one of those venial sins is blowing neo-lefty stink bombs out your bishop's miter. ♦

GARY LOCKE

The Polar Bears Are All Right

So cool it about the Arctic ice.

BY MICHAEL GOLDFARB

In 1817, nearly a century before Roald Amundsen first navigated the long-sought Northwest Passage, the Royal Society in London got word of "new sources of warmth" in the Arctic. The society was the Victorian-era equivalent of NASA, and its president reacted with great enthusiasm to the sudden prospect of discoveries "not only interesting to the advancement of science but also to the future intercourse of mankind and the commerce of distant nations."

Times change, as does the climate. New sources of warmth are no longer greeted with such good cheer. Last year's "record" melt of sea ice in the Arctic caused a flood of reporting on the growing threat from global warming. The statistic most tossed about put the area of open water in the Arctic at "six Californias" more than the summer average. The media coverage was mostly characterized by a deep anxiety about the fate of the polar bear. Little prospect for intercourse was seen in its future.

Then came the Arctic winter of 2007-08, described as "colder than average" by NASA researchers in a recent teleconference. The ice recovered remarkably quickly and by March, when it reached its annual maximum, had exceeded the three year average by some 4 percent.

Despite this unusually cold weather, scientists at NASA and elsewhere remain concerned about the state of the Arctic. They point to the loss of multiyear ice, which makes up the thickest sections of the icecap and is therefore more likely to survive the summer melt. Multiyear ice now represents less than 30 percent of overall ice cover, down from as much as 80 percent in the 1980s. They also point to the long-term trend, though long-term may be a misnomer. Reliable records on arctic ice go back only to 1979, when satellites first started to survey the poles.

> Richard Lindzen, a prominent global warming skeptic and a professor at MIT, flatly describes worry over polar bears as 'gibberish.' 'Polar bears are going up in number,' he says. 'They're not worried.'

As Richard Lindzen, a prominent global warming skeptic and a professor at MIT, puts it, "this is a primitive field where nobody has much idea of anything."

Still, based on this short record, some scientists predict the Arctic may see ice-free summers as early as 2013. Julienne Stroeve, a researcher at the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) who briefed Al Gore on the subject last fall, said she "wouldn't be surprised if that were to happen." Joey Comison, senior research scientist at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, is more cautious, saying only that the Arctic would lose its summer ice cover "within the century." Ignatius G. Rigor, who last year authored a NASA-led study on sea-ice decline, is reluctant to offer any forecast, though he does expect this summer's melt to break last year's record.

Suffice it to say that not everyone agrees the end of the summer sea ice is nigh, but it is the prevailing view. The NSIDC's official projection has the Arctic ice-free in the summer months starting in 2030, and according to Stroeve, there is no way to reverse the process. "I think we are going to lose it," she says.

Which to any layman will raise an obvious question: So what?

Stroeve says there may be an impact on the weather further south. Some climate models show reduced rainfall and snowfall in the American southwest as a result of the loss of Arctic ice. Others show more precipitation in southern Europe, "but again, these are climate models, and they're not perfect. . . . There's no real consensus now." Beyond that, Stroeve says, "I'm not really sure at this point how it's all going to pan out, because we really don't know."

As Ignatius explains, to some extent how one views the loss of summer sea ice "depends on how you feel about polar bears." "This is a big loss of habitat" for the animals he said, and "for local subsistence hunters this is a retreat or a loss of the surface that they hunt on."

But there's good news, too. The Inuit might find better work in the oil and gas sector, as high energy prices and melting ice make the Arctic an increasingly attractive area for exploration. A few weeks ago, an ambitious U.S. firm with a bent for publicity, Arctic Oil and Gas, petitioned the United Nations for the right to act as the "sole development agent" in the extraction of what they estimate to be 400 billion barrels of oil beneath the Arctic seabed. Shipping promises another windfall for the sparsely populated region. A Denver-based entrepreneur purchased the Canadian port of Churchill on the Hudson Bay for just $7 in 1997, hoping that he might cash in to the tune of as much as $100 million a year once the Northwest Passage becomes a viable shipping lane. The benefits of warming to consumers may be substantial.

Polar bears, on the other hand, are

Michael Goldfarb is a Phillips Foundation fellow and online editor of The Weekly Standard.

expected to see few benefits, even if the threat they face from warming is a matter of dispute. Lindzen flatly describes worry over polar bears as "gibberish." "Polar bears are going up in number," he says. "They're not worried; they can swim a hundred kilometers." The notion of threatened polar bear populations was recently challenged by J. Scott Armstrong, a professor at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. In an article for the journal *Interfaces*, Armstrong and his coauthors argued that a series of complex and "erroneous assumptions" undergird much of the research showing polar bears at risk, and they offer compelling evidence that the animals have survived far warmer conditions in the past.

Still there is a push to have the polar bear officially listed as a "threatened species." Hugh Hewitt, who practices natural resources law in addition to hosting a radio show, explained in a recent column that the move would clear a path for environmentalists to "argue that every federal permit that allows directly or indirectly for increased emissions of hydrocarbons is a federal act that might impact the polar bear." Such permits would thus be subject to a new range of environmental regulations affecting all manner of industry.

Assuming the threat to the bears from climate change is real, and that the computer models are to be believed, there may be a less costly solution. The warming of the last century has had no real effect on the ice floes of the Antarctic. In fact, the Antarctic Ocean appears to have become more favorable to the formation of sea ice over the last 30 years. Could the polar bear be relocated? In Antarctica, Rigor says, "the polar bear would have the issue where most of the sea ice is seasonal, so [with] the big retreat of Antarctic sea ice during the summer, the only place where polar bears could go is onto the Antarctic ice sheet, which probably isn't the happiest place to be."

Can a polar bear's happiness really be allowed to impede the future intercourse of mankind and the commerce of distant nations? ♦

What Happened in Basra

The Maliki-Sadr showdown.

BY FREDERICK W. KAGAN & KIMBERLY KAGAN

On March 24, 2008, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) under Lieutenant General Mohan al-Fireji launched a series of attacks against illegal Shia militias and criminal elements in the city of Basra.

The attack appears to have resulted from an impulsive order by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, who had gone down to Basra to see the preparations for a more deliberate operation then being planned. The militias, which included elements of the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) nominally under the control of Moktada al-Sadr as well as the Special Groups—secret cells organized by the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps—were well dug-in and fought back.

Iraqi forces in Basra, supported by American advisers and air support, pressed the attack and sent reinforcements. Special Groups and elements of JAM attacked the ISF throughout Shia Iraq in what appears to have been an attempt to ignite widespread fighting in Baghdad, Najaf, Karbala, Hilla, Kut, Nasiriya, and Diwaniya. Iraqi forces repulsed these attacks with very little assistance in the area between Baghdad and Basra, and coalition forces worked closely with the ISF to contain the violence in Baghdad.

On March 30, Sadr ordered his fighters to stand down, following a meeting between Iraqi officials and the commander of the Quds Force, Qassem Suleimani. Sadr's order, accompanied by a set of demands—which Maliki has denied agreeing to—led to a significant reduction in the resistance of JAM members, but has not halted ISF operations in Baghdad and Basra.

These are the facts of the case established so far. There has been much speculation about what happened in Basra itself: about possible deals between Maliki and Sadr, about the benefits Sadr or Maliki might have received from this encounter, and about Maliki's motivations. Because British forces, nominally responsible for the area in which Basra is located, have abandoned the city, there were few coalition forces present and very few Westerners at all. Most of the details of the operation publicized in the American press come from Iraqi stringers, the usual anonymous Iraqi officials, and, it seems, some Sadrist media outlets. In all previous operations where U.S. forces were present, we have learned that such information is of limited value. We simply do not yet know how well the ISF acquitted itself in the actual fighting, what if any areas were cleared, who was resisting, and so on.

Domestic critics of the war have so-far focused on a forensic dissection of what American commanders knew about Maliki's plans and when. Many have also hastened to argue that the flaws in the operation demonstrate the incompetence of the ISF. Those enthralled with prosecutorial inquisitions can amuse themselves by trying to figure out when Maliki told General David Petraeus he was going to attack, but what difference does it make? The operation

Frederick W. Kagan, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of "Iraq: The Way Ahead," the Iraq Planning Group's Phase IV Report. Kimberly Kagan is the president of the Institute for the Study of War. Her reports and analysis of the Iraq war are available at www.understandingwar.org.

was clearly imperfectly planned and was launched before the necessary conditions had been set. Failures of coordination did not prevent coalition forces from providing necessary air support—the most important reasons for Maliki to coordinate with Petraeus—even if it did require scrambling to meet an unexpected situation. Failure to set conditions properly led to a flawed operation, but reinforcements were flowing in when Sadr backed down, and it is hard to say how things would have proceeded if he had decided to fight.

It is too soon to judge the effects of this operation, particularly since those effects will depend heavily on what comes next. The following things, however, are already clear:

¶ Maliki finally did what Congress and the administration have been pressing him to do for almost two years: attack the illegal Shia militias and criminal gangs with the intention of disarming them and establishing the rule of law. It is worth remembering that this undertaking was one of the congressionally mandated benchmarks.

¶ The ISF mobilized more than 30,000 troops for the fight, including thousands drawn from outside of Basra. While it did use some coalition transport, it also employed its own aircraft for the movement, which went relatively smoothly. Again we might recall that a key benchmark in 2007 was the deployment of three Iraqi army brigades (perhaps 9,000 soldiers) to support the Baghdad Security Plan. The ISF just deployed more than three times that number on short notice to fight without coalition ground forces in support.

¶ Iranian military intervention in Iraq should now be manifest to everyone. The commander of the Quds Force was himself involved in the cessation of fighting, and he did not "broker" the deal as a neutral mediator since his forces were among the belligerents.

¶ The ability of the Sadrists and Iranian-controlled Special Groups to plunge Iraq into chaos has been exaggerated. To the extent that they have just tried to do that, they failed completely. In 2004, Sadr threw Baghdad and Karbala into full-scale combat that lasted for weeks and required the deployment of thousands of American soldiers to reestablish control. The most recent showing was a pale shadow of 2004.

¶ Some are arguing that recent events demonstrate the power of the Special Groups. They have certainly been engaged in an offensive against ISF and coalition forces for the past several months—to which the ISF has vigorously responded. When it came to uprisings in the Shia heartland, the ISF prevailed handily. Special Groups and JAM will no doubt reconstitute and try again, and they may do better next time—it would be a grave mistake to underestimate them—but the recent operation has shown only their limitations.

¶ Sadr was in Iran during the entire operation, gave his statements from Qom, made no attempt to return to Iraq to lead his fighters

as he had as recently as last year, and appeared both weak and under Iran's thumb. Sadrist news outlets argue that he has benefited from this, but other Iraqi media disagree, and the case is hard to make if you're not on the Sadrist payroll.

¶ Reports suggest that the ISF seized and is holding the port of Basra. If so, this would actually be quite a significant gain, since the port was in the hands of criminal gangs and its revenues had been flowing into militia coffers.

¶ Maliki has finally reached out to Shia tribes and accepted the establishment of Sons of Iraq groups—the auxiliary police forces providing security in many Sunni areas—in Shia areas. These would be similar to the awakening movements in Sunni areas and open the possibility of expanding the range of Shia politics and drawing larger numbers of Shia into active participation in the establishment and maintenance of their own security.

The most important fact about the recent operations has escaped most observers, however. The government of Iraq, that group of "Persian ex-pats" as many Iraqis and some Americans call them, went to war against the illegal Shia militias which are thoroughly infiltrated, supported, advised, trained, and led by Iran and its agents. When it ran into trouble, the government called for American support and then began to engage with its own local tribesmen, who eagerly volunteered to support the fight against the foreigners.

Iraq has already demonstrated that it is by far the most serious and determined ally the United States has in the war against al Qaeda by deploying more forces and taking more casualties in that struggle than any other state. After several years in which Americans feared that the Shia government would attempt to triangulate between Iran and the United States without taking sides, the Iraqi leadership has made its choice clear. It chose America. What will we choose? ♦

How Sarko Got His Groove Back

A triumphant 36 hours in Britain.

BY ANNE-ELISABETH MOUTET

Paris

With Nicolas Sarkozy's precipitous slide in the polls finally reversed thanks to a carefully calibrated spin campaign and an unexpectedly successful state visit to Britain, there are long faces to be seen on the left—but even longer ones inside the president's own party.

Call the French inconsistent. They objected to their new president's perceived flaunting of his private life. But give him a picture-perfect trip to England, complete with horse-drawn carriage ride into Windsor next to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, gala evenings, a speech before the Houses of Parliament, and a new commitment to a French-British alliance equal to the French-German "axis" that for the past half-century has kept France in the leadership of Europe—and what do the French pick up on but the accolades bestowed by the British press on Sarkozy's new wife. "London falls for Carla—Carlamania seizes Britain!" goes the headline in *Le Monde*. "Carla steals the show," trumpets *Libération*. And that's only the supposedly "serious" (and usually anti-Sarkozy) leftwing press. It took a 36-hour visit, one night at Windsor Castle, and nine dress changes (all in demure but *très chic* Dior) for Sarko's poll numbers, which had dropped 30 points in three months, to finally inch back up, from 35 percent to 40 percent favorable, leaving him a bit of elbow-room to announce a series of cuts in welfare spending last Friday.

The week before last, everyone in France was dismissing Sarkozy as last year's wonder, a four-year lame-duck president who'd managed to squander a clear victory in record time. Worse, he'd managed to lose half a dozen large cities to the left in local elections on March 9 and 19—almost without help from the opposition Socialists. As France moves more and more into a two-party system (Sarkozy has destroyed Jean-Marie Le Pen's far-right National Front in a neat mirror-image of François Mitterrand's shrinking trick with the Communist party a quarter century ago), the Socialists still don't have a leader or a platform. Deciding on these—at their next national conference in November—promises a lively free-for-all, as former presidential candidate Ségolène Royal slugs it out with her archenemy, Paris mayor Bertrand Delanoë.

Unlike their German Social Democratic or British Labour counterparts, the French Socialists still haven't formally abandoned Marxism. If they do, they fear losing the votes of France's three (count 'em!) small Trotskyite parties preaching class struggle and antiglobalization. As a result, the Socialists' message is often distorted by the tension between ideology and realism. Meanwhile, they look less modern, less diverse, and older than Sarkozy's troops, which helps explain his victory last year. (It took Sarko to appoint blacks and Muslims to major cabinet positions and to insist on strict equality between the sexes in appointments ranging from cabinet jobs to the Legion of Honor.)

As Sarkozy seemed intent on an own-goal ignominious free fall, his real enemies started coming out of his own party's woodwork. They are the self-proclaimed Gaullists, to whom the new

Anne-Elisabeth Moutet is a political journalist in Paris. She is a frequent contributor to the BBC.

president's pro-Americanism is anathema, and the keenest of them all is a lanky figure well-known in Washington, Dominique de Villepin, the former foreign minister and prime minister of anti-Iraq war fame.

Villepin and Sarkozy hate each other's guts. It's political—they have different views of the world, and Sarkozy despises in Villepin the career bureaucrat who never ran for elective office—but also personal. Villepin, who for a good while toyed with the idea of running for president himself in 2007, has been indicted in the Clearstream scandal, a smear campaign in which Sarkozy's name (and others') were faked on a computer list purporting to show holders of illegal Luxembourg bank accounts. Around 2004-05, Villepin and, in all likelihood, President Jacques Chirac, allegedly hired through intermediaries a computer expert to produce the list, in a dirty-tricks bid to prevent Sarkozy from running for president. The chief intermediary was an officer in the French intelligence service, General Philippe Rondot, who found the task distasteful enough that he kept detailed notes in his office safe, to be produced if any of this leaked. It did.

It should probably be noted here that even if Villepin is found guilty and sentenced (in all likelihood to a fine and a suspended prison sentence), this will be no hindrance to his pursuing a political career. The bright line in France is personal pecuniary gain. Another former prime minister, Bordeaux mayor Alain Juppé, was three years ago sentenced to a 14-month suspended prison term for financing the Gaullist party through City of Paris coffers. Since he did not help himself to a centime, he was reelected in Bordeaux in March with an even higher majority.

While Villepin is incensed that Sarko didn't lift a finger to slow down the judicial process against him (French judges are civil servants; it is not uncommon to convince them to slow a proceeding to a crawl), his

Carla in London: The many Diors of Mrs. Sarkozy

1) VIA NEWSCOM; 2) EXPRESS UK; 3) DP / AAD / STARMAXINC.COM; 4) PHILIPPE WOJAZER / AFP / GETTY; 5) PHOTO POOL / ANWAR HUSSEIN COLLECTION / WENN; 6) DAILY MAIL

official reason for opposing Sarkozy is that the president is betraying the "Gaullist legacy." One sure sign that Villepin intends to pursue an active political career, probably even run for president in 2012, is that he's recently registered with the Paris bar. He doesn't need the work—he is already getting both his prime minister's pension and an ambassador-at-large's salary from his civil service career—but as a lawyer, he can receive large fees from clients without having to disclose them. It is a known dodge in French political finance. Sarkozy himself was a barrister. So are Socialist chief François Hollande and his former partner Ségolène Royal, even though they're both (like Villepin, Chirac, and many more—but not Sarko) graduates of the illustrious Ecole Nationale d'Administration and therefore civil servants for life.

Until last week, Villepin and his bevy of anti-American, anti-EU, largely pro-Arab "historic Gaullists" were licking their chops at Sarko's fall from grace, punctuating the president's descent in the polls with snide attacks. "Europe has never had borders. . . . Europe made concrete commitments vis-à-vis Turkey some decades ago and [those commitments] need to be honored," Villepin told students (and the local great and good) at Galatasaray University in Istanbul, in open criticism of Sarkozy's well-known refusal to let Turkey into the EU. "France has no call to reintegrate NATO," he thundered in an interview with the radio station Europe 1, just as Sarkozy prepared to announce exactly that at the Bucharest NATO summit. "I might very well run for election in France," he confided to *La Tribune de Genève*. "The government's message isn't clear enough," he sniped on public radio France-Info. Even when selling his collection of Napoleon memorabilia and papers (tellingly, through the auction house owned by a longtime Mitterrand acolyte, Pierre Bergé), Villepin seized the occasion to express his grave doubts about France sending more troops to Afghanistan "in the absence of clearly defined goals by the United States and NATO."

Sarkozy's reaction was typical: Just as, after winning the election last year, he brought half a dozen leftwingers into his cabinet, throwing the defeated Socialists into further disarray, last week he had two Villepin associates appointed to leadership posts within the UMP, the Gaullist party, one of them as vice secretary in charge of defense. Sarko believes that while Villepin stays out in the cold, he can whittle some of his troops away from him. It's a daring strategy, undertaken even before the poll numbers started to improve, but Sarkozy, who at 53 is two years younger than Villepin, has been in politics for twenty years longer. Villepin has written several admiring books about his hero, Napoleon, but it's Sarkozy who's got the true Bonaparte style. ♦

The Politics of Hope, Take One

Deval Patrick's unpretty preview of an Obama presidency. BY CHARLES CHIEPPO & JIM STERGIOS

Both are purveyors of "the politics of hope." Both run optimism-heavy, light-on-specifics campaigns, exhorting voters to "take a chance on your own aspirations." Both read from David Axelrod-penned speeches—often the same David Axelrod-penned speeches.

The similarities between Barack Obama and Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick are unmistakable, leaving some to wonder whether Patrick's governorship might be a preview of an Obama presidency. Far from the politics of hope, Patrick's first year in office has been a cross between Mike Dukakis and Tammany Hall.

Despite Patrick's "Together We Can" campaign mantra, there isn't a single Republican in the governor's cabinet. Even if you chalk that up to just how scarce Republicans are in Massachusetts (12 percent of the electorate), it's hard to explain away the fact that Patrick, shortly after being sworn in, set up a 16-member team to cleanse the executive branch of GOP holdovers.

Charles Chieppo is a senior fellow and Jim Stergios is executive director of the Pioneer Institute, a think tank in Boston, Massachusetts.

Patrick is committed to big government and has proposed billions in new spending, including a billion-dollar giveaway to biotech companies, a new $1.4 billion commuter rail line, numerous multibillion-dollar bond bills, and a proposal to make Massachusetts community colleges tuition-free. To raise cash, he has proposed increasing business taxes, allowing the commonwealth to increase borrowing, and opening state-run casinos—the last overwhelmingly rejected by the legislature in March. His January budget plan uses nearly $500 million from the commonwealth's rainy day fund and includes a $1.3 billion structural deficit—after a year of record tax receipts.

Then there's Patrick's wholesale sellout to the unions. Fifteen of the 20 most generous PACs in Massachusetts are labor organizations, and they contributed heavily to Patrick's campaign. Repayment began quickly. After the state Labor Relations Commission acted against the Boston Teachers Union for threatening an illegal strike, Patrick simply eliminated the commission from his first state budget. Then in September, he granted a big union wish, signing legislation allowing public employ-

ees to unionize without a secret ballot election.

But it is with education that the governor's special interest agenda is most transparent.

In 2005, Massachusetts became the first state ever to place first in all four categories of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, generally known as the Nation's Report Card. When the test was next administered in 2007, the commonwealth did it again. This achievement is thanks to the landmark 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act. That year, over 200 business executives came together with a Republican governor and Democratic legislature to enact a grand compromise: high standards, accountability, and school choice in exchange for a large infusion of taxpayer dollars (more than $40 billion so far) into education.

The reforms were overseen by the Massachusetts Board of Education, which was established in 1837 and has always been an independent entity insulated from politics. The board developed a statewide exam that students must pass to earn a high school diploma, a curriculum framework that enforces standards, and a system for teacher testing. All have become national models, and the 1993 act is considered the most successful education reform initiative of the last half-century. (The Manhattan Institute's Sol Stern called it the true "Massachusetts Miracle.")

But the teachers' unions maintain a deep antipathy to the reforms and to anything that encourages charter schools—charter school teachers are not automatically unionized. The unions pumped $3 million into Patrick's campaign, and the governor called education his "singular pursuit." What he is pursuing is the systematic dismantling of the successful 1993 reforms.

He has wasted little time. His first budget eliminated the state's independent education accountability office. Then he used his first two picks for the Board of Education to demolish standards and choice: choosing anti-testing zealot Ruth Kaplan and charter school opponent Paul Reville—whom he also made chairman of the nine-member board.

Then he eliminated the board's independence by pushing through legislation that shortens the terms of reform-minded members and increases the board's size—allowing him to pack it with his own appointees. Beginning later this month, a new education secretary will have veto power over some of the reconstituted board's most important decisions. At the unveiling of his reorganization plan, the usually affable Patrick suggested that those who are concerned about the statewide exam and charter schools should "grow up."

Massachusetts charter schools outperform their district counterparts and are wildly popular—25,000 students attend the 61 schools and another 19,000 are on waiting lists. But the Reville-run Board of Education quickly became the first to reject a charter school application recommended for approval by the acting commissioner of education. (The school would have served two demonstrably failing school districts, one of which is on the verge of state receivership.) Ruth Kaplan publicly complained that charter schools are too focused on preparing students for college.

Even the *Boston Globe*, which enthusiastically endorsed Patrick, is losing patience. In February, it published an editorial calling on the administration to support charter schools and to reject the "pre-1993 state of flat expectations, phony promotions, and torpid teaching."

If Deval Patrick is indeed a preview of Barack Obama, the lesson is buyer beware. Patrick has proven to be little more than a machine politician packaged with a New Age ribbon of hope. And on February 5, Massachusetts Democrats filed their interim report on the politics of hope, rejecting the governor's handpicked candidate and giving Hillary Clinton a double-digit win in the Massachusetts presidential primary. ♦

Not What They Supposed

The terror connection missed by the Clintonistas.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Four months after the start of the Iraq war, two former senior Clinton administration national security officials took to the pages of the *New York Times* to demand accountability for the Bush administration's claims about Iraq and terrorism. Or, as they put it in their opening sentence, "Iraq's supposed links to terrorists."

Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon wrote that the Bush administration's assertions about Iraqi support for terrorism were "suspect" and demanded scrutiny. One sure way to know the truth about Iraq and terrorism, they argued, was to consult the mountain of evidence the regime left behind as its leaders fled in front of American forces. "Military and intelligence officials need only comb through the files of Iraq's intelligence agency and a handful of other government ministries," and we would have our answers.

Well, we have our answers. They came in the 1,600-page Pentagon study released on March 13 and entitled *Iraqi Perspectives Project, Saddam and Terrorism: Emerging Insights from Captured Iraqi Documents*, produced after a review of some 600,000 documents unearthed in postwar Iraq. And it is a devastating indictment of the U.S. intelligence community's analysis of Iraq, the Clinton administration's counterterrorism policy, and the arguments of anyone who would use the word "supposed" to describe Iraq's links to terrorists.

A thorough examination of those flawed analyses and the policies that resulted from them is as important now as it was when Benjamin and Simon called for it in the summer of 2003. "This is not only a question of political accountability—it also bears on our nation's fundamental approach to security," they wrote. On that, at least, they were right.

Benjamin laid out his views in the 2003 article he coauthored with Simon and in another one he wrote by himself in the fall of 2002, also published in the *New York Times*. The Clinton administration itself was of two minds on Iraqi support for terrorism. Sometimes Clinton officials argued that Iraq and al Qaeda were in league, as they did in justifying U.S. airstrikes on the al Shifa pharmaceutical plant in August 1998 and in issuing a formal indictment of Osama bin Laden. But since George W. Bush took office, and particularly since 9/11, former Clinton officials have largely disowned these claims, pretending that they never made such arguments and lashing out at anyone who reminded them that they did.

There are few more succinct distillations of the Clinton administration's view of Iraq and terrorism than these two articles. It will take years before we understand the full scope of Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism and the U.S. government's response to it under Bill Clinton. For the time being, it is useful to contrast the views offered by these top Clinton administration national security officials with the findings of the military historians who authored the Iraqi Perspectives Project (IPP) report, as well as with the actual words of the former Iraqi regime.

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

■ **"Attacking Iraq would not be a continuation of the war against terror but a deviation from it."**
—Benjamin, September 30, 2002

"The Iraqi Perspectives Project (IPP) review of captured Iraqi documents uncovered strong evidence that links the regime of Saddam Hussein to regional and global terrorism."
—IPP report, page ES-1

"From 1991 through 2003, the Saddam regime regarded inspiring, sponsoring, directing, and executing acts of terrorism as an element of state power."
—IPP report, page ES-2

Iraqi "documents show Saddam's terror organizations could be deadly. They were willing to target not only Western interests but also to directly attack Americans."
—IPP report, page 32

■ **"Iraq and Al Qaeda are not obvious allies. In fact, they are natural enemies. A central tenet of Al Qaeda's jihadist ideology is that secular Muslim rulers and their regimes have oppressed the believers and plunged Islam into a historic crisis."**
—Benjamin, September 30, 2002

"Saddam supported groups that either associated directly with al Qaeda (such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, led at one time by bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri) or that generally shared al Qaeda's stated goals and objectives."
—IPP report, page 42

■ **"During the Persian Gulf war, Omar Abdel Rahman, the radical sheikh now imprisoned in the United States, summed up the Islamist view when he was asked what the punishment should be for those who supported the United States in the conflict. He answered, 'Both those who are against and the ones who are with Iraq should be killed.'"**
—Benjamin, September 30, 2002

A memorandum "drafted in Saddam's office . . . refers to an agreement with Islamic terrorists to conduct operations against the Egyptian regime during the first Gulf War and for continued financial support for the terrorists after hostilities ended. . . . This document appears to refer to the Egyptian Islamic Group [EIG]. EIG's spiritual leader, Sheikh [Omar Abdel] Rahman, is in prison for his involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. The group's most recent terrorist attack was the 1997 massacre of fifty-eight tourists in Luxor, Egypt."

—IPP report, pages 16 and 51

"There has been agreement since December 24, 1990, with the representative of the Islamic Group organization in Egypt on a plan to move against the Egyptian regime by carrying out commando operations provided that we guarantee them financing and training and provide them with the requirements in accordance with the honorable order of the President [Saddam Hussein] which calls for carrying out commando operations against hostile alliance governments."

Excerpt from an Iraqi Intelligence document dated March 18, 1993, describing terrorist organizations receiving support from Iraq,

—IPP report, page 16

■ **"Like other Middle Eastern rulers, Saddam Hussein has long recognized that Al Qaeda and like-minded Islamists represent a threat to his regime. Consequently, he has shown no interest in working with them against their common enemy, the United States. This was the understanding of American intelligence in the 1990's."**

Benjamin, September 30, 2002

"Captured documents reveal that the [Iraqi] regime was willing to co-opt or support organizations it knew to be part of al Qaeda—as long as that organization's near-term goals supported Saddam's long-term vision."

—IPP report, page 34

■ **"As members of the National Security Council staff from 1994 to 1999, we closely examined nearly a decade's worth of intelligence and we became convinced, like many of our colleagues in the intelligence community, that the religious radicals of Al Qaeda and the secularists of Baathist Iraq simply did not trust one another or share sufficiently compelling interests to work together."**

—Benjamin & Simon, July 20, 2003

"In a meeting in the Sudan we agreed to renew our relations with the Islamic Jihad Organization in Egypt. Our information on the group is as follows: It was established in 1979. Its goal is to apply the Islamic shari'a law and establish Islamic rule. It is considered one of the most brutal Egyptian organizations. It carried out numerous successful operations, including the assassination of [Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat. We have previously met with the organization's representative and we agreed on a plan to carry out commando operations against the Egyptian regime."

It will take years before we understand the full scope of Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism and the U.S. government's response to it under Bill Clinton.

Excerpt from an Iraqi Intelligence document dated March 18, 1993,

—IPP report, page 14

■ **"American policy must recognize this clear division between the old state-sponsored terrorism, which we have shown we can deter, and the new, religiously motivated attacks."**

—Benjamin & Simon, July 2003

"Saddam's interest in, and support for, non-Iraqi non-state actors was spread across a wide variety of revolutionary, liberation, nationalist, and Islamic terrorist organizations. For years, Saddam maintained training camps for foreign 'fighters' drawn from these diverse groups."

—IPP report, page 42

"Two movements, one pan-Arab and the other pan-Islamic, were seeking and developing supporters from the same demographic pool. Captured documents reveal that later IIS activities went beyond just maintaining contact [with Islamist terrorists]. . . . [T]he Iraqi [General Military Intelligence Directorate] was training Sudanese fighters inside Iraq."

—IPP report, page 17

There are numerous other examples of these mistaken assumptions. If the consensus view of the U.S. government throughout the 1990s was, as Benjamin claimed, that Saddam Hussein had little interest in terrorism and no real links to al Qaeda and like-minded jihadists, we now know that consensus was wrong.

Benjamin and Simon were correct that the review of Iraqi documents could not only shape "our nation's fundamental approach to security," but also provide a measure of "political accountability," in this case for those who wrote off Iraq's "supposed" links to terrorists.

Military and intelligence officials have begun the process that these former senior Clinton administration counterterrorism officials demanded five years ago. And after combing through the files of Iraq's military and intelligence bureaucracies they have presented "strong evidence that links the regime of Saddam Hussein to regional and global terrorism," including al Qaeda and its affiliates.

Back in 2003, Benjamin and Simon wrote that the Iraq war was sold to the American people "as Phase II in the war on terror that began after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. But was there ever a credible basis for carrying that battle to Iraq?"

We have our answer. ♦

Is Islam the key to understanding the Middle East? Tribalism offers a more profound—if neglected—insight into the region.

By Stanley Kurtz

On the morning of August 29, 1911, a half-starved Indian stumbled down from a remote canyon near California's Mount Lassen and surrendered at the corral of a nearby slaughterhouse. Reluctant, in accordance with tribal custom, to divulge his personal name, he called himself simply "Ishi," or "Man." It took an anthropologist working with phonetically transcribed records of historic Indian languages to establish communication and identify Ishi as the last-known member of the Yahi tribe.

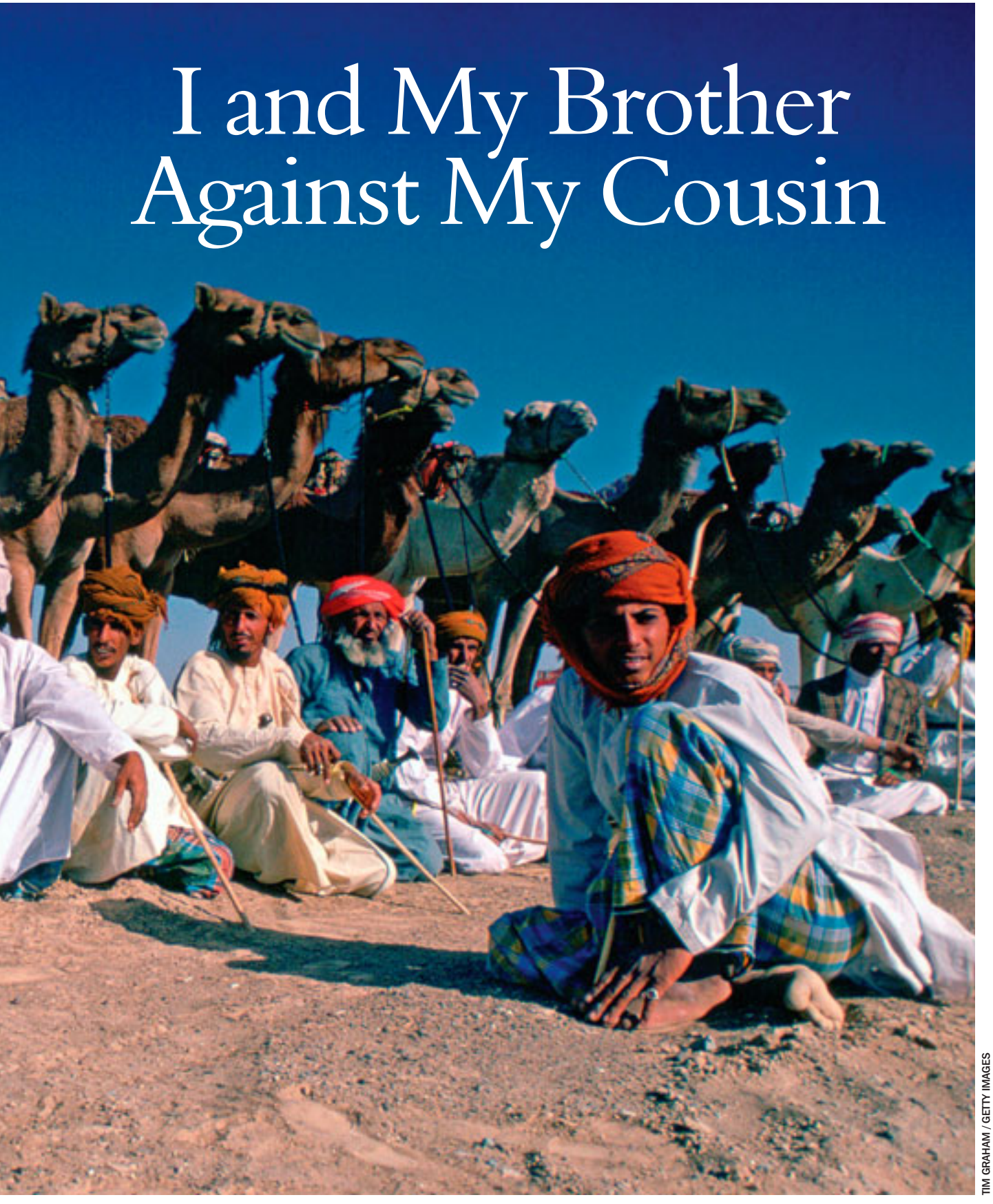
The Yahi were fierce predatory raiders—as were hill tribesmen the world over with their remote sanctuaries and a lack of property to defend. Lowland Indians feared them, and the Yahi offered the stiffest resistance to the flood of settlers who entered California during the 1850s Gold Rush. In the end all but a few dozen of the several hundred Yahi were killed, and the survivors vanished into the remotest parts of their mountain territory, living a life of concealment, at bare subsistence level, for 40 years. The renowned anthropologist

Culture and Conflict in the Middle East
By Philip Carl Salzman
Humanity Books
224 pages, $34.95

Stanley Kurtz is a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

Bedouins with their camels in the United Arab Emirates in 1980

I and My Brother Against My Cousin



TIM GRAHAM / GETTY IMAGES

Alfred Kroeber dubbed this refugee group "the smallest free nation in the world." Ethnologists of the day considered the Yahi way of life during the four-decade concealment "the most totally aboriginal and primitive of any on the continent."

I thought of Ishi while reading Philip Carl Salzman's new book, *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (Humanity Books, 224 pages, $34.95). It is a major event: the most penetrating, reliable, systematic, and theoretically sophisticated effort yet made to understand the Islamist challenge the United States is facing in cultural terms. A professor of anthropology at Montreal's McGill University, Salzman specializes in the study of Middle Eastern nomads. He, too, is something of a last survivor of a once proud band. What Salzman has managed is to have preserved, nurtured, deepened, and applied to our current challenge a once-dominant anthropological perspective on tribal societies: the study of tribes organized into "segmentary lineages." It was one of the great achievements of modern anthropology. Yet, over the past 40 years, scholars have largely rejected and forgotten the study of segmentary lineage systems.

Nearly a century after Ishi's surrender, the United States finds itself locked in a struggle with fierce jihadi warriors shaped by the pervasively tribal culture of the Islamic Near East. Whether hidden in the mountain sanctuaries of Waziristan or in the fastness of the Iraqi desert, the heart of the jihadi rebellion is tribal. The classic tribal themes of honor and solidarity inspire and draw recruits to the cause—from among lowland peasants and educated urbanites as well. Yet tribalism has been vastly overshadowed by Islam in our attempts to understand the jihadist challenge.

The anthropological understanding of tribal social structures—especially in Africa and the Middle East—has been shunned for 40 years as exaggerating the violence and "primitivism" of non-Western cultures, discouraging efforts at modernization and democratization, and covertly justifying Western intervention abroad. Decades of postmodern and postcolonial studies have conspired against the appearance of books like Salzman's. That an academic, "on the inside," could have worked in relative concealment long enough to produce this book is testament to the possibility of cultural survival. Indeed, fully appreciating what Salzman has to teach us will first require us to dust off our records of his all-but-forgotten language, and trace the trajectory of its destruction.

As with other fundamental sociological terms like "state" or "class," it is difficult to provide a precise meaning for the word "tribe." Whatever their similarities, there are important differences between relatively small hunter-gatherer Indian bands in the California hills like the Yahi and large Middle Eastern tribes professing a world religion and interacting in complex ways with nearby states.

In the Islamic Near East, however, the term "tribe" has a fairly specific meaning. Middle Eastern tribes think of themselves as giant lineages, traced through the male line, from some eponymous ancestor. Each giant lineage divides into tribal segments, which subdivide into clans, which in turn divide into sub-clans, and so on, down to families, in which cousins may be pitted against cousins or, ultimately, brother against brother. Traditionally existing outside the police powers of the state, Middle Eastern tribes keep order through a complex balance of power between these ever fusing and segmenting ancestral groups.

The central institution of segmentary tribes is the feud. Security depends on the willingness of every adult male in a given tribal segment to take up arms in its defense. An attack on a lineage-mate must be avenged by the entire group. Likewise, any lineage member is liable to be attacked in revenge for an offense committed by one of his relatives. One result of this system of collective responsibility is that members of Middle Eastern kin groups have a strong interest in policing the behavior of their lineage-mates, since the actions of any one person directly affect the reputation and safety of the entire group.

Universal male militarization, surprise attacks on apparent innocents based on a principle of collective guilt, and the careful group monitoring and control of personal behavior are just a few implications of a system that accounts for many aspects of Middle Eastern society without requiring any explanatory recourse to Islam. The religion itself is an overlay in partial tension with, and deeply stamped by, the dynamics of tribal life. In other words—and this is Salzman's central argument—the template of tribal life, with its violent and shifting balance of power between fusing and fissioning lineage segments, is the dominant theme of cultural life in the Arab Middle East (and shapes even many non-Arab Muslim populations). At its cultural core, says Salzman, even where tribal structures are attenuated, Middle Eastern society is tribal society.

In reviving and updating classic anthropological studies of tribal kinship, Salzman is implicitly raising one of the great unresolved problems of political philosophy—one whose implications in today's environment are anything but theoretical. When anthropologists first decoded the system by which lawless and stateless tribes used balance-of-power politics to keep order, they quickly recognized that their discovery cast new light on Thomas Hobbes's "state of nature" theory.

From one perspective, Middle Eastern tribal struc-

Bedouin tribal leaders dining in the tent of a prominent sheikh in Saudi Arabia in 2004

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC / GETTY IMAGES

tures completely contradict Hobbes's notion of what life in stateless societies must be like. Far from being "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," life outside the state turns out to be collective, cohesive, and safe enough to generate a stable and successful world-conquering civilization. Man as such is not, therefore, inherently individualistic, as Hobbes, the founder of modern liberalism, presumed.

Yet scholars have noted continuities between Hobbes's account and the conditions of life in segmentary tribes. Edward Evans-Pritchard (1902–73), the anthropologist who first described these societies, called them systems of "ordered anarchy," implying that, kin-based organization notwithstanding, life in segmentary systems necessitates endemic, often preemptive, low-level violence and never-ending mutual distrust: what Hobbes might have recognized as the state of nature's "perpetual and restless desire of power after power."

And despite collective guilt and powerful group-based pressures for conformity, anthropologists commonly characterize segmentary tribal systems as intensely individualist, egalitarian, and democratic. This is arguably the central paradox of Middle Eastern social life. Muslim tribal society is both fundamentally collectivist and profoundly individualist. In the absence of state power and formal political hierarchies, no man of the tribe can, by right, command another. All males are equal, free to dispose of their persons and property and to speak in councils that determine the fate of the group. This tribal tradition of equal and open consultation is singled out by those who argue that democracy is far from alien to Middle Eastern culture.

So which is it? Are Near Eastern tribes laboratories of individualism and democracy or generators of kin-based loyalties that render the Middle East refractory to modern, liberal governance? Does life in stateless communal tribes represent a radical alternative to anything Hobbes might have imagined possible? Or does the bold and martial egalitarian individualism of tribal life actually confirm Hobbes, thereby encouraging hope for gradual, liberal cultural change?

It is difficult to answer such questions when the mere mention of the word "tribe" is now all but banished from public discourse. Contemporary anthropologists, especially those influenced by "postcolonial theory," have in many respects repudiated the culture concept. For these anthropologists, the very notion of a distinctive culture is

Sunni tribal leaders at the Umm al-Qura mosque in Baghdad in 2004

held to entail excessive generalization and to subtly imply that non-Westerners lack rationality. The rebellion began in the late 1950s and early 1960s with the newly independent states of Africa. The last thing modernizing intellectuals and politicians in these countries wanted was to have their societies thought of as essentially tribal or connected in some fundamental sense with the "aboriginal" or the "primitive." Although by the 1960s anthropologists had come to look upon the subtleties of tribal social structure as anything but simplistic primitivism, in the public mind the word "tribe" remained an insult. So to respect the perspective of exasperated Third World intellectuals, why not buck up regional pride by studying a sophisticated modern metropolis or a brilliant Muslim philosophical text instead? Why must anthropologists actually highlight those "primordial" loyalties most likely to undermine the modern state? (Anthropologists must highlight them precisely *because* they cut against modernization, Salzman would reply.)

On top of all this, decades before 9/11, the rise of terrorism as a tactic in the Palestinian struggle against Israel suggested embarrassing continuities between the endemic violence of traditional tribal life and the present. Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism* was the key work in the rise of postcolonial theory, and Said, a savvy Palestinian academic and advocate, was particularly keen to keep the focus on American and Israeli policies that he claimed explained terrorism, rather than on any causes internal to Palestinian society. By attacking efforts to link terrorist violence to Middle Eastern culture as bigoted "Orientalism," Said and his followers gave a hard edge to already widespread Third World complaints about Western scholarship. That move, coupled with the growing number of faculty members entering American universities from outside the West, put paid to all but a remnant of the anthropological study of Middle Eastern tribes. The triumph of Said's perspective meant that by the post-9/11 era, when we'd need it most, the systematic understanding of Muslim tribal violence was largely lost.

Radicalized anthropologists not only stopped trying to make systematic sense of tribal social life, but many even worked to debunk segmentary lineage theory. The first and greatest critic was Emrys Peters (1916–87). Having done field research with one of the Bedouin tribes where segmentary lineage theory was first applied, Peters argued that feuding actually had little to do with who was descended from whom. According to the famous Arab saying, it was: "I against my brother; I and my brother against my cousin; I and my brother and my cousin against the world." Yet Peters claimed that the elegant tribal system of "balanced opposition" between small families nested in clans, nested in larger clans, and so on, was simply a bogus native "ideology," mistakenly taken for reality by credulous anthropologists. In truth, said Peters, other than a kaleidoscopic blur of secondary considerations, material interest was the only factor explaining tribal social structure.

With many anthropologists already drawn to Marxism in the 1970s, Peters's theory found a receptive audience. And when Marxism declined and postmodern anthropology took its place, it was actually Peters's notion of a kaleidoscopic blur that caught on. His careful fieldwork had indeed uncovered important exceptions to what the classic lineage model would have predicted. For example, he discovered that, when it comes to feuding over precious resources like water and pasturage, where you live often trumps whom you're related to. So having given up Marxist explanations, and drawn to Edward Said's radicalism, postmodern anthropologists seized upon Peters's exceptional cases as an excuse for further debunking the systematic study of tribal social structure. Exceptions were now considered the rule, and generalization became postmodern anthropology's bogeyman.

OLEG POPOV / REUTERS / CORBIS

Salzman takes an opposite approach. In a 1978 article, "Does Complementary Opposition Exist?," in *American Anthropologist*, he defended and refined segmentary theory. If Peters found important exceptions to the classic pattern of alliance and feud along lines of male descent, Salzman showed there was a systematic explanation. He found that when erstwhile nomadic tribes settle down, a given clan's location and its immediate neighbors begin to trump the call of traditional kinship loyalties. Yet even settled tribes preserve the classic kin-based ideology of feuding and alliance, precisely because they might someday be forced by economic necessity—or by war with the state—to pick up and move. The further nomads are from the settled life of a state, the more they rely on kin-based, segmentary, balance-of-power principles to keep order. So even after settlement, Bedouin preserve classic segmentary kinship ideology as a kind of "social structure in reserve" for times of movement, crisis, and conflict.

In the early 1980s, the brilliant social theorist Ernest Gellner resurrected the cyclical theory of tribe-state relations first suggested by the 14th-century Arab philosopher Ibn Khaldun. In Khaldun's theory, outlying tribes tied together by traditional kinship solidarities conquer, settle, and rule a state. In time kinship loyalties loosen, the rulers urbanize and grow effete, their state loses control over distant tribes, and the cycle begins again. The wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan present variations on this theme, and it's clear now that in 1978 Salzman was one of the first to recognize an important piece of the cyclical puzzle. So it turns out that tribes aren't so simple after all. Nor is understanding them incompatible with a study of brilliant Muslim philosophical texts.

In *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East*, Salzman draws on his fieldwork with nomads of Iranian Baluchistan to show how the classic tribal ideology of patrilineal descent and revenge actually works on the ground. It makes for riveting reading. Walk with Salzman as he accompanies a war party of 100 fighters armed with clubs, axes, sickles, and brass knuckles to prosecute an escalating feud. The aggrieved lineage in this party, the Kamil Hanzai (who'd seen their women and older men dishonorably roughed up in an earlier clash), were accompanied by men of six closely related lineages, who'd united to fight a comparable kin-based coalition backing the offending lineage.

Yet just three days before, the Dadolzai, one of the lineages supporting the Kamil Hanzai, had been ready to do battle with the Kamil Hanzai over the apparent theft of some palm trunks. It was a classic case of fissioning lineages uniting in the face of a threat from more distantly related tribal clans. Since the original male ancestors of the Dadolzai and the Kamil Hanzai had been brothers, the principle of "I and my brother against my cousin" held.

Salzman's detailed account of "segmentary feuding" offers a microview of some of the same processes we see writ large in the war on terror. Let's take a closer look at the alleged theft of those palm trunks. Mahmud Karim, of the Dadolzai lineage, was enraged to learn that a member of a "brother" lineage, the Kamil Hanzai, had carried off the palm trunks he'd prepared to roof his temporary mud-brick dwelling during the seasonal date harvest. Karim quickly mobilized a war party from among his Dadolzai lineage mates (including a few allies from closely related lineages) to retrieve the trunks—by fighting the Kamil Hanzai, if necessary.

But why hadn't Karim first simply walked over to the Kamil Hanzai and tried to clear the matter up? Indeed, it was later discovered that the palm trunks had been taken by mistake. Why risk a battle without first making a reasonable effort to talk the problem out? That sort of question is liable to be posed by someone living where a state monopolizes the legitimate use of force, and police and courts can therefore be relied upon to keep the peace. In a nonstate setting, where anarchy is kept under control only by the threat or use of force, it often makes sense to send a war party first and ask questions later.

A lone emissary from the Dadolzai making an inquiry or offering to negotiate a settlement would have conveyed an impression of weakness. Only by making publicly known their capacity to swiftly unify and fight to preserve their interests would the Dadolzai prevent future abuse in the lawless desert environment, whatever the intentions of the Kamil Hanzai had been in this particular case. The Dadolzai meant to fight only if blocked from retrieving the palm trunks, yet it was crucial that they be seen as willing to do battle. Had the Kamil Hanzai in fact seized the palm trunks with hostile intent, a lone Dadolzai emissary would have been in serious danger. Only after retrieving the palm trunks unopposed did the Dadolzai send an emissary—not a Dadolzai, but a member of a neutral lineage who would not be at personal risk—to inquire after the Kamil Hanzai's intent. And only then was it discovered that the apparent theft of the palm trunks had been an innocent mistake.

Arab tribesmen are preoccupied with maintaining deterrence and prepared to use force preemptively, if necessary—rather like über neocons. The ironic but very real parallel is a function of the de facto stateless anarchy in which Arab Bedouin live—and the de facto global anarchy that hawkish conservatives rightly believe to be the underlying reality of the international system. Saddam Hussein's interest in being taken to possess WMDs, whether or not he actually had them, makes sense in light of the link between deterrence and reputation. The emboldening effects of America's pre-9/11 retreats in Somalia, Lebanon, and elsewhere show the reverse of the medal. Although this is a familiar

litany, I'd argue that the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, the rage against the Muhammad cartoons, the killing of Theo van Gogh, and a host of related acts of intimidation ought to be placed under the heading of pro-active deterrence as well.

The swift and seemingly disproportionate resort to retaliatory force against apparently trivial offenses is an effective technique for suppressing future challenges. Most of the feuds Salzman describes, however weighty and enduring, break out over seemingly petty and inconsequential matters, like the mistaken appropriation of some palm trunks. Rifle shots, intentionally off the mark, are used to intimidate, as are calculated threats of murder. The careful use of targeted force and credible threats against Western critics of Islamism shows genuine mastery of the technique of deterrent intimidation. Here as elsewhere, an overtly religious action is actually shaped by a hidden tribal template.

Knowingly or unknowingly, American liberals and conservatives highlight sections of the tribal template, though for their own preferred uses. The implicit dovish take on tribalism notes that our own use of force actually serves to unite the foe. By hitting back at terrorist-harboring states, doves remind us, we create the impression of an infidel war against Muslims, thus figuratively recruiting every Muslim lineage into bin Laden's civilizational war party. This danger is real, yet the doves omit the rest. Failure to strike back creates an impression of weakness that invites further attacks.

The effective use of force deters in other ways, too. As Salzman accompanied the 100-man war party, he noticed that allied lineage members, while perfectly willing to fight in solidarity with their aggrieved lineage brothers, lacked the passion of the Kamil Hanzai. These calmer, more distant allies—as well as lineage members related to opposing groups through ties of marriage—act as checks on hotheaded adventurism. So the successful use of force can split the opposing coalition and create pressure for settlement, even on disadvantageous terms. The West's doves see themselves acting as checks on our own hotheaded adventurism, but Islamists, with considerable justice, view the cooing of the doves as a sign that their feud against the West has successfully weakened and split our own coalition.

The most disturbing lesson of all is that, in the absence of fundamental cultural change, the feud between the Muslim world and the West is unlikely ever to end. Tribal feuds simmer on and off for generations, with negotiated settlements effecting only temporary respites. Among the tribes of Waziristan, the saying goes: "I took my revenge early. I waited only 100 years." The Western liberal template takes an experience of peace under the lawful authority of a state as the normal human condition. In this view, when peaceful equilibrium is disturbed, reasonable men reason together to restore normalcy.

In the tribal template, however, low-level endemic feuding in conditions of controlled anarchy is the norm. Mediation by a neutral party can sometimes create a temporary respite if violence spins out of control. Yet the underlying conflict, especially if it is between distantly related or entirely unrelated groups, is seldom finally settled. It is instead prosecuted aggressively in strict accordance with cold-blooded balance-of-power calculations. From Karim's palm trunks to the war on terror, the liberal "come let us reason together" model has little currency in Arab tribal culture.

Yet by themselves, harsh calculations of deterrence are insufficient to account for the dynamics of tribal violence. The pervasive quest for honor adds a critical aggressive charge to the politics of tribal life. How was Karim able to mobilize a war party so quickly in the wake of the theft of his palm trunks? Alone, he had no ability to compel support, nor did a state with the power to require military service stand behind him. Yet Karim had risked his own life on behalf of his lineage mates in the past, and he would be needed again in the future. In a stateless environment, with kin-based alliance the only defense, each individual has a strong sense of his dependence on relatives for safety in case of attack. Individuals are also intensely aware that their personal destinies depend upon the deterrent reputation of the group. At one level, then, a man's willingness to risk his life in battle on behalf of his lineage-mates is a form of self-interest—an entirely rational calculation in an environment of stateless semi-anarchy.

Yet when it comes to risking your life in battle, a gap between the individual's short-term interest and the long-term interests of the group remains. How can it be self-interest to die for a relative's deed? Honor bridges that gap. A man's personal honor is a matter of the highest pragmatic import. A given individual may be free to refuse to help his lineage mates, but in that case not only will his group lose standing, but his personal reputation will suffer and others will refuse to aid him in the future.

With so many strictly rational reasons to maintain it, the quest for honor takes on a life of its own. In a society without ascribed hierarchies, honor marks some as superior to others. Honor is easily challenged and easily lost. It is also increased by displays of aggressive courage and dominance. So over and above even the necessities of preemptive deterrence amidst "ordered anarchy," the neverending quest for honor encourages violent action. Salzman gives the example of a tribe that took up smuggling as a form of economic warfare against the Syrian state that had stamped out their ability to make war. This had material benefits, of course,

but the danger involved was actually a positive inducement as well since it permitted tribesmen to display martial virtues essential in a competitive system of honor. Honor as an end in itself helps make sense of the not-so-pragmatic calculations underlying suicide bombing and again reveals the tribal template hidden beneath an overtly religious surface.

Although Salzman doesn't say it, I'd add that the dynamics of honor and collective responsibility help explain the particular resistance of Middle Eastern culture to change. Even when an individual is inclined toward modern attitudes, the need to protect the honor of the group draws him back to tradition. Salzman tells the story of a Druze serving in the Israeli army who shot and killed his sister to preserve family honor.

The young woman had lived in America for several years and returned to visit her family wearing Western garb. Her brother was inclined to ignore this, until his uncle's loud complaints about their endangered family honor were heard by the neighbors. Salzman's point here is that honor depends less on the action itself (e.g., wearing earrings) than on public knowledge and response. What's notable, however, is that the key characters in this honor killing are a relatively modernized young man and his sister. Experience in the Israeli army and time in America had worked a change on both. Yet the responsibility of each individual for the honor—and therefore the safety and prosperity—of the group as a whole makes it difficult to break away from tradition.

The funeral procession of six members of the Shiite Rabiya tribe who were killed in the Sunni city of Fallujah in 2004. The flags are tribal standards.

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

To prefer tribal tradition over incorporation into a modern state is a conscious choice. To make sense of it, we need to begin to think differently about states themselves. Looking at a political map of the Middle East, we tend to assume government control of the territories lying within all those neatly drawn borders. It is a serious mistake. As Salzman puts it, traditional Middle Eastern states are more like magnets, exerting force on territory near the center, while losing power with distance. The Ottoman Empire (and the British) ruled the tribes loosely, demanding an annual tribute but generally leaving them to govern themselves. To a remarkable extent, this holds true today. While the precise degree of centralized power ebbs and flows, tribes living in what are often quite large territories on national peripheries exist largely free of state power.

Far from viewing this as a disability, Middle Eastern tribesmen consider life beyond the state as the surest way to avoid dishonorable submission. Statelessness is an essential condition of dignity, equality, and freedom. The traditional relation of the state to the peasant, notes Salzman, "is that of the shepherd to his flock: the state fleeces the peasants, making a living off of them, and protects them from other predators, so that they may be fleeced again." Salzman asks us to think of traditional states as "cliques determined to impose their power for the pleasure of dominance and the profit of extortion."

Saddam Hussein comes to mind. Not only was his regime exploitative, it was built around a tribal coalition, at the center of which was Saddam's Tikriti clan. In the traditional system, says Salzman, states were bereft of any wider sense of civic responsibility or benevolence. Secure in distant mountains or deserts, traditional Middle Eastern tribes (like the Yahi in the hills of California) engaged in predatory raiding against settled peasants. Once a particularly powerful tribe or tribal coalition actually captured a state, they simply routinized their predation under official guise. (Saddam and his Sunni tribal allies fit the bill.) From that perspective, avoiding a life of peasant humiliation and exploitation through membership in an independent tribe begins to look good—endemic violence notwithstanding.

With their technologically advanced armies, modern

Middle Eastern states may look like they've put an end to the independence of tribes. Yet with tribal rebellions centered in Iraq's Anbar province and Pakistan's Waziristan region, one way to think of the war on terror is as an unexpected recrudescence of classic tribe/state antagonism. As Salzman notes, the scrupulously respected borders of modern states actually offer tribes a way to counter the reach of modern armies. Those Bedouin smugglers in Syria are able to slip across the border to Jordan when pressure from the government mounts. And of course, Pathans fighting for the Taliban in Afghanistan take refuge from NATO over a Pakistani border we dare not cross.

In Salzman's retelling of tribal feuds, the role of the state is ambiguous. Working through selected elders, state authorities do sometimes pressure tribes to keep the peace. More often, the state is virtually recruited into the system of feuds. After one tribal elder's mediation was rejected, he threatened to authorize the assassination of the parties who'd rebuffed him, then use his influence with the state to exempt the culprits from murder charges.

Disproportionately powerful though they may be, outlying tribal populations are small in comparison with peasants or city dwellers in the modern states of the Middle East. Even conceding the renewed significance of militant but marginal tribes, can we really follow Salzman in treating the tribal template as the dominant pattern of Arab culture itself? Salzman confronts this challenge persuasively and, if anything, actually understates his case.

Salzman says that it is not the details of tribal kinship structure that pervade Arab culture but the underlying principles of "balanced opposition," in which collective responsibility, honor, and feuding shape every action and thought, often calling for quick shifts in loyalty. Unite with your erstwhile enemy in opposition to a more distant foe; treat all members of an enemy group as potential targets; demand honorable behavior from members of your own group; and maintain your own and your group's honor by a clear willingness to sacrifice for the collective good. Warring Sunni and Shiite sects from Beirut to Baghdad follow principles of balanced opposition. They may be at each other's throats, yet they'll unite in opposition to an outside threat, as when Shiite Iran harbors members of Sunni al Qaeda on the run from America. In a sense, Islam's founding triumph was to raise the stakes of balanced opposition by uniting all the Arab tribes in an ultimate feud against infidel outsiders.

Since Muslims treat the tribal era of Muhammad and his early successors as the golden age of Islam, the cultural influence of the tribal template remains pervasive. To prove it, Salzman takes us on a country by country tour of Middle Eastern tribalism, from Jordan, where Bedouin form the backbone of the army, to Iraq, where even towns are heavily tribal, to Kuwait, where the strongest parliamentary opposition to women's rights emerges from tribal MPs.

Writing in 2006, Salzman cites a news report of clashes between Hamas and a powerful clan in Gaza to show tribal themes enduring in towns and cities. By early 2007, when Salzman's book was in press, the Palestinian unity government had fallen apart and Gaza was in quasi-anarchy, with Fatah and Hamas too busy fighting each other to govern. Such order as existed was enforced by brutal, battling clans.

This is no isolated occurrence. We ought to understand the emergence of Gaza's feuding clans as the revelation of a bedrock of Middle Eastern social organization ever-present and ever-influential, beneath superficial layers of Islam and state. Salzman noted the phenomenon in Gaza well before it became obvious. And long before he could have known of the tribal-based Anbar Awakening of 2007, Salzman identified it in nucleus thanks to some throwaway news reports in 2005.

I think we can also extend Salzman's case for the pervasiveness of balanced opposition even further. In treating towns and cities, Salzman focuses on settled populations of Bedouin who retain many features of tribal social life. Yet the massive slums of cities like Istanbul and Cairo clearly display many of the marks of balanced opposition. Salwa Ismail's 2006 book *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters* describes life in Cairo's shantytowns. With their homes illegally built, largely off the government grid, and seldom reached by police, the residents of these quarters keep order through a combination of traditional kinship ties and local loyalties (much as do the partly-settled/partly-nomadic tribes studied by anthropologists).

When a quarrel breaks out in a Cairo shantytown, men line up according to alleyway prepared to fight. Neutral parties are then sent out to explore intention and arrange a settlement, just as in Mahmud Karim's quarrel over those desert palm trunks. In effect, then, the vast, unpoliced "new quarters" of Cairo are the modern equivalent of extra-state territories ruled on tribal principles. And in some of these new urban tribal lands, as in faraway Waziristan, Islamism has taken root.

This brings us back to the question of democratization and the Middle East and to the most politically significant paradox posed by Salzman's tribal interpretation of Arab culture. On the one hand, he argues that the pervasive tribal principle of balanced opposition "precludes democracy" in the Middle East. Salzman neither opposes democratization nor thinks it impossible to

achieve. To get there, however, Salzman believes that the particularist loyalties at the core of balanced opposition—kin, tribe, sect—would have to be replaced by greater "individualization." Only then could an authentic liberal democracy based on constitutionalism and the rule of law take root in the Arab world.

On the other hand, Salzman's account of tribal culture consistently emphasizes its egalitarian, individualist, and democratic character. Balanced opposition is democratic, says Salzman, because "decision making is collective and everyone has a say." The very absence of government authority, combined with a system based on shifting coalitions of willing individuals, means that freedom, equality, and personal responsibility—along with bellicosity and courage—are fundamental tribal values. Salzman recognizes that while collective tribal decisions bring moral pressure to bear, it is ultimately up to the individual.

Salzman is right to contrast the relative freedom, equality, and open consultation of tribal culture with hierarchical systems of authority such as, say, caste in India. Yet there's something fundamentally misleading about applying the words "equality," "freedom," and "democracy" to the tribal context. What do freedom, equality, and democracy actually amount to in tribal society? Up until the expansion of state power in the 1930s, many Arab Bedouin engaged in predatory raiding against caravans and distant peasant villages. Captives taken in these raids were enslaved (not exactly egalitarian individualism).

So-called democratic consultation in this context is closer to a conclave of family heads in 'The Godfather'—never far from potential violence—than to debate in a modern representative assembly.

Turkmen raiders used to intimidate villagers with the following threat: "I do not have a mill with willow trees. I have a horse and a whip. I will kill you and go." Salzman uses this threat to illustrate the Turkmen's strong association of tribal nomadism with "freedom." Yet the freedom in question seems different than what we mean by freedom in a liberal state. Our freedom is rights-based and universal. The freedom Salzman is talking about is the freedom of a freestanding warrior and his tribe to dominate and deprive others of their liberty. And what about tribal equality? Salzman explains that tribesmen would rather meet government soldiers in "equal combat" than submit themselves to the state.

As for democracy, Salzman tells of an elder who tried to settle a feud by inviting warring clans to a *diwan* (tribunal of justice) for deliberation. The meeting quickly devolved into charges, counter-charges, then slaps and a full-fledged battle, with the presiding elder jumping in and flailing away at the victorious faction as it delivered a thorough drubbing to its foes. This certainly does illustrate the weakness of political authority in a tribal context. So-called democratic consultation in this context is closer to a conclave of family heads in *The Godfather*—never far from potential violence—than to debate in a modern representative assembly. This is not equality before the law but equality outside of law. Democracy requires something more fundamental than open consultation between descriptively free and equal parties.

Hobbes was the first great thinker to ground the rule of law and the authority of the state in the consent of free and equal human beings. Given the nature of human passions—our fear of violent death and our desire for eminence—society in the absence of law-giving authority would be a war of all against all. The way out, Hobbes argued, was to collectively delegate some portion of our rights to a central government that would demand our obedience to its laws, while also respecting the most fundamental rights to life and liberty that continue to inhere in every individual human being.

From 17th-century defenders of patriarchal authority through modern anthropologists, Hobbes's state of nature theory has brought forth numerous critics. To them the existence of paternal rule within early human families, like the organization of entire societies around the obligations of kinship, shows that authority and collective solidarity are fundamental to human social life. History, the critics say, shows that authority and solidarity predate individualism, which may be a strictly modern phenomenon.

Hobbes's defenders reply that a thoroughly individualist war of all against all isn't meant to be a literal history but instead a theoretical construct designed to shed light on real events. Nations may be vast collectivities, yet within the international system, they behave like individuals—defending, preempting, and seeking glory in a perpetual war of all against all.

Hobbes understood that historically the fundamental political units were families and tribes, which behaved toward one another like individuals in a war of all against all. He conceived of early commonwealths as agglomerations of families created through conquest—not a bad approximation of a tribe or of the cyclical capture of traditional Middle Eastern states by tribal coalitions. Hobbes even noted the power of tribal codes of honor.

He did more than simply conceptualize warring "pre-liberal" families, tribes, and nations as larger-than-life "individuals" in a war of all against all. He also reconceptualized the internal structure of families themselves as little commonwealths grounded in individual consent. For Hobbes, children obeyed their parents in a rational exchange of compliance for protection, a kind of social contract writ small. Hobbes isn't entirely convincing on this score, yet he captures an important truth. Even seemingly selfless family generosity involves at least an element of rational self-interest.

What then are we to make of the man who sacrifices himself in battle for his lineage, or dies for jihad with a bomb around his waist? Is this self-interest or self-nullification—a sacrifice for the honor of the group, or the ultimate competitive affirmation of individual superiority? It is all of this and more. Refusal to fight means loss of honor and possible abandonment by the group—a very practical penalty. Yet functioning families—including those mega-families we call "tribes"—seem able to call upon a sense of honor that is something greater than mere calculated obedience in exchange for personal protection. This complex duality of defiant individualism and self-sacrificing group loyalty haunts Middle Eastern life. Salzman's resolution of the paradox is to say that, on the one hand, Arabs pursue the virtues of equality and autonomy "to a fault," while on the other hand, Arabs are too deeply enmeshed in their particularist loyalties to accept liberal democracy.

I would put it differently. Arab tribal warriors aren't "too egalitarian." Advocates of race and gender preferences are too egalitarian. Arab tribal warriors aren't "too individualist." Strict libertarians are too individualist. The equality and autonomy of Arab tribal warriors are closer to what we find in Hobbes's state of nature—the sort of individualism that precedes the social contract, not the individualism that follows it. This, then, is the fundamental barrier to democracy in the Arab world. Arabs know all about freely expressing their opinions in open council, yet nonetheless have fundamental reservations about entering into the sort of social contract required to create a modern liberal state. What's more, these reservations are largely justified.

The state, such as it is in the Middle East, offers but a thin alternative to "the war of all against all." Too weak to provide public utilities, policing, or impartial justice, most Middle Eastern states are just reincarnations of the predatory, winner-take-all tribal coalitions of old. Why exchange the protection of your family, tribe, or sect for submission to a weak or predatory state? Tribal society contains just enough order to make a bit of violent anarchy bearable, and just enough grasping anarchy to make a liberal social contract unreliable.

Some political scientists decry cultural explanations for failure of democracy in the Arab world. They argue that Arab dictators deliberately cultivate "primordial" tribal loyalties, so as to block the formation of the genuinely liberal political parties, labor unions, and voluntary associations that might bring an end to their unjust rule. Yet this begs the question of why family, tribe, and sect were available and powerful enough to be "exploited" by authoritarian leaders. We're looking at a vicious circle, in which primordial loyalties undermine the modern state, which in turn is forced to rely upon and reinforce primordial loyalties. This causal circle is an only slightly updated version of Ibn Khaldun's cyclical theory.

It won't be easy to weaken the circle of particularism—the self-reinforcing loyalties of extended family, tribe, and sect that dominate Arab countries at both the state and local levels. The British did something comparable in traditional India by creating a counter-system of liberal education and advancement through merit, rather than kin ties. But that took time, military control, and a favorable political environment. The road to genuine cultural change is long, and there are no easy shortcuts. On the other hand, the tribal template offers a ray of hope.

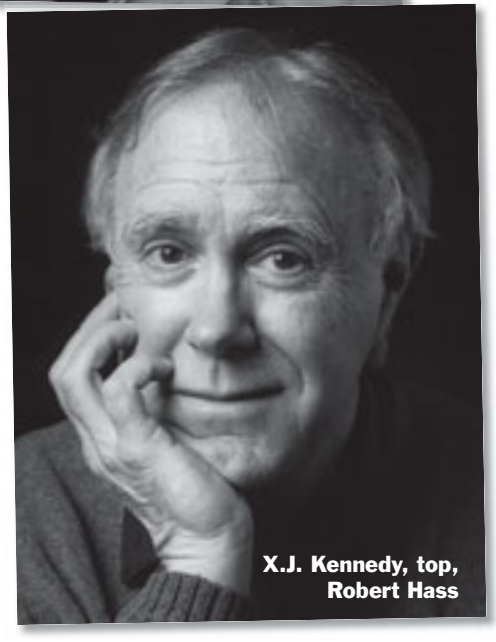
Since 9/11, we've understood Islam as the fundamental source of the cultural challenge coming from the Middle East. That has given rise to a strategy of direct assault—an almost Voltairean attempt to deflate religious pretensions in hopes of forcing a change. Islam itself may be a complex extension of tribal culture, yet technically, Islam is defined as something different from, and sometimes antagonistic to, pure tribalism. When Muslim immigrants in Europe debate amongst themselves female seclusion, cousin marriage, and honor killings, reformers argue that these are "cultural" rather than strictly "Islamic" practices. There is truth here and also an opening.

While tribalism is in one sense culturally pervasive in the Middle East, tribal practices are less swathed in sacredness than explicitly Koranic symbols and commandments—and are therefore more susceptible to criticism and debate. Even jihad and suicide bombing can be interpreted through a tribal lens. We've taught ourselves a good deal about Islam over the past seven years. Yet tribalism is at least half the cultural battle in the Middle East, and the West knows little about it. Learning how to understand and critique the Islamic Near East through a tribal lens will open up a new and smarter strategy for change. The way to begin is by picking up Salzman's *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East*. ♦

Two Routes to Reality

Kennedy sings, Hass describes, poetic truth

BY WYATT PRUNTY



X.J. Kennedy, top, Robert Hass

X.J. Kennedy's *In a Prominent Bar in Secaucus* and Robert Hass's *Time and Materials* take different paths to reality.

Each poet is an ironist who proceeds by doubt, but Kennedy's poems display the songlike qualities of the central English lyric while Hass, who recently received the National Book Award, writes more descriptively. Kennedy's latest collection takes its title from a poem that is intended to be sung to the tune of "Sweet Betsy from Pike." The worn-out woman in the Secaucus bar is a comic version of a familiar blues type, the persona of Bessie Smith's "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out," say. But Kennedy's character has encountered a hyperbolic bounce or two on the way down. Anyone who has heard Kennedy perform this poem during one of his readings will remember the event.

In a Prominent Bar in Secaucus
New and Selected Poems, 1955-2007
by X.J. Kennedy
Johns Hopkins, 224 pp., $35

Time and Materials
Poems 1997-2005
by Robert Hass
Ecco, 96 pp., $22.95

And there are other Kennedy poems meant to be sung. Two are "Song: Great Chain of Being" and "Song to the Tune of 'Somebody Stole My Gal.'" The first opens, "Drinking smooth wine in a castle or digging potatoes knee-deep in dung, / Everybody in creation knew just how high or how low he hung." Now, the poem's argument goes, nobody knows this. The poem asks, "*Is* seeing believing? / *Is* seeing believing?" The answer, one concludes, is a resounding no. Then there is "Song to the Tune of 'Somebody Stole My Gal,'" which opens:

Somebody stole my myths,
Stole all their gists and piths,
Somebody pinched my Juno and Pan,
Crooked Dionysus
And caused my spiritual crisis.

When he reads this poem Kennedy takes an instrumental break during which he puts his hand to his lips to imitate a muted trumpet. That brings the house down. But funny as these poems are, they also have their shadows: The order we associate with melody stands in stark contrast to the chaos of the lives Kennedy describes. He applies his tunefulness to a loss of meaning, even as he has the grace to make us laugh. And putting chaos to familiar tunes is just one way Kennedy tricks out the dissonances he hears. He tosses his readers an array of ironies, amid which there are more harrumphs than hurrahs.

Here is a different route to reality, Robert Hass's "A Supple Wreath of Myrtle":

Poor Nietzsche in Turin, eating sausage
his mother
Mails to him from Basel. A rented room,
A small square window framing August
clouds
Above the mountain. Brooding on the
form
Of things: the dangling spur

Wyatt Prunty, Carlton professor of English at the University of the South (Sewanee), is the author, most recently, of Unarmed and Dangerous: New and Selected Poems.

Of an Alpine columbine, winter-tortured trunks
Of cedar in the summer sun, the warp in the aspen's trunk
Where it torqued up through the snowpack.

"Everywhere the wasteland grows; woe
To him whose wasteland is within."

Dying of syphilis. Trimming a luxuriant mustache.
In love with the opera of Bizet.

Turin, where Nietzsche fell ill in 1889, was the first capital of unified Italy. Italy was first in fascism. Basel, the source of Nietzsche's sausage, is a Swiss city north of Turin close to Bismarck's Germany. It is where, at the age of 25, Nietzsche held the chair in classical philology at the University of Basel, and it is the site of the first meeting of the World Zionist Organization.

Although he was sickened by the sight of blood, Nietzsche thought strength equaled good. In the next century the Nazis would co-opt that idea. Sausage is an efficient form of butchery. The Nazis were efficient butchers. Bizet's best known opera is *Carmen*, a story about a woman who abandons a soldier for a bullfighter. Torino (Turin) means "little bull." Nietzsche had a naive admiration for soldiery, and as his Zarathustra praised tragedies and crucifixions, he also praised bullfights. Nietzsche, "dying of syphilis," trims his "luxuriant mustache." Mustaches of the 19th century were associated with the military, and the military was associated with strength, so if strength equaled good in Nietzsche's mind, then a soldier or a bullfighter was to be admired.

Meanwhile, the hairs of Nietzsche's mustache curled like the spirochetes of the syphilis that infected him. The spirochete found in syphilis is shaped like a sausage and even has an outer sheath like that of a sausage, and the myrtle shares the same shape in its five petals and sepals, while the columbine has five spurs that, in their turn, are of similar shape. The Latin *aquilegia* of columbine is associated with *aquila*, "eagle," its spurs shaped like the talons of a raptor. And so the circle of associations goes.

Hass has a kaleidoscopic vision. The spirochete, from the Latin, *spira*, or coil, and *chaeta*, or bristle, is a shape found as commonly in nature as brutality is in human behavior. To wreathe is to curl, writhe, or spiral. The wreath for Nietzsche that Hass has in mind is pliant, changeable, and adaptable. It is a supple (that is, a pliant) memorial offered for Nietzsche who was twisted to madness by his disease. At the heart of all this suffering, Nietzsche's and that of modern Europe, lies a recurrent shape, whether seen in a sausage, a flower's "dangling spur," the geographical shape of Italy where fascism began, or the mobile part of syphilis.

For Hass, butchery, talons, spurs, fascist states, and a lethal disease are of a piece, as is one of our greatest strengths and failures, abstract thought—Nietzsche's ability to be in love with an opera rather than a person, for example.

X.J. Kennedy is admired for such fine early poems as "Nude Descending a Staircase" and "Nothing in Heaven Functions as It Ought," but his *New and Selected Poems* provides an impressive array of more recent work. "Fireflies," "God's Obsequies," "At the Antiques Fair," and "Secret River" are some of the most striking new poems in this collection. Of the fireflies in the first of these Kennedy says, "Somehow their incandescent dance / Obscures our dark view of the dark's / Enormity as they advance." The argument here is similar to the conclusion drawn by a Hass poem entitled, "Art and Life," which begins with a description of a painting by Vermeer and concludes, "Something stays this way, something comes alive / We cannot have, can have because we cannot have it."

Whether found in experience or in art, Kennedy and Hass agree that reality exists as it resists, stays on by standing off. Kennedy captures this irony with humor: "Concupiscent, the fireflies cruise. . . . They stay out late / Blinking their signs to advertise / STUD WANTED and BRIGHT MALE SEEKS MATE," while Hass catalogs what he sees, citing everything from those living in Vermeer's time to the materials used for his painting, "the brush," "volatile," "oils / Of linseed, rapseed," "essence / Of pinewood in a can of turpentine." There is a tough-minded yet celebratory quality to each of these poets.

Often Kennedy is most serious when most funny. Other times what he writes is astringently direct, "Secret River" for example:

When love's done, drooped and drowned
And buried, sleep flows by.
Scaled, tailed, and finetooth-boned,
Descending, you and I
Have left our eyes upstairs,
For what's there to remark?
Why interrupt with ears
The dumbshow of the dark?

With finning hands we stir
A petrifying river
Whose overhead and floor
Extend to touch each other.
Opposing spears of stone,
Limewater-rinsed, time-wrought,
We lengthen till we join
Our inmost tips in thought.

"Secret River" displays a concrescence reminiscent of the 17th-century metaphysical poets and their descendants, even as it maintains a reserve characteristic of Kennedy alone, including a resistance to certain hierarchies of the tradition, the church for one. When he considers higher order, Kennedy's general response is a shrugging laugh. When he turns to individuals, however, he is as compassionate as any divine could hope to be.

Often Robert Hass introduces a seemingly small but concrete subject, expatiates, and returns with something surprisingly comprehensive. He operates by description, narration, and the indirect drama of relationship. A man and a woman, in a poem entitled "Then Time," for example, have known each other for years, first as lovers then as friends. Early on when he asks, "What is this? . . . I can't get enough of you. . . . Where does this come from?" her answer is, "Self-hatred . . . longing for God." Later, we are told, "He decides that she thinks more symbolically / Than he does and that it seemed to have saved her, / For all her fatalism, from certain kinds of pain." The fusion of tense here ("she thinks," "it seemed") is like the fusion of

understood time, the time and material of the book's title poem.

For her part, the woman, now seated across the table during dinner, lets her mind run this way: "She finds herself thinking what a literal man he is, / Notices, as if she were recalling it, his pleasure / In the menu." Again the time involved conflates ("as if she were recalling it") so then and now stand inseparable in the most realistic theater we have, understanding. This aggregating process continues until the poem ends in a series of overlays:

She sees her own avidity
To live then, or not to not have lived might be more accurate,
From a distance, the way a driver might see from the road
A startled deer running across an open field in the rain.
Wild thing. Here and gone. Death made it poignant, or,
If not death exactly, which she'd come to think of
As creatures seething in a compost, then time.

One of the great modern themes has been time, plus a hallmark of modernist poetic method has been use of the image and allusion. Thus, Hass opens his book with the two-line poem "Iowa, January": "In the long winter nights, a farmer's dreams are narrow. / Over and over, he enters the furrow." The poem's brevity imposes its visual power, and with January there is allusion to the Janus, double-facing god of gates and doorways (and furrows). But one sees in the passage from "Then Time" quoted above that a great deal more than imagery and allusion is at work with Hass. There is the aggregating power of description by which he builds linearly. Hass is like Elizabeth Bishop in that readers recognize the visual influence of modernist practice, but seeing such influence makes the originality of the poetry that much more impressive.

Before anything else, one returns to Hass for the same reason one returns to Bishop: Both see what others miss. Robert Hass is one of our very best poets. And X.J. Kennedy? He ought to be declared a national resource and excused from taxation. ♦

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Republican National Convention, Detroit, 1980

BOOKS & ARTS

The Right Stuff

Conservatism prevails when the hatchets are buried.

BY DANIEL CASSE

Does the conservative movement still exist in any meaningful sense? It is now nearly two decades since Ronald Reagan left office, and during that time conservatives have been in constant tumult. Looking back, the Hiss verdict, California's tax-cutting Proposition 13, the Reagan presidential victories, the failed fight for the Bork nomination, now seem like relatively rare, halcyon moments of conservative unity. Today, that unity is found almost nowhere in conservative ranks. Immigration policy, trade, defense spending, foreign intervention, Social Security reform, George W. Bush—these comprise just a short list of the topics that send self-identified "conservatives" into paroxysms of fury.

The Conservative Ascendancy
How the GOP Right Made Political History
by Donald T. Critchlow
Harvard, 368 pp., $27.95

Maybe fury, at least the slow-boiling kind, is good for the conservative soul. Unlike liberalism, American conservatism has always proudly worn the cloak of the embattled and neglected underdog. Its little magazines, from *The American Spectator* to *The New Criterion*, have been best in opposition. And its most outsized, colorful figures—Patrick Buchanan, Charlton Heston, William Bennett, George Will, Ann Coulter—have more verve when they are firing from the trenches.

The late William F. Buckley Jr., early in his career, coined a motto for the movement that stuck: A conservative is someone willing to "stand athwart history yelling 'Stop!'" Almost four decades later Vice President Dan Quayle offered another pithy self-description: "I wear their scorn as a badge of honor." You have to wonder: Does the latter quote cap-

Daniel Casse is a senior director of the White House Writers Group, a public-policy communications firm.

ture the political temperament of modern conservatives better than the first?

Despite its masochistic tendencies, conservative politics have been an effervescent and transformative force in American politics for the past few decades. What is remarkable about the cautious, unimaginative campaign speeches of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton is how much they bear the stamp of conservative intellectual debates that preceded them. These liberal Democratic presidential aspirants coyly demur on tax increases. Their discussions of foreign policy invoke American credibility. They talk about efficiency in government. Yes, conservatives know these are poll-massaged, manufactured personas; yet surely they reflect how much of the conservative flavoring has seeped into the Democratic drinking water.

That said, Donald T. Critchlow has the misfortune of publishing a book entitled *The Conservative Ascendancy* at a moment when conservative prospects have never looked worse and conservative activists are depressed. To his credit, Critchlow does not try to analyze the coming presidential season or place any bets. His book is part intellectual history, part policy analysis, with each part trying to explain how the ideas that motivated the conservative movement translated, however roughly, into political power.

There are other solid histories of the conservative movement in America, notably George Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*. Critchlow, a professor at Saint Louis University, is no stranger to the conservative universe, having already written books on federal social policy and grassroots conservatism. Perhaps that background allows him to identify quickly a nagging problem buried in the roots of conservative thought: Many of the earliest theorists hated modern American society. Albert Jay Nock's 1935 classic *Our Enemy, the State* captured the isolationist, anti-New Deal tendency that, at the time, was the essence of what it meant to be a conservative.

It would take a long time to shake that sentiment completely out of conservative thought. Nearly 20 years on, Russell Kirk published *The Conservative Mind*, a much better book that introduced readers to some neglected parts of American history. But no one can read *The Conservative Mind*, or any of Kirk's subsequent writing, without getting a sense that Kirk was never comfortable with 20th-century American life. As a political matter, this was clearly a problem. As Critchlow points out, the unavoidable issue with the reactionary conservatives is that "they offered no programmatic alternative to modern liberalism."

In fact, it is hard to say when conservatives evolved from a fragmented collection of economists and traditionalists to a political movement with electoral heft. The broad national popularity of F.A. Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* (which sold 600,000 copies in a single year), Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*, and even Ayn Rand's novels, surely helped cement the conservative movement to the defense of personal liberty. But these were intellectual achievements, not political ones.

Critchlow argues, as many others have, that the 1964 Goldwater campaign, with its testy primary battle between the Arizona senator and New York's Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, was a kind of cotillion ball for a new mix of anti-Communists, libertarians, and southerners who would eventually form the conservative base of the Republican party. But the truth is that, in 1964, the conservative voting bloc didn't extend much beyond the John Birch Society and its sympathizers. The emergence of *National Review*, founded almost a decade earlier, surely helped stir a broader movement. So did the unexpected success of Phyllis Schlafly's *A Choice Not An Echo*, the first populist outcry from Middle America against the Eastern Establishment.

Yet it is not clear that the Goldwater campaign amounted to a conservative program. Yes, there was the steely rhetoric ("extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice") along with the states' rights strains of Barry Goldwater's own book, *The Conscience of a Conservative*. But there was not much more. Goldwater stood firmly against the Civil Rights Act—an early example of conservatives' persistent attachment to losing causes. More than anything else, that posture defined his campaign and preordained his defeat. But let's be clear: This was not a principled defeat. The 1964 election was a wipeout that illustrated how far out of touch Republican conservatives were with the American mood.

Critchlow's narrative reminds us of how long it took them to get organized after Goldwater. He accurately describes the times of Richard Nixon, and his "pathological concern with the opposition," as a period of betrayal. But betrayal of whom? *Human Events* subscribers? True, Nixon pandered to conservatives whenever it was expedient, but Nixon was also a realist when it came to partisan politics. He realized that there wasn't a large-enough conservative movement to make it a reliable political base.

The battle over ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment in the mid-1970s was the cause that, more than anything else, brought a conservative coalition into mainstream political struggles. It brought to the forefront of political debate the "silent majority" that Nixon had spoken about but never really understood. But there is no escaping the fact that the ERA battle was still an essentially negative act, not the basis for a national political agenda.

What conservatives really needed after Nixon was an influx of new blood, new ideas, and a system of outreach that created a national network. It emerged slowly. First came the professionalization of direct-mail campaigns, directly targeted at religious voters. Then came the think tanks and the arrival in Washington of something that had heretofore never existed: the conservative policy expert. By the waning days of the Ford administration, the conservative movement had the elemental architecture of a political movement.

Still, it is hard to imagine the conservative movement going anywhere

without Ronald Reagan's arrival on the scene. Reagan's presidential primary challenge against Gerald Ford in 1976 was surely one of the most exciting contests in modern American politics, creating a convention floor fight that we may never see again. Critchlow offers a too-brief description of that primary battle, perhaps because he sees it as just another chapter in the forward march of the conservative movement. To him, the Reagan-Ford match was an updated version of the Goldwater-Rockefeller fight 12 years earlier: the moderate Establishment wing fending off attacks from the New Right.

It was more than that. Reagan, unlike any previous conservative leader, began drawing on the various strains of conservative thinking and activism that were still relatively new in the mid-1970s. By 1980, he was on the brink of redefining the conservative movement and winning its first national political victory.

Without any of Nixon's manipulative cynicism, Reagan seemed to have something for everyone. For the limited government crowd, he promised smaller government and fewer federal programs. For the traditionalist and evangelical blocs, he talked of a family-oriented social agenda. For the foreign policy hawks who were recoiling from Jimmy Carter's hapless national security management, he offered a bracing attack on détente and arms control.

While Nixon relied on advance men and PR executives for his image, Reagan came to power in the midst of a rich conservative intellectual climate. Alexander Bickel's penetrating attack on the Warren Court, *The Morality of Consent*, was published in the mid 1970s. Norman Podhoretz's nervy essay on the Soviet threat, *The Present Danger*, was published in the spring before the 1980 election. George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty* appeared just as Reagan was taking office.

Barry Goldwater and Goldwater Girl, 1964

ART RICKERBY / TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

These were not ideas dusted off from the Goldwater campaign: They were a result of a new coalition of conservative thinking, emerging in the face of humiliation in Vietnam, a collapsing economy, and a seemingly rudderless domestic policy.

Critchlow, so thorough in his description of early conservative thought, takes little notice of this change. In a way, he treats these new intruders on the conservative scene with a degree of suspicion. His discussion of the intellectual roots of the neoconservatives is largely respectful and detailed, but he can't hide his doubts about whether they really belong in the club:

> The neoconservative current was rife with personal ambition and intellectual arrogance. While projecting themselves as a new force in the political debates, neoconservatives were elitists who upheld the seemingly oxymoronic theory of democratic rule by elites. In effect, they offered managerial conservatism at a time when bureaucratic liberalism was under attack.

Reagan had no such qualms about embracing these new, variant strains of conservatism. And while *The Conservative Ascendancy* does an adequate job of cataloging some of the tick-tock of his presidency, it fails to capture the transformation of the conservative movement during those remarkable eight years.

In the early 1960s the conservative response to the Supreme Court's activism was to place "Impeach Earl Warren" billboards along the highways. The Reagan Justice Department, by contrast, was staffed with muscular law professors, building an intellectual case for strict constructionism. While earlier conservatives had been determined to root out Soviet espionage (much of it very real), Reagan had a more aggressive program: to challenge Soviet military superiority and confront its advances in Afghanistan and Central America. And instead of talking about the minimal state, Reagan had a thoroughgoing legislative program to win tax cuts, a move he knew would eventually undermine congressional spending.

The old guard of the conservative movement never fully understood how Reagan was moving beyond them. *Conservative Digest* attacked Reagan in 1982 for raising taxes, part of a broader legislative agreement he had reached with a hostile Congress. (Critchlow tells us that Reagan responded by writing to editor John Lofton, an old firebrand, calling the piece "one of the most dishonest and unfair bits of journalism I have ever seen.") And it didn't end there: A year later Howard Phillips of the Conservative Caucus accused the Reagan administration of "pandering to win votes from the homosexual community."

That Reagan was continually second-guessed by self-appointed guardians of the conservative movement illustrates the extent to which he moved beyond the vision of the early conservative network. He understood that, like liberals,

conservatives were a coalition—and a dynamic and fluid one at that. Perhaps his greatest strength as a politician was that he was never troubled by the need to juggle the various factions—libertarians, neocons, traditionalists, business—that put their trust in him. That was what political power meant, and he proved that you could still deliver conservative ideological goals even when you didn't govern as a full-time, principled conservative.

Many of the early Goldwater conservatives believed that all that was needed was a public call for minimal government and opposition to New Deal liberalism. That was, and remains, a chimera. Reagan and others recognized that if conservatism was ever to become something more than a reactionary bumper sticker, it needed a steady injection of new ideas that went beyond bedrock principles. Supply-side economics, the Strategic Defense Initiative, mandatory welfare-to-work policies, school vouchers, energy cap and credit trading, private accounts for Social Security—all these ideas stretch far beyond (and even contradict) the vision of the "founders" of American conservatism. But it is precisely these ideas that permitted conservative thought to have a political life in the United States.

But the lesson of Reagan that emerges from *The Conservative Ascendancy*—and a lesson for the next generation of Republican leaders—is that conservatives thrived only after burying the hatchet and making peace with modernity and the pursuit of political power.

Today, there is much manly talk of "getting back" to conservative principles. But the simplicity of such arguments can be deceiving. Conservative leaders need to add something to their principles that will create and energize a realigned conservative coalition. The paradoxical success of conservatism in America is that it has been a force for change, and it must continue to be so. While much conservative rhetoric has been devoted to dismantling government, in the political arena, it has succeeded only when it has been an advocate for transforming government. ♦

BCA

Goodbye, Blockbuster

Are museums rediscovering the treasures within?

BY VICTOR M. CASSIDY

It was the strangest art exhibition you ever did see. Installed in two galleries at the Art Institute of Chicago were Utamaro prints of Japanese maidens tending silkworms; a Dutch still life of hybrid tulips; a coin with Alexander the Great in profile; and more. Called "The Silk Road and Beyond: Travel, Trade, and Transformation," this gathering of works from the Art Institute's storerooms kicked off a yearlong "Silk Road Chicago" project in September 2006.

The Silk Road is the name given to trade routes that extended from Japan and East Asia through Central Asia, India, and other lands, to the Mediterranean. From the 2nd century B.C. until the 14th century A.D., immense quantities of goods were traded along the Silk Road, enriching culture and advancing technology in Europe and Asia.

Every object in "The Silk Road and Beyond" was related to the historic Silk Road. Tulips came to Holland from Turkey, and trade followed Alexander's conquests. "Silk Road Chicago" was a museum-wide group of shows at the Art Institute, accompanied by events presented in collaboration with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Yo-Yo Ma's touring Silk Road musical ensemble, which plays non-Western music. Art museums and musicians had collaborated before, but never on such a grand scale.

Indeed, "Silk Road Chicago" signaled a shift in Art Institute priorities away from touring shows designed to attract large numbers of people and revenue (i.e., blockbusters) toward exhibiting the permanent collection in fresh and imaginative ways. James Cuno, who heads the Art Institute, had been pressing for such change since about 2001 when he organized lectures by six museum directors on "the public's regard for and trust in art museums." (The speakers were Cuno, Philippe de Montebello of the Metropolitan Museum, Neil MacGregor of the British Museum, John Walsh of the Getty Museum, Glenn Lowry of the Museum of Modern Art, and James Wood of the Art Institute.)

The directors spoke with considerable urgency as they searched for answers. They declared that art museums are losing direction and public confidence as they drift away from their central purpose, which is the preservation and exhibition of great art. People go to art museums for spiritual nourishment, they declared, and not to be entertained.

"It is the mystery, the wonder of art, that is our singular distinction and that our visitor seeks," said de Montebello. Others told how the public flocked to art museums after 9/11 just to be with beautiful things—and to restore faith in civilization.

Blockbuster shows have boosted museum attendance and revenue, but the directors believe that things have gotten out of hand. Art requires quiet, thoughtful contemplation: "You cannot possibly have . . . deep engagement with a work of art in a room with 5,600 people jostling each other," said the Getty's Glenn Lowry. For that matter, few blockbusters contributed to scholarship, and presented mostly late 19th and 20th century European painting.

Love them or not, blockbusters bring in the bodies—and cash. Museum directors acknowledge that their mission is educational, and wel-

Victor M. Cassidy writes about art in Chicago.

come a large attendance: Every penny they earn from operations is one they don't have to raise. But how can they serve the public in dignity and still stay afloat? Look to the permanent collection, said Cuno. So far so good, but you need a focus to change priorities without losing momentum.

Cuno became director of the Art Institute in 2004 (succeeding James Wood) and, as soon as he arrived, charged his staff to think about and interpret the permanent collection in new and different ways.

"Silk Road Chicago" was born. As the project got rolling, Institute curators went on a treasure hunt, identifying hundreds of Silk Road-connected objects in the permanent collection. A few of these were shown in *The Silk Road and Beyond.* Others became exhibitions of Islamic Art, Tang China, Buddhism, and more. Works on paper were exhibited in shows such as "Renaissance Europe and the Ottoman Empire" and "Delacroix and Northern Africa."

The Art Institute of Chicago

Soon after the Silk Road Project ended, Cuno assessed the results for me. His "feel for it," he said, was that the Silk Road Project had a "positive" effect on attendance. The year's single blockbuster show—"Cézanne to Picasso: Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant Garde"—was "not as popular as we thought it would be," and since overall museum attendance was flat in 2007, Cuno guesses that "a higher percentage of visitors spent time in the permanent collection galleries."

He received only "very positive comments, both for the vitality of the Silk Road programming and its quality." And since the project lasted a full year, "we were able to sustain the buzz. . . . It wasn't a temporary thing." His model for the future is "a yearlong season in collaboration with other Chicago institutions."

With the Silk Road Project, the Art Institute generated blockbuster-style excitement without losing its dignity. But because the Silk Road Year is a tough act to follow, the museum designed the more modest "American Perspectives" for this season, adding a touch of promotional gimmickry to traditional museum practice and scholarship.

"American Perspectives," which runs through September, is a yearlong collaboration among the Art Institute, the Chicago Symphony, and the Poetry Foundation, celebrating American art, music, and literature. Of the more than 100 scheduled events, five have been art exhibitions: photographs by Richard Misrach and Ed Ruscha, paintings of Jasper Johns, and paintings and works on paper by Edward Hopper and Winslow Homer. Four of these shows draw heavily on the permanent collection.

The Homer show is built around 25 unpublished watercolors that the Art Institute owns, and the complete show will consist of 130 watercolors, related paintings, and additional materials from outside. The Hopper exhibition, which was cooperatively organized with two other museums (reviewed in the October 15, 2007 Weekly Standard) includes the Art Institute's iconic "Nighthawks."

Walter Liedtke, curator of European paintings at the Metropolitan Museum, views exhibition policy from a scholar's perspective. Blockbusters won't disappear, he says, but "more museums are stressing in-house scholarship now." After cataloging and conserving the Met's 228 Dutch paintings of the 1600s, Liedtke organized "The Age of Rembrandt: Dutch Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art," accompanying the exhibition with his two-volume, thousand-page catalogue.

"The Age of Rembrandt" cost "roughly one-third as much as a touring blockbuster," Liedtke says. "In planning the show, there was never any discussion of saving money. We just wanted to place greater emphasis on what we already have."

There is nothing especially new in this movement to return to basics. But it seems evident that, after an unsatisfactory flirtation with corporate thinking, American art museums are honoring their core mission: to study and conscientiously present the finest art that the human race has made. ♦

Book of Revelations

Father Rutler proves wit and God can coexist.

BY EDWARD SHORT

The parent tradition of English literature includes many subsidiary traditions. There are the poet-critics John Dryden, Samuel Johnson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, and William Empson. There are what Penelope Fitzgerald called the "kitchen-table" novelists, female heads of families who, like Mrs. Oliphant and Frances Trollope (Anthony's mother)—and, indeed, Fitzgerald herself—wrote books to keep the bailiffs at bay.

When Oliphant's husband died of tuberculosis, she was pregnant with her third child and deep in debt. She paid off the debts, reared her children, looked after her bibulous brother, and in the evenings at the kitchen table, wrote—98 novels, 25 biographies, and about 50 short stories. Mrs. Trollope was left in equally parlous straits by her husband—a feckless clergyman who went to his grave attempting to write a history of ecclesiastical rites—but she recouped the family fortunes by writing the bestselling *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), after which she churned out no less than 35 novels.

Then there are the comedians of class, about whose subjects V.S. Pritchett once remarked: "One glance at the English upper classes imposing their private fantasies on whatever is going on, treating everything from war downwards as though it were happening in one of their country houses, has been enough to provide comedians with material for a lifetime." Henry Fielding and William Makepeace Thackeray were the masters of this tradition.

But no group produced wittier writing than the witty divines Jonathan Swift, Laurence Sterne, and Sydney Smith. The letter that Smith wrote to the daughter of a lady friend is a good sample—which, coincidentally, concerns a subject dear to the author under review.

Coincidentally
Unserious Reflections on Trivial Connections
by George Rutler
Crossroad, 192 pp., $14.95

> Lucy, dear child, mind your arithmetic. You know, in the first sum of yours I ever saw, there was a mistake. You had carried two (as a cab is licensed to do), and, you ought, dear Lucy to have carried but one. Is this a trifle? What would life be without arithmetic, but a scene of horrors? You are going to Boulogne, the city of debts, peopled by men who never understood arithmetic; by the time you return, I shall probably have received my first paralytic stroke, and shall have lost all recollection of you; therefore I now give you my parting advice. Don't marry anybody who has not a tolerable understanding and a thousand a year; and God bless you, dear child . . .

The divine most responsible for rejuvenating this lively tradition is George Rutler, Roman Catholic pastor of the Church of Our Saviour in New York City. Author of 14 books on theology, history, cultural issues, and the lives of the saints, Rutler is also host of a weekly television program on EWTN. This latest book is an entertaining *jeu d'esprit* on the role coincidence plays in life and history. Catholic in scope, it includes chapters on everything from geography and mesmerism to baseball and Napoleon. It should amuse and instruct a wide audience.

Here is a typical effusion:

> For the dark and driven Richard Wagner, thirteen had mixed connotations. His own name has thirteen letters and he was born in 1813, the digital sum of which is thirteen, and he died seventy years later on February 13. His mentor Liszt, who first met him on September 13 in 1841, visited him on October 13, 1854 in Switzerland where Wagner fled from Dresden on May 13, 1849, and where he was exiled for thirteen years. Wagner finished *The Flying Dutchman* on a September 13, premiered *Tannhäuser* on a March 13 and the *Ring of the Nibelungen* on an August 13. With a one-hour intermission, the Ring Cycle lasts thirteen hours. Wagner first heard *Lohengrin* performed thirteen years after its completion, wrote thirteen stage works, was married to Cosima for thirteen years and died thirteen months after finishing *Parsifal* on May 13, 1882.

Numerological mania has never been given a funnier send-up. In *Remote People* (1931), Evelyn Waugh described traveling through Ethiopia in the company of "rival Byzantinists at variance." In Rutler's *Coincidentally*, readers will meet with similarly choice absurdities.

In one chapter Louis Farrakhan is described expatiating on the number 19 to the "million men" on the Mall in Washington. The 9, Farrakhan explains, stands for the length of time that we spend in the womb. And the 1 before the 9? It stands for "something secret that has to be unfolded."

Rutler marvels at the electrifying effect that this vatic pronouncement has on Farrakhan's auditors, and then says:

> Should I ever face an audience of a million men in the nation's capital . . . I would shout into the microphone portentous puzzles that escaped even [Farrakhan's attention]. I picture myself wiping my brow as I tell all those amiable and eager faces that the expenses and receipts of the Glasgow World Exposition of 1901 were absolutely identical. The applause subsides and my bodyguard draws closer as I look to heaven and cry out that the arithmetic sum of the years of Czar Alexander II's birth and death (1818 and 1881) are the same.

I won't spoil things by quoting the peroration. Suffice it to say that here is a skit tailor-made for one of Rutler's television programs.

Most of us are conscious of coinci-

Edward Short is completing a book about John Henry Newman and his contemporaries, which will be published by Continuum.

dence as a kind of ironic commentary on the text of our lives. Rutler shows that coincidences may not be as rare as we are accustomed to imagine. In this, he agrees with G.K. Chesterton, who remarked in one of his Father Brown stories that "there is in life an element of elfin coincidence which people reckoning on the prosaic may perpetually miss."

Are coincidences mere chance? Or proof that God intervenes in the unfolding of events? Rutler recognizes that "an irresponsible mind may make too much" of coincidence. But he also recognizes that only the barbarous mind can be indifferent to connections that argue not only the coherence but the wonder of history. He also sees in coincidence a summons to sanity:

> Not to laugh at coincidences is a prescription for weeping at coincidences and that way lies endless madness. The one kind of humor that always gets this right is literally graceful. A mad world calls it madness, but in small sane pockets of that world it is called sanctity.

Recently, many have alleged parallels between Iraq and Vietnam. Apropos *arma virumque*, Rutler has some timely truths to impart, which should give pause to those who hear only the counsel of defeatism in such parallels.

> I am not sure what we are to conclude from this review of arms and men, but it is never amiss to conjure up the victor of Waterloo in his celebrated dispatch of June, 1815: "Nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won." William Tecumseh Sherman, having graduated from West Point in the year that the capital of New Zealand was named for the Iron Duke, agreed as he surveyed the carnage of Shiloh: "The scenes on this field would have cured anybody of war." Some celestial symposium made up of all the generals from Alexander to George Patton, who did not make the distinction, would be either the jolliest of fêtes or a pitched battle, but overwhelming odds are that they would be unanimous with Wellington's motion.

Here, the wit in Rutler gives way to the sage, but whether he is being witty or wise, or both, he is always a delight. *Coincidentally* is a comic *tour de force* that gives new life to Sterne's great motto: "*Vive la bagatelle!*" ♦

Real Slick Willie

The uncrowned king of California politics remembers—selectively. **BY TIM FERGUSON**

It's a safe bet that jaunty Willie Brown, the longtime speaker of the California Assembly and then mayor of San Francisco, would not write a boring book. And he hasn't. He is as full of himself as a good storyteller can be. He just isn't telling the whole good story.

Basic Brown
My Life and Our Times
by Willie L. Brown Jr.
Simon & Schuster, 368 pp., $26

So we learn, in *Basic Brown*, how this 50-years-married man—he and the Missus long ago reached an understanding—squires lovely things around town only after bracing them to be ignored while he works the room. "Sex Scandals and the Socializing Politician," one chapter is titled. (His advice: Don't apologize for your fun!) A separate 10 pages is devoted to sartorial cautions: "Don't Pull a Dukakis." (*Avoid* wearing brown shoes with your—tailored, of course—blue suit.)

If Willie had intended to provide a meaty political memoir, we might find due notice of the key personnel behind his remarkable 14 years in the second (first?) most powerful job in Sacramento. One would be Richie Ross, who as a Brown chief of staff and afterward, as a political consultant, shepherded the coalition of Democratic party interest groups—the public employee unions, the environmental and trial bar, and the social-welfare lobby—that put and kept the liberal black Democrat Willie Brown in power through the state's last Republican era.

It is that period, more than Brown's subsequent eight years as mayor in a naturally hospitable domain, that should most interest political wonks. His tenure as speaker confounded conservatives, to slick Willie's undying delight, until finally they found an opening with a well-timed initiative for term limits. Only that delayed-action device could dynamite him from the state house. This, to his undying bitterness—as can be inferred from the fact that he has barely anything to say about the slip-up by which it passed and doesn't as much as mention the name of Pete Schabarum, the longtime Los Angeles County supervisor who engineered the exit.

Instead, Willie has "written," through an oral history provided to his ghost P.J. Corkery, a book that has the flavor of politico bar talk. Lots of other names are dropped along the narrator's political trail, with an emphasis on gossipy goings-on. The Sacramento soap opera may drag for outsiders, but it's easy to skip over parts and pick up the drift. All the while, the central character remains in character—and a character. Self-admiring, unabashed, racy, and nearly always triumphant, he is the straw that stirs this tale. At times, he is so much the story that only a third-person reference to "Willie Brown" will do, as if the man is already the legend.

Which he is. Arrived in San Francisco in 1951 from bootblack origins in Mineola, Texas, initially to stay with a bookie uncle, Willie brought his single mom's brio and brass. He thinks Stanford would be a good corrective to his admittedly lousy education in Jim Crow schools. A wise man suggests San Francisco State instead. Willie Brown the racial warhorse would never acknowledge it, but his experience is the best argument for leaving admissions free of preferences. His skills grew apace with his opportunities as he advanced through then-second-tier

Tim Ferguson, a native Californian, is an editor at Forbes.

Hastings Law School and local legal activism.

Mineola is where the Willie Brown legend started, but it also provides one of the more intriguing bits of political color. Inevitably this Willie nods admiringly to the other one who usually made sport of his GOP opponents, Bill Clinton. The two were doing some horse trading after Bill became president when California Willie suggested an Amtrak stop for his lowly birthplace. The town had been bypassed by the railroad in the years since he'd boarded there for the West Coast.

Not surprisingly, Amtrak resisted tossing yet another uneconomic political bone. Few surveyed would get off a train there, Washington Willie relates. Brown says it's who wants to *leave* that's important. Sure enough, a little follow-up by the reader will discover that Mineola service resumed in 1996, and now there's a refurbished station. About 10 people a day are served.

In the state house, Brown's deft courting of legislators of both parties helped him maintain the speakership. The partisan battles, though bruising, were rather a sideshow. The Democratic interest groups ensured that market-oriented policy reform, applied to education or welfare or environmental controls, was going nowhere. Republican governors during nearly the entire period were felt on the margin, but any basic change depended on the ballot-initiative process.

Proposition 13's big property tax cut in 1978 had hamstrung the novel spenders even as it shifted power to Sacramento (which kept the high income tax), and the state schools cornered the biggest slice of the pie with a subsequent initiative constitutional amendment. The prisons and their guards, big donors to all, gave no quarter when it came to budgets, and all efforts to undo the Democrats' districting gerrymander were thwarted.

Thanks to this basic balance of power, stasis remains the order of the day in California lawmaking even now, such that Indian casinos—funding wildcards, in fact—are, by far, the most active battleground for political action in our largest and once most interesting state.

Willie Brown, 1996

That such grinding gridlock followed so many liberal-left advances in the 1970s—enacted by Brown and other protégés of Philip Burton, the San Francisco congressman and builder of an enduring machine—meant this: In the 1980s and early '90s, Speaker Brown, onetime street lawyer for the dispossessed, owned the status quo. Those who attacked it from the right were, in his eyes, racists, dimwits, and bad dressers to boot. And to make matters worse, they came up with that silver bullet, term limits, with Willie's name on it.

All that said, conservative activists will find common cause, so to speak, with Willie on one point: his open welcome to money in politics. As speaker he was early to grasp the power of channeling the dollars through his office, for distribution to needy (and loyal) members of his caucus. This served his interests and, he argues, theirs: He insulated the weak from being tempted by an ugly solicitation. Natty Willie Brown, you see, is too clean and smart to take a bribe. Of course, he relishes recounting how the FBI tried to nail him on just that, only in the end to sting one of his GOP foils instead.

Ultimately, to his credit, Brown goes beyond the dinner-party riff to offer a spirited case for the practicing politician, whose art he mastered and of which he is genuinely proud. He could make a good case that the up-or-out world of Sacramento today has left the capital with relative political pygmies.

Then again, if stasis is the order of the day, does it matter? ♦

Critic Under Fire

The retreat from 'Stop-Loss.' BY JOHN PODHORETZ

No one wants to see Iraq war movies. The latest major Hollywood release about Iraq, *Stop-Loss*, cratered at the box office in its opening weekend, and flop sweat is already pouring by the bucketful from the editing bays where the remaining three Iraq pictures are being readied for release. Conservatives say these movies are failing because their general antiwar stance is offensive to a great many Americans. Liberals say these movies are failing because Americans are so upset by an unpopular war they cannot bear even the thought of it at the multiplex. Box-office analysts make the point that downbeat movies always face an uphill climb.

It is high time to cease the armchair analysis of those who refuse to attend war-in-Iraq movies and ask them directly to explain their behavior. The

John Podhoretz, editorial director of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

AP PHOTO / SUSAN RAGAN

moviegoer must be permitted to speak. So committed am I to this straightforward approach that I will now attempt it by interviewing—myself.

ME: You were going to see *Stop-Loss* today.

MYSELF: Yes, I was.

ME: There you were, in a taxicab, driving down Broadway toward the movie theater in Times Square . . .

MYSELF: And I told the cab driver to let me out at Columbus Circle. I felt as though I had had an appointment for a root canal and received a cell phone call informing me that my dentist had just been named Client #8 and was pursuing an immunity deal with the U.S. attorney's office.

ME: This is a shocking dereliction of duty! You are the film critic of THE WEEKLY STANDARD. It is your job to see this film and offer a nuanced and brilliantly insightful discussion of its virtues and, dare I say, its flaws.

MYSELF: I don't have to see it to do that. I'm about to turn 47. I have seen thousands of movies in my time. Life is too short to spend even two hours in a theater watching *Stop-Loss*. Its virtues are, I expect, that it is very well made, with vivid scenes of terrifying battles in the streets of Karbala or Falluja—and touching moments of reconciliation. There's probably a well-done scene in or just outside a Wal-Mart. Its failings are that it tells a schematic story that stacks the deck.

ME: What do you mean?

MYSELF: The movie is about American military personnel who serve tours of duty in Iraq and then are compelled by the policy of "stop loss" to return there. Our hero begins as a gung-ho guy and ends up going AWOL. In other words, he grows in office. He begins by obeying orders in an unjust war and ends by breaking the law to protest injustice. He begins immature and ends mature. He begins a conservative and ends a leftist. He begins in a red state and ends up Code Pink. He begins—

ME: All right! Enough with the parallel sentence structure. You gathered all that from reviews?

MYSELF: I haven't read a single review. This is from three trailers and a few minutes watching *Showbiz Tonight*.

ME: So it's schematic. Most movies that feature a character taking a "journey," following an "arc" that causes his growth as a human being, are schematic.

MYSELF: Yes, they are. And that is why I hate them.

ME: But a character's journey, following an arc . . . that's Screenwriting 101!

MYSELF: It's only Screenwriting 101 over the past couple of decades. It's a perversion of the classic principle of fiction, which is that people are changed by experience. That doesn't mean people automatically grow from experience, or get better through experience, or become wiser, or become more enlightened. It just means that they are affected by what happens to them. In what passes for serious filmmaking in Hollywood, this change always occurs on a straight line. It is always for the better, and "better," in these instances, means that its lead character or characters start out as unthinking cogs in a status-quo machine and then, following a few dark lessons in the nature of evil (as represented by corporations or a Republican-led government), emerge from their cocoons to write angry and passionate blog items for the *Huffington Post*. Or the equivalent.

Antiwar movies are exercises in hypocrisy, supposedly portraying the horrors of war but actually reveling in its glories.

ME: Stop-loss your disingenuousness right now. You know you didn't want to see this because you are a bloodthirsty neocon who thrills only to the drumbeat of war, war, war!

MYSELF: When did my superego turn into James Wolcott? If I found it impossible to see movies with which I disagreed ideologically, I would have given up on the medium a long time ago. The truth is that there is nothing more disagreeable than an antiwar movie, and for reasons that have little to do with politics. These movies are exercises in hypocrisy. They depict battles in ways that are supposedly intended to demonstrate the horrors of war but actually revel in its glories. They leech off the powerful emotions generated by personal heroism and sacrifice to run down the value of personal heroism and sacrifice.

ME: Chickenhawk.

MYSELF: Surely not everyone who stays away from antiwar movies is a chickenhawk. The reason people have always loved war movies is that they are depictions of men challenged by the most extreme circumstances, who achieve a kind of selflessness and heroism that those of us who have not fought can only imagine—and that make those who have fought feel as though they are being honored in the telling. Making a war movie that denies an audience this kind of satisfaction is an act of storytelling perversity. Moviegoers can smell it from miles away. And they stay away.

ME: How can you be so crude as to assume that all writing about war is binary? What of Tolstoy, who captured perfectly the heroic and the senseless in his portrait of the sudden death of 15-year-old Petya in *War and Peace*:

> "Hurrah-ah-ah!" shouted Petya, and without pausing a moment galloped to the place whence came the sounds of firing and where the smoke was thickest. A volley was heard, and some bullets whistled past, while others plashed against something. . . . Petya was galloping along the courtyard, but instead of holding the reins he waved both his arms about rapidly and strangely, slipping farther and farther to one side in his saddle. His horse, having galloped up to a campfire that was smoldering in the morning light, stopped suddenly, and Petya fell heavily on to the wet ground. The Cossacks saw that his arms and legs jerked rapidly though his head was quite motionless. A bullet had pierced his skull.

War, in its glory and horror, and in the greatest novel ever written.

MYSELF: When Hollywood begins to approximate the merest semblance of the greatness of Tolstoy, then maybe we can talk.

ME: Why would I ever want to talk to *you*? ♦

"Havana — New President Raul Castro's government has lifted a ban on Cubans staying at hotels previously reserved for foreigners, ending another restriction that had been especially irksome to ordinary citizens."
—Associated Press, March 31

MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR
Calzada y G, Vedado, Plaza
Ciudad de La Habana

April 8, 2008

My Dear Comrade President,

In accordance with your request, and the directive of the President's Ministerial Office, this Department has surveyed the testimonials from the designated Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, and can report that the Masses of the Cuban People are gratified by the collective decision to permit Party members and Citizens to stay in hotels. May I add, Mr. President, that the comments from the Committees were especially complimentary about the revolutionary wisdom and class consciousness of your state decision.

As you know, it has been determined, through an exhaustive process of analysis and self-criticism within these Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, that the welfare, well-being and revolutionary zeal of the Masses of the Cuban People would be enhanced if similar measures might be undertaken during the next several years.

Accordingly, I attach a short list of proposed amendments to the Basic Law (BL) which the Committees would commend to your attention, to the attention of the Peoples' Representatives and, of course, to the Commander-in-Chief Emeritus, Dr. Fidel Castro, for your revolutionary evaluation.

- Amendment to BL 516(d) section II: To permit the addition of two (2) but no more than three (3) mint leaves during the preparation of daiquiris for personal consumption by Party members.
- Amendment to BL 189(a) section IV: To permit the changing of undergarments by male Comrades within a 48-hour period when the average daily temperature exceeds 100 degrees Fahrenheit, as determined by designated Police Jurisdictions.
- Amendment to BL 1017(d) section II: To permit male and female Young Pioneers between the ages of six and ten years to dispense with the wearing of red neckerchiefs during attendance at voluntary demonstrations in the Plaza of the Revolution. This exemption will not be extended when ordered by authorized representatives of the Party.
- Amendment to BL 595(b) section IV: To permit drivers of registered DeSoto and Studebaker North American automobiles, manufactured before 1959-60, to decorate front and rear bumpers with appropriate slogans and exhortations approved by the Revolutionary Transport Bureau of the Ministry of the Interior.
- Amendment to BL 81(a) section I: To permit Party members to retain discarded cellophane wrappers, glass milk bottles, hula hoops, 45 rpm records, carbon paper and 3-D glasses for a period of one (1) year, for personal use, as determined by the local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution.

With the thanks of the Masses of the Cuban People in the 49th year of the Triumph of the Revolution, I am,

J. Valdez

J. Valdez
Deputy Minister