the weekly Standard

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Contents

July 4 / July 11, 2011 • Volume 16, Number 40

Articles

11

Features

27

Books & Arts

44

COVER BY GARY LOCKE

Enough Already

Having reached a certain age, The Scrapbook finds itself taking more interest in probate news than we used to. And while we concede that it's not exactly the stuff of Perry Mason or a juicy episode of *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*, the little dramas of probate law teach us something about human nature.

When, for example, the reclusive, 104-year-old heiress Huguette Clark died in Manhattan six weeks ago, her lifelong desire for seclusion and anonymity was treated in the media as freakish, clear evidence of some unstated abnormality. The Scrapbook will concede that Mrs. Clark's story was intriguing in many respects: The surviving daughter of a 19th-century robber baron who left her unimaginably wealthy when he died in 1925, she lived a resolutely private life in what is the largest private apartment in New York City, and later in two private hospitals; she owned estates in California and Connecticut that were scrupulously maintained but seldom occupied. According to the *New York Times* obituary, her personal austerity seems to have extended to nourishment—a daily lunch of crackers and sardines—and she cherished her collection of French dolls and enjoyed watching *The Flintstones* on TV.

How much of this is true, of course, is open to conjecture. But it must have been distressing to a 102-year-old recluse when, in 2009, MSNBC.com learned that her Connecticut property was for sale and reporter Bill Dedman embarked on an extensive "investigation" to penetrate her privacy.

Accordingly, The Scrapbook believes it is worth mentioning that Mrs. Clark had donated her father's giant art collection to the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, gave $1.5 million for a security system to the settlement in Israel where her lawyer's daughter lives, contributed generously to New York hospitals, and in her will, left one of Claude Monet's "Water Lilies" to the Corcoran and established an arts foundation in California, complete with lavish endowment and collection of rare books and vintage musical instruments. In other words, while Mrs. Clark's long, solitary existence may have been comparatively eccentric, it was also punctuated by common interests in life and a philanthropic spirit that, in The Scrapbook's view, should have ensured her privacy.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the notoriety spectrum, The Scrapbook records with grim satisfaction the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court (albeit on a legal technicality) to deny the heirs of the late Anna Nicole Smith further access to the estate of Texas oil billionaire J. Howard Marshall. This has been a spectacle from start to finish: the wedding of the 89-year-old Marshall to the 26-year-old *Playboy* model in 1994, Marshall's demise the following year, his widow's claim that her late husband had informally promised his bride one-half of his estate (approximately $400 million), and Anna Nicole Smith's own death from a drug overdose in 2007.

The fact that Marshall's direct descendants have been bogged down in litigation since his death in 1995 reminds The Scrapbook of Dickens's *Bleak House* and its interminable chancery case, Jarndyce and Jarndyce. It is certainly true that Anna Nicole was married to J. Howard, who may or may not have been fully cognizant of what he was doing, and that she deserved some sort of settlement when he expired 14 months later. But there was never any evidence (and no mention in his will) that he intended to add substantially to the millions that he had already lavished on her in his lifetime, or that the various relations and hangers-on around Smith should take precedence over the Marshall family in dividing his estate. Of course, that did not prevent the case from bouncing around for years among state and federal appellate and bankruptcy courts; nor did it spare us the memorable day when Anna Nicole Smith herself appeared as petitioner when the case was argued in Washington.

Now the High Court has decreed, at long last, enough! ♦

Strike Three for Alcee Hastings?

Democrats looking for a respite from the Anthony Weiner scandal—gird your loins. Well, maybe it's better we gird congressional Democrats' loins, as that seems to be the source of the party's trouble.

While Weiner made his resignation official on June 22, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on June 21 that Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Fla., was being investigated by the congressional ethics committee for sexual harassment. A lawsuit has been filed against Hastings by Winsome Packer (yes, her real name) who encountered Hastings while on the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

For his part, Hastings claims Packer's allegations are based on "numerous inaccuracies and untruths." While the usual standard of innocent until proven guilty applies, The Scrapbook is not inclined to give Hastings the benefit of the doubt.

Those of you with long memories will recall that the most noteworthy item in Hastings's biography is not his dismal track record in Congress these past 18 years. Rather, it's that Hastings in 1989 became the sixth federal judge in history to be impeached by Congress.

In 1981, Hastings was charged with accepting a $150,000 bribe in exchange for a light sentence for Frank and Thomas Romano, who were facing 21 counts of racketeering. Hastings was acquitted by a jury after his co-conspirator, William Borders, re-

NEWSCOM

fused to testify against him, resulting in a prison sentence for Borders.

In 1988, the Democrats in the House of Representatives took up the case against Hastings, who was impeached in the House by a vote of 413 to 3. Borders served another prison sentence for refusing to testify before Congress. (Borders was later given a full pardon by Bill Clinton on his last day in office.)

In Hastings's impeachment trial, the Senate considered forbidding him from ever holding another federal office, but held back. So naturally, Hastings was elected to Congress in 1992.

Today Hastings serves as a senior Democratic whip, but other than that he's mostly relegated to such marginalia as co-chairman of the Congressional Caucus on Global Road Safety, which is no doubt doing its best to improve road signage in the Bahamas, or something.

When Hastings does make the news, it's usually for something dubious. He nabbed headlines in late 2008 with this sage campaign advice: "If Sarah Palin isn't enough of a reason for you to get over whatever your problem is with Barack Obama, then you damn well had better pay attention. Anybody toting guns and stripping moose don't care too much about what they do with Jews and blacks. So, you just think this through." The *Wall Street Journal* reported in 2009 that Hastings had spent $24,000 in taxpayer money to lease himself a Lexus.

So should Hastings be found guilty of sexual harassment, we urge his congressional colleagues to consider his long track record of corruption and, in Hastings's phrase, "just think this through." ♦

Honor in Beirut

James Wolfensohn was due to be awarded an honorary degree at the American University in Beirut last week but pulled out at the last moment to defuse a controversy that had been brewing over the past month. AUB faculty had circulated a petition protesting the university's decision to honor the former World Bank head. University president Peter Dorman tried to reach an accommodation with the petitioners but proved no match for a group that included Edward Said's nephew Karim Makdisi.

Some professors attributed their stance to their disapproval of the "policies" of the World Bank—which also happens to have funded the research of some of their faculty colleagues. Only slightly less disingenuous were those who protested Wolfensohn's "pro-Zionist" positions and his disregard for the Palestinians. It seems that they don't read the *New York Review of Books* at AUB, or they would've seen that Wolfensohn was among the signatories to a recent letter there demanding President Obama go harder on the Israelis. Indeed, as some of his supporters at AUB noted, Wolfensohn is the 2007 recipient of the Palestinian Authority's Prize for Excellence and Creativity—a prize not known for its pro-Zionist track record.

A simpler explanation was advanced in Lebanon's liberal corners: Wolfensohn was the victim of an anti-Semitic campaign. There may be some truth to that, but it seems there is yet another explanation as well. A profoundly anti-American political current wanted to take its ideological warfare into an institution that was once the citadel of American soft power in the Middle East. Hezbollah got its way.

Overlooking the Mediterranean and located on one of the choicest pieces of land in the whole country, AUB was founded in 1866 by Ameri-

can missionaries who had little luck converting Middle Easterners to Protestantism. The school was created to disseminate America's other gospel—democracy, freedom, universal equal rights.

That message was reinterpreted in peculiarly Levantine fashion, as AUB became one of the Petri dishes of Arab nationalism. This political doctrine attempted to redefine the region in terms of a shared history and language rather than by its dangerous sectarian divides. In time, Arab nationalism misfired and led to more conflicts than it was meant to put to rest. As Scrapbook friend Makram Rabah documents in *A Campus at War: Student Politics at the American University in Beirut, 1967-1975*, the university became a hotbed of student radicalism that graduated Palestinian militants and culminated in the Lebanese civil war, 1975-1990. Undoubtedly the school's worst moment came in 1984, when its president, the well-respected American scholar of the Middle East Malcolm Kerr, was gunned down on campus by killers believed to have been sent by Hezbollah.

That brings us to the present day. It's not clear whether the university faculty that started the anti-Wolfensohn petition was acting on its own. However, Hezbollah-associated media outlets threw their weight behind the campaign. Most notable among the press agitators was *al-Akhbar*, a daily newspaper that a fawning *New York Times* profile last year described as "dynamic and daring."

In fact, the broadsheet is used by Hezbollah to issue threats against its opponents—threats that no one can ignore given the Party of God's suspected involvement in a string of assassinations over the last six years. If Lebanese journalists, policemen, and even a former prime minister were murdered, why not an American college president, again?

Dorman's reluctance to push his case for Wolfensohn is thus understandable. If Hezbollah and its allies are calling the shots at AUB, however, that can't be the end of the story. The school's agenda can't be abandoned to an organization with American blood on its hands, which makes war on Israel and kills our Lebanese allies.

The school operates "under a charter granted by the Education Department of the State of New York, which registers and certifies the University's curricula, degrees and certificates," and it receives millions in U.S. aid. Over the last decade, AUB has received $21 million in scholarships and educational grants alone. We certainly don't want to see deserving Lebanese students denied a good education, but that's a prospect incompatible with a Hezbollah-mandated curriculum. The university's funders in this country should withhold future subventions pending a full examination of the anti-Wolfensohn campaign. ♦

The Director's New Clothes

Terrence Malick is venerated by sophisticated moviegoers for his languid, beautiful, meditative films. His career has been as languid as his movies: He has directed just five since 1973 and the long pauses have served to heighten the anticipation of each new work. Enlightened viewers who appreciate Malick will tell you that his films are tone poems set to celluloid. More bourgeois audiences have been known to complain that his movies are incoherent.

The latest Malick opus, *Tree of Life*, debuted a few weeks ago and was promptly awarded the *Palme d'Or* at Cannes. Starring Brad Pitt, *Tree of Life* tells the story of a 1950s American family whose three boys come of age as their loving, but not altogether nice, father tries to make men out of them.

Or maybe it's about something else entirely. The Italian paper *Corriere di Bologna* reports that a theater in Bologna showed the movie with its reels in the wrong order. For a full week (or as many as nine days; accounts differ). Not only did no one seem to notice, but after some showings, it's reported, the audience actually applauded. ♦

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AC for D.C.

Returning home the other evening to an empty house from a three-day trip, I checked the thermostat in the darkened vestibule and noticed that the temperature was a few degrees higher than the setting. My alluring wife, who is more cost-conscious than I about such things, had left the air conditioner on at a responsible setting before leaving on her own (separate) trip. The house was comfortable, if perceptibly less cool than usual; but I was intent on unpacking and surveying the tokens and souvenirs I had accumulated during a sojourn in the Hudson Valley.

So it took awhile for the grim reality to sink in: At some calamitous instant between my wife's departure from the homestead for New York City and my own return from Hyde Park a few days later, our air conditioner had broken down. I assumed, since the indoor atmosphere was still bearable, that death had occurred a few hours before I walked in the house. But that was the extent of my postmortem analysis: I am generally bewildered by the mechanics of heating and air conditioning, and after a few desultory attempts to stop and restart the system, came to the sad conclusion that this was an unprecedented failure, requiring professional assistance and the likely expenditure of lots of money.

I am happy to report that, while the worst was true, it was a relatively painless episode in household history. Late the following morning a cheerful mechanic arrived from the company that had installed the system 19 years ago—and certified its robust health during an annual checkup two weeks earlier!—who confirmed my diagnosis and suggested some courses of action. After learned discussion, and some quick mental arithmetic, I opted to replace the various air-conditioning components, which would include some modification of the furnace but not constitute systemwide surgery. Expensive, yes, but not catastrophic.

This was followed by a pregnant pause, and then the mechanic asked me, with a tentative tone in his voice, whether it would be all right for him to return the following day with his colleagues to install the new air conditioner. Of course, I replied—and he literally breathed a sigh of relief. Most customers, he reported, are so desperate that they plead for what amounts to instant gratification: They cannot

imagine another summer night (or another few hours, for that matter) in a house without air conditioning, and will beg, plead, weep, fall to the ground, introduce their sweltering children, or otherwise express, in dramatic fashion, just how close to extinction their lives have hovered.

As for me, I thought that getting the job done the following day was pretty luxurious: I'd had visions of a part being ordered from some remote warehouse, or a long line of overheated households taking precedence over mine. And I must confess, the old homestead was not especially uncomfortable: The outside temperature was comparatively reasonable, we have plenty of fans, a light rain was expected to fall that evening—all in all, things could have been worse.

Indeed, they could have been as they were for the first two decades of my life, when I grew up in a house in hot, humid, subtropical Washington without air-conditioning. I say this not with any perverse sense of pride—I dreaded hot weather as much as anyone would, and suffered accordingly—but as an indication of how far we have come, to the point where even Army tents in the Iraqi desert are artificially cooled, and a day or two with a broken air conditioner is akin to a natural disaster.

The fact is, however, that a typical household in the nation's capital during the Eisenhower administration was not air-conditioned, and neither were banks, department stores, classrooms, trains or train stations, or automobiles. Just as the television networks would pointedly mention in those days that a program was to be broadcast "in color," so the rare businesses controlling their summertime climate (notably movie theaters) would advertise that the premises were "air-cooled." There was one private home on my street with a window air-conditioning unit. It belonged to old Mrs. Crossette, the grandmother of a neighborhood boy, who would chuckle indulgently as I stood in front of her magic machine.

This was manifestly not the case in the Terzian household. My father, who had served as a naval officer in the South Pacific, was enamored of equatorial weather, liked everything about the tropics except Japanese aviators, and was never happier than when the lampshades were wilting and sweat flowing in the enervating Washington heat. He and his equally sadistic spouse, moreover, were light sleepers and forbade the sound of electric fans after lights out.

Which explains one mystery about me to my otherwise perceptive wife: It is not so much the cool that I like about air-conditioning as that comforting hum.

Philip Terzian

DAVID CLARK

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Don't Come Home, America

'America, it is time to focus on nation building here at home." This was the core sound bite in President Obama's speech announcing the drawdown of forces in Afghanistan, and it was an extraordinary statement. Of course, such sentiments have been uttered many times over the years. George McGovern's "Come Home America" campaign theme in 1972 comes to mind, and we're sure Patrick Buchanan, Ron Paul, Dennis Kucinich, and George Will have said either exactly that or something similar at one time or another.

Not since the 1930s has an American president struck such an isolationist theme in a speech to the American people, however. By juxtaposing the winding down of the war in Afghanistan with the need to focus on domestic problems, Obama gave presidential sanction to the erroneous but nevertheless widespread belief that whatever the United States does abroad detracts from our ability to address our problems at home. We wonder if the speechwriters, policymakers, and of course the president himself fully understood the damaging effect such a statement can and probably will have on the entire scope of American foreign and defense policy.

We can imagine that line being thrown back in the administration's face the next time it comes to Congress to defend the foreign aid and defense budgets, the intervention in Libya, or the forward deployment of U.S. forces in Asia and Europe. But maybe Obama's increasingly evident concern about winning reelection trumped such issues. Maybe the cheap shot—with its clear implication that the efforts of our military in Afghanistan actually detract from the nation's well-being—was too good to pass up.

And it is a cheap shot. Here's the core point that Ron Paul, Dennis Kucinich, George Will, and now Barack Obama can't quite seem to understand: Failure in Afghanistan will cost much, much more than the billions spent on this surge. What was the cost to the U.S. economy of the attacks on 9/11? What will be the cost if the terrorist groups now operating in Afghanistan—the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e Taiba, as well as al Qaeda—are able to reconstitute safe havens and the next president has to send troops back in to clear them out again? It is a peculiar kind of wisdom that can only see the problems and costs of today and cannot imagine the problems and costs of tomorrow.

The argument that the cost of the surge in Afghanistan undermines our ability to address our domestic problems is especially risible coming from this president. It would be one thing if cutting back in Afghanistan were part of a sweeping deficit-reduction plan where domestic programs and entitlements were getting the axe, too. It would still be a mistake. But at least it would be consistent.

There is something appallingly cynical, however, in this president suggesting that the American fiscal crisis required overruling his military leadership and ordering a more rapid and therefore more dangerous drawdown in Afghanistan—this, after two and a half years of proposing spending on domestic programs that dwarfs the cost of the surge.

We're glad to see no one is contesting the fact that the president overruled the unanimous advice of his military leadership in ordering this drawdown. Yes, our military leaders have saluted and "endorsed" the president's plan. But they make no secret of their opposition to it. This is

especially true of the September 2012 deadline. Where did that date come from? It must have come from Obama campaign headquarters in Chicago because, while we can see a political reason for wanting those troops out before voters go to the polls in November 2012, there is no military or strategic justification whatsoever. In Obama's new plan, the forces will be withdrawing right in the middle of the fighting season.

General David Petraeus and his commanders wanted to get two more full fighting seasons in before ending the surge. This year they are battering and pushing back the Taliban and the terrorists from the southern and central parts of Afghanistan. Next year their goal was to push them out of the eastern parts of Afghanistan. Now that effort has been cast into serious doubt. The result may be continued safe havens for the enemy, allowing them to begin attacking again in the areas cleared out this year by the surge. The difference between Obama's politically motivated strategy and the commanders' military strategy could well prove the difference between success and failure.

The psychological effect of Obama's announcement may be just as damaging. The tone of the speech, the war-weariness it exhibited, combined with the unexpectedly rapid drawdown, will convince everyone in the region, and everyone in the world, that the United States can't wait to get out, regardless of the consequences. Afghan civilians who have to decide what's safest, sticking with the Americans or giving in to the Taliban, will be increasingly unlikely to choose the Americans. Taliban fighters trying to decide whether it might be a good idea to lay down their weapons before being crushed by an inevitable American victory will now view that victory as anything but inevitable. Bad actors in Pakistan, who have always doubted America's staying power, will now feel confident that we are leaving fast and will act accordingly. Our European allies, who were barely hanging on in Afghanistan in any case, will no doubt trip over themselves in a rush to the exits. They have "nation-building" to do at home, too.

And although this decision was clearly made for political reasons, the irony is that it is likely to backfire. If the war does not look like it is going well next spring and summer, as troops are being prematurely withdrawn, Obama will take the blame. Everyone will know that he overruled his military advisers to formulate this plan. Everyone will know he did it for political reasons. Obama will own it. And the thing is, there will still be 70,000 American troops in Afghanistan—only at that point, instead of being part of a winning effort, they could well be part of a losing effort. Oh, to be the Republican nominee in that scenario!

Which brings us to the Republicans. They have not all covered themselves in glory this week. Some have been stalwarts in opposing the president's plan, and for the right reasons. But some have been cautious, evidently worrying about the same polls that Obama is worrying about.

That is a mistake. It is a mistake in the most fundamental sense that losing in Afghanistan is profoundly not in America's interest, and every Republican has an obligation to place national interests above party and personal ambition. But it is also a political mistake. We know the conventional wisdom is that this election will be won on the economy. That may be mostly true, but we are confident that it is not entirely true. The next two years are going to continue to be dangerous times for the United States and for our friends and allies around the world. Indeed, they may be more dangerous than the past few years.

The Middle East is in turmoil. Yemen may be collapsing and could become a base for a very dangerous terrorist organization, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The United States may well have to use force to address that danger. Regimes in the Arab world are toppling, and it is unclear what will replace them. China grows stronger. Russia grows more authoritarian. Iran may be close to acquiring a nuclear weapon. We could go on.

The point is that 2012 will be an election about the economy, but it will also be an election about national security. The American people may tell pollsters they want to focus on domestic problems—they have said that many times in the past, as well—but they will also be looking to see who can be a reliable and strong commander in chief. Me-tooing Obama or, worse, trying to outflank him on the dovish left will not serve any candidate well in the general election. National security until now has been a Republican advantage. To squander that advantage in these times of global danger would be worse than a blunder. It would be a crime.

—Robert Kagan

'We Don't Estimate Speeches'

On June 22, the Congressional Budget Office released its annual "Long-Term Budget Outlook." To call the document grim would be a grave understatement. It describes a massive wave of debt that threatens very soon to drown us—and that, thanks to the weak economy and the continuing growth of spending, is coming at us very fast.

In last year's outlook, which was alarming enough, the CBO projected that our national debt would be 91 percent of GDP in 2021. The agency now says debt will be 101 percent of GDP in 2021—that is, a decade from now our debt will be larger than our economy, and still growing quickly. By 2030, CBO projects debt will top 150 percent of the economy, and by 2037 it will be 200 percent and growing. At that point, the federal government would be spending almost a tenth of the nation's GDP

on interest payments alone, up from 1 percent today.

No nation could prosper under such a massive burden of debt. The CBO is notoriously understated in drawing conclusions from the figures it provides, but last week's report brims with barely restrained panic. Alarming as the raw figures are, the report notes, its projections "do not include the harmful effects that rising debt would have on economic growth and interest rates. If those effects were taken into account, projected debt would increase even faster." "Rising debt," moreover, "would increasingly restrict policymakers' ability to use tax and spending policies to respond to unexpected challenges, such as economic downturns or financial crises."

And a crisis is exactly what we should expect. "Growing federal debt," the report states, "also would increase the probability of a sudden fiscal crisis, during which investors would lose confidence in the government's ability to manage its budget and the government would thereby lose its ability to borrow at affordable rates." In the poker-faced bureaucratic parlance of the CBO, this kind of talk is tantamount to shouting fire.

To be sure, all of this will happen only if we fail to change course. It will be a choice made knowingly by leaders who were warned well in advance about the consequences. Congressional Republicans have offered a detailed alternative to this dire scenario: The budget they passed in April would curtail spending and reform entitlement programs to reduce the debt dramatically and enable economic growth.

But rather than propose an alternative of their own, or take the Republican budget as an invitation to negotiate, Democrats have demagogued the Republican plan—scaring seniors about a Medicare reform that would not even affect them, for instance—and have otherwise offered nothing.

The Democratic Senate has not proposed a budget in either of the last two years. In February, President Obama offered a budget that would actually *increase* the deficit. Then in a speech in April he essentially retracted it, and offered in its place a vague and incoherent series of policy goals that left Democrats with no particular agenda. On June 23, at a hearing of the Budget Committee, CBO director Douglas Elmendorf was asked what his agency made of the proposals in that presidential address. "We don't estimate speeches," he said. "We need much more specificity than was provided in that speech."

Republicans have no way to force the Democrats to be more specific and to take the crisis seriously. But they are doing their best to use the fight over raising the government's debt ceiling—a fight the Democrats cannot avoid—to compel some responsible action.

Until last week, that fight had been focused on negotiations led by Vice President Biden. Those talks certainly revealed something about the Democrats' priorities: In the midst of a spending-driven debt explosion and a weak economy, Democrats in Washington want to raise taxes. But the

negotiations also revealed the continuing unwillingness of the president to make specific proposals about how to reduce spending, reform entitlements, and bring the debt under control. On June 23, House majority leader Eric Cantor (who had represented House Republicans at the negotiations) decided he'd had enough, and left the talks in order to force the issue to a higher level and compel the president to get specific.

Even some congressional Democrats seem frustrated by the White House's absenteeism. Asked if the breakup of the Biden talks would mean that a bipartisan group of senators negotiating a deal of their own would take center stage in the budget debate, Senate majority leader Harry Reid said, "My honest feeling is that we are beyond gangs of five and gangs of sixes." Instead, the president would have to get directly involved. "It's in the hands of the speaker and the president and, sadly, probably me," Reid said.

"Sadly" is right, but Reid and Obama are the leaders the Democrats have, and it is high time they faced up to the nation's foremost domestic challenge. Republicans were right to force the budget debate to the top, and now President Obama must decide if he is finally ready to get serious.

The country is facing a fiscal disaster greatly exacerbated by the policies of the Obama administration and congressional Democrats, but so far the president has refused to acknowledge the problem or act to alleviate it. He has been struggling to avoid making tough choices, hoping instead to paper over our troubles with words and so distract voters from the need for action. The public, however, is more serious than the president supposes. If he fails to show leadership and take meaningful action to reduce our debt, he will find that voters do not estimate by speeches. They reach their judgments by looking at results.

—Yuval Levin

We've Got Mail

The mass email from BarackObama.com evaded our spam filter and made it into our inbox at 1:03 A.M. on June 24. What was Jim Messina, Barack Obama's campaign manager, urgently telling us as we slept?

He was urging us to watch President Obama's June 22 address to the nation on Afghanistan, and conveniently provided a video link and text. But why should we want to watch Obama again? Messina explained:

> The President's address marks a major turning point in a nearly decade-long conflict. He announced his plan to start withdrawing our troops from Afghanistan next month, fulfilling a promise he made a year and a half ago to begin the drawdown this summer.
>
> To put it simply: When this president took office, there were 180,000 troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Now, the combat mission in Iraq has ended, Afghanistan will be fully responsible for its own security by 2014, and there will be fewer than 100,000 American troops in the two countries by the end of this year.
>
> As President Obama decisively concludes two long-running wars, he is refocusing our foreign policy to more effectively address the threats we face and strengthen America's leadership in the world as we do.
>
> I'm writing to you because this transformation has already begun to reshape the policy debate—foreign and domestic—in the 2012 election. As the President said last night: 'It is time to focus on nation building here at home.'
>
> The outcome of this debate will have consequences for all of us, so it's important that you understand the policy and help inform the conversation.

That's it. Almost as lame as the speech it was touting.

You thought Messina might feel he had to defend the politically motivated—and strategically indefensible—September 2012 date for the drawdown? Silly you.

You thought he might explain how the speech fit into a coherent foreign policy vision for the region or the world? Silly you.

You thought Messina might not present the decision for what it was: a drawdown driven by a prior Obama "promise," not by realities on the ground; a foreign policy decision motivated by the desire to "conclude" two "long-running" wars, not a commitment to succeed in them. And you thought Messina might express pride in what our soldiers and Marines have accomplished in Iraq and Afghanistan? Silly you.

But Messina did accurately convey the two core messages of his candidate's speech: Come home, America. And reelect me.

Why? So President Obama can continue "to focus on nation building here at home." For some reason, Messina didn't quote the whole sentence: "America, it is time to focus on nation building here at home."

Perhaps Messina thought you might be put off by the attention-grabbing and hortatory gimmick of beginning the sentence, "America." Perhaps he suspected you felt that Obama's tone was hectoring rather than inspiring. Perhaps he intuited that it sounded as if our president thinks he's addressing the denizens of a third-world nation, a bunch of God-fearing and gun-toting yokels who need the benefit of nation-building efforts by our betters in the capital. Perhaps Messina knows that lots of Americans think we've already built a pretty great nation—and that if the government would stop building up mountains of debt at home, and would commit to winning our wars abroad, we'd be fine? Silly you.

And perhaps you thought the president might be more concerned about the success of the military campaign in Afghanistan than his own campaign in 2012? Silly you.

And if this president gets reelected? Silly us.

—William Kristol

America's Labor Party

Is there anything Obama won't do for unions?

BY FRED BARNES

DAVE MALAN

How far will President Obama go to advance the interests of organized labor? Awfully far. We know this not only from the effort to keep Boeing from building a plane in a right-to-work state, South Carolina, but also from the way Delta Airlines is being railroaded into recognizing unions its employees have repeatedly rejected.

In June alone, the Obama administration adopted rules likely to discourage employers from hiring law firms that specialize in thwarting union organizing drives, and moved to shorten union certification campaigns, long a goal of organized labor.

But the targeting of Delta stands out. Following Delta's merger with Northwest Airlines in 2008, its flight attendants voted against joining the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA), and other employees decided against signing on with four separate unions of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM).

That didn't end what has become a union crusade against Delta, abetted by Obama. Now, from all appearances, the fix is in—against Delta. It starts with the National Mediation Board, which governs labor relations in the airline and railroad industries. Obama stacked the NMB deck by putting two former union senior executives on the three-member board, Linda Puchala of the AFA and Harry Hoglander of the Air Line Pilots.

That tilted the board sharply against Delta. At the urging of the AFL-CIO, the NMB changed the rule for airline and railroad union elections. For 75 years, a majority of the entire cohort of workers was required in a vote to unionize. The board reduced it to a majority of those voting.

And the two unions were tipped the change was imminent. They had filed for elections under the old rule. Then, just before the NMB's decision, they withdrew those requests, only to reinstate them later in order to have the more union-friendly new rule apply to the Delta elections.

The unions lost anyway. In the case of the flight attendants, it was the third time they had voted against the AFA. But the AFA and the IAM have doggedly refused to take "no" for an answer.

There are three reasons for their persistence. First, the vote was an embarrassing defeat for organized labor, already shrunken to the point of representing only 6.9 percent of the private sector workforce. Union leaders were unwilling to give up on what has been, at Delta, the biggest organizing drive since 70,000 workers at Ford Motor Company were unionized in 1941.

Second, 17,000 Northwest employees, inherited in the merger, had been union members. But they will become nonunion if the rejection of unionization by Delta employees is certified by the NMB. (Delta pilots have been union members for years.)

Third—and most important—the unions know they now have an indispensable ally, the pro-union majority on the National Mediation Board. To take advantage of this, both the AFA and IAM have accused Delta of illegally interfering in the union elections and asked the board to overturn the results and order a new election.

The board took the first step in June when it announced it would investigate whether Delta had acted improperly in opposing the unions. Should it decide Delta had, the NMB would call for still another election.

This could go on and on. Unions routinely accuse employers of using

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coercive tactics in elections, insist employees were denied a free choice, and demand a new round of voting. The AFA and IAM are counting on the board to go along.

The unions haven't made it easy for the NMB. Their formal complaints make an exceptionally weak case. Their argument boils down to the fact that Delta vigorously opposed unionization and made the case that both the airline and employees would be better off without the unions. Nothing illegal about that.

The unions argue that Delta went beyond simple opposition and committed "gross interference." But their detailed complaints are flimsy, some of them downright absurd.

The first offense cited in the IAM complaint was that Delta told employees they "must vote." Indeed they must, Delta said, if they want to vote against the union. This was to distinguish the old rule, under which employees not voting were counted as having voted "no," from the new rule in which only an actual "no" vote will count, the airline said.

That wasn't the only allegedly wrongful conduct the IAM cited on this issue. Delta CEO Richard Anderson, in an audio message to employees, "sounded very militaristic," the IAM said. Maybe so, but it's not illegal either.

This was another IAM objection: "Delta engaged in a massive and omnipresent anti-IAM campaign designed to so overwhelm employees that their free choice was suppressed." Is the IAM oblivious to how stupid and impressionable this makes Delta employees look? Chances are, the Delta workers noticed that unionized Northwest employees made less money.

The AFA took up this matter as well, saying Delta "transformed" the election into a "mandatory directive to vote 'no' against AFA." The airline "so overwhelmed the atmosphere that one flight attendant thought the election was a 'company sanctioned event.'"

With such dubious arguments, the unions have put the National Mediation Board to the test. If it's open-minded and unbiased, as the board claims to be, it's bound to reject the bid for new elections. If it's a tool of organized labor, it will go along.

Obama won't play a direct role in the decision. But he created the pro-labor majority on the NMB, just as the folks who run the Department of Labor and control the National Labor Relations Board are his people. So he's responsible for elevating unions to a privileged status.

You might suspect he aims to change the Democratic party into the Labor party. If that's the end he has in sight, he's taking all the right steps. There's an alternative explanation: Obama is just kowtowing to one more liberal pressure group. ♦

The al Qaeda-Taliban Connection

Obama takes his eye off the ball.

BY THOMAS JOSCELYN & BILL ROGGIO

Joe Biden finally won an argument. President Obama's decision to draw down U.S. forces in Afghanistan seems to move American policy toward Biden's long-held view that the U.S. military should narrow its approach to a selective, counterterrorism-focused mission. In this view, targeted raids, like the one that killed Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan, are enough to secure America. It's a politically convenient theory. Too bad it's wrong.

President Obama did not, strictly speaking, endorse Biden's approach. The tens of thousands of American troops stationed in Afghanistan after the summer of 2012 will be more than the number needed to wage the type of war advocated by Biden. But the Biden "counterterrorism" strategy clearly influenced Obama's decision.

Biden's thinking, which has many proponents both inside and out of government, hinges on the idea that the al Qaeda threat is distinct from the Taliban's war in Afghanistan. During a press briefing last week, anonymous administration officials explicitly made this argument.

"On the threat side, we haven't seen a terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan for the past seven or eight years," one senior administration official claimed. "There has been clearly fighting and threats inside of Afghanistan, but the assessment of anywhere between 50, 75, or so al Qaeda types that are . . . focused inside Afghanistan. . . . [There is] no indication at all that there is any effort within Afghanistan to use Afghanistan as a launching pad to carry out attacks outside of Afghan borders."

This is wishful thinking. The administration has drastically underestimated the footprint of "al Qaeda types" in Afghanistan. What's more, an al Qaeda operative captured in Afghanistan just last year was planning to attack multiple targets in Europe.

Al Qaeda's reach in Afghanistan can be seen in the press releases issued by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), NATO's command in Afghanistan. Press releases from March 2007 forward show the presence of al Qaeda and affiliated groups, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), in 94 different districts and in 25 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

Since mid-April of this year alone, ISAF and Afghan forces have killed

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or captured dozens of al Qaeda commanders and fighters. On May 3, the day after bin Laden was killed, Afghan troops killed or wounded more than 25 Arabs, Chechens, and Pakistanis in the Barg-e-Matal district of Nuristan. The 25 were sent across the border to retaliate for bin Laden's demise. According to the Obama administration's estimates, this would mean that half of al Qaeda's presence inside Afghanistan was wiped out on that one day. A week later, on May 10, a dozen more al Qaeda fighters were killed or captured by ISAF and Afghan forces. At this pace, there should not be any al Qaeda operatives left in Afghanistan.

The administration's low estimate is further belied by al Qaeda's martyrdom statements for leaders and fighters killed in Afghanistan. Consider the statement "Winds of Paradise—Part 5, Eulogizing 5 'Martyrs,'" which was released last fall by As Sahab, al Qaeda's propaganda arm. It detailed the service of five senior commanders, who led al Qaeda forces in seven of the country's 34 provinces: in Kandahar, Helmand, Farah, and Zabul in the south; and in Paktia, Paktika, and Khost in the east.

Simply put, there is no way that "al Qaeda types" could manage such widespread operations with the trivial footprint imagined by the Obama administration.

The idea that al Qaeda is not using Afghanistan to launch plots elsewhere is similarly myopic. In July 2010, a German citizen and member of the IMU named Ahmed Siddiqui was captured in Kabul. Once in custody, Siddiqui spoke "extensively about attack scenarios in Germany and neighboring European countries," according to *Der Spiegel*. These attacks were to mimic the 2008 assault on Mumbai carried out by Pakistan-based terrorists. Siddiqui's planned assault was reportedly ordered by Osama bin Laden himself.

There is a deeper problem with the Obama administration's theory of the terrorist threat. Counting al Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan is not a science. It is not clear where, say, al Qaeda ends and the Taliban and other terrorist groups begin. This is by design. Bin Laden envisioned al Qaeda as the vanguard of a broader jihadist coalition. Al Qaeda was always a joint venture, drawing from the manpower of sympathetic organizations in Pakistan and Afghanistan and throughout the Arab diaspora to replenish its ranks.

On Friday, the *New York Times* reported that the cellphone used by Osama bin Laden's most trusted courier was captured during the raid on bin Laden's compound. The courier had been in touch with members of Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen (HUM), a terrorist group backed by Pakistan's spy agency. HUM leaders have endorsed al Qaeda's terror since the 1990s.

Bin Laden invested heavily in al Qaeda's ties to the Taliban in particular, an alliance that is not likely to fray any time soon. Years before the September 11 attacks, al Qaeda fighters joined their Taliban brethren in combat in Afghanistan. Bin Laden established al Qaeda's 55th Arab Brigade specifically for this purpose. Recently leaked memos authored by Joint Task Force Guantánamo (JTF-GTMO) describe the brigade as bin Laden's "primary battle formation supporting Taliban objectives," with bin Laden "participating closely in the command and control of the brigade."

In late 2001, the 55th Arab Brigade was smashed by coalition forces, with dozens of its surviving members transferred to Gitmo. Bin Laden and al Qaeda then rebuilt the brigade as the Lashkar al Zil, or the Shadow Army.

The Shadow Army enlisted support from a range of jihadist groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan, including senior jihadists bin Laden and other al Qaeda leaders had befriended in the 1980s. The Shadow Army also received support from powerful state backers, including elements of Pakistani and Iranian intelligence.

The untold story of the Shadow Army can be found in the threat assessments of JTF-GTMO, which were published online in late April by WikiLeaks. Consider just three striking examples.

An Afghan named Haji Hamidullah has been detained at Guantánamo since 2003. JTF-GTMO found that

Hamidullah was an "agent of the Iranian Savama [Ministry of Intelligence and Security]" and "closely associated" with the Taliban, Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG), and al Qaeda. One especially intriguing intelligence report contained in his file reads:

> December 2002 reporting linked [Hamidullah] to a Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISID) initiative to create an office in Peshawar combining elements of the Taliban, HIG, and al Qaeda. The goal of the initiative was to plan and execute various terrorist attacks in Afghanistan. Members were to attack the foreign headquarters in Kabul in late January 2003.

Afghan officials linked Hamidullah to numerous attacks, resulting in the deaths of 71 people. Such is the nature of the jihadist coalition in Afghanistan that a suspected terrorist like Hamidullah can cooperate not just with terrorist groups but also with Pakistani and Iranian intelligence.

Another detainee, Abdul Razak, was identified as "a high-level military commander in a newly-conceived 'unification' of Al Qaeda, HIG and Taliban forces within Afghanistan." Osama bin Laden, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (the leader of the HIG and longtime ally of bin Laden), and Mullah Omar "envisioned this new coalition of HIG, Al Qaeda, and Taliban during a meeting in Pakistan in early spring 2003." (Razak was repatriated to Afghanistan from Gitmo by the Bush administration.)

Still another file contains intelligence on Haroon al Afghani, who is still held at Guantánamo. Al Afghani admitted to U.S. authorities that he studied at a school set up by 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and then joined the HIG. He also served as a courier under Abdul Hadi al-Iraqi, bin Laden's chief lieutenant in the 55th Arab Brigade, who is also currently detained at Guantánamo. Afghani's file contains this startling intelligence report:

> [Afghani] is assessed to have attended a joint operations meeting among extremist elements in mid-2006. A letter describing an 11 August 2006 meeting between commanders of the Taliban, al Qaeda, [Lashkar e Taiba], Pakistani military and intelligence officials, and the Islamic Party (probably a reference to the HIG), disclosed that the groups decided to increase terrorist operations in the Kapisa, Kunar, Laghman, and Nangarhar provinces, including suicide bombings, mines, and assassinations.

These are just a few reports, chosen from many in the leaked Guantánamo threat files, that demonstrate a high degree of collusion between al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. Their common goal is to drive the U.S.-led coalition out of Afghanistan.

The Obama administration is right that al Qaeda is headquartered in Pakistan. But that does not mean al Qaeda has removed itself from the coalition attempting to wrest control of Afghanistan. The jihadist hydra in Pakistan has its sights firmly set on Afghanistan. The withdrawal of American troops will only make the defeat of al Qaeda more difficult. ♦

No Energy in the Executive

Can the Obama administration be compelled to approve offshore drilling?

BY ADAM J. WHITE

"At some point this must end. With a permit, or without." With those words, an exasperated federal judge punctuated his latest decision ordering the Obama administration to process applications to drill for oil and gas offshore. More than a year after the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill caused the administration temporarily to halt the federal permitting process, Judge Martin Feldman of the Eastern District of Louisiana was prepared to accept no further bureaucratic delay by the federal regulators who continue to bottle up almost all drilling applications.

The court's May 10 order would have been remarkable if only for its emphatic rhetoric. But even more noteworthy was the fact that the Obama administration—i.e., the Interior Department, with jurisdiction over offshore drilling—claimed to have ended its moratorium seven months earlier.

Yet an unofficial moratorium is seemingly still in place. And Judge Feldman is joined in his frustration by restive congressmen of both parties, especially from the delegations of coastal oil- and gas-producing states. To force an end to the gridlock, the House has begun passing bills imposing deadlines on federal regulators' review of drilling applications.

Congress's frustration is understandable, but its strategy is underwhelming. New statutory deadlines, by themselves, will not end the drilling moratorium. Drilling proponents who pin their hopes on procedural "fixes" are setting themselves up for disappointment.

That Congress feels compelled to order the Interior Department to hasten the review of drilling applications shows how dramatically the Obama administration reacted to last summer's Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Just 16 months ago, President Obama—surrounded by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Energy Secretary Steven Chu, climate "czar" Carol Browner, and other officials—announced an energy strategy that would include expanded drilling in the Atlantic and Gulf waters. That policy, he insisted, would be "guided not by political ideology, but by scientific evidence."

Adam J. White is a lawyer in Washington.

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"Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government."

—Thomas Jefferson

Jeffery Sikkenga is Associate Professor of Political Science at Ashland University and a senior fellow in the University of Virginia's program on Constitutionalism and Democracy.

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The administration's new strategy was shortly thereafter engulfed in a deluge of oil—BP's Deepwater Horizon well erupted just three weeks later. Desperate to forestall more disasters, Salazar imposed a six-month moratorium on drilling in water deeper than 500 feet, including 33 wells then under construction. President Obama reiterated this ban in an Oval Office address two weeks later, urging that "we need to know the facts before we allow deepwater drilling to continue."

But the administration's commitment to a science-not-politics-based policy quickly proved to be empty rhetoric. Would-be drillers challenged the moratorium in federal court, and Judge Feldman issued his first of several decisions, concluding that the moratorium was far more expansive than the factual record warranted. Undeterred by the judge's order, the administration "rescinded" that moratorium and imposed a virtually identical new one. Further litigation ensued.

When Salazar ultimately announced the end to that moratorium in October 2010, after months of litigation, pro-drilling advocates reacted with a distinct sense of skepticism. The American Petroleum Institute's president warned that "without additional resources and a serious commitment by the government to process and approve permits . . . a de facto moratorium . . . will continue to cripple the already hard-hit Gulf region."

And by all appearances, that warning has proved correct. According to the House Oversight Committee's recent report, the administration's official moratorium "was replaced by a 'permitorium'—whereby drilling activity remained at a standstill not by operation of law—but because of inaction on the part of [Interior]." As proof of the "permitorium," the House report noted that before the Deepwater Horizon spill, Interior had "processed and issued permits to drill in two weeks"; since the moratorium ended last year, only one new well had been approved. In the words of Judge Feldman, "Where there should be a queue" of applications receiving orderly review, "there is instead an untended pile."

With the administration unwilling to accelerate the regulatory process, and the federal courts seemingly unable to effect change, Congress increasingly has sought to force the administration's hand itself. Its most recent strategy is to impose new deadlines on federal regulators reviewing drilling permit applications.

For example, the "Putting the Gulf of Mexico Back to Work Act," which passed in the House by a 263-163 vote, would require Interior to "decide whether to issue a permit" within 60 days of receiving the application; if no decision is made within 60 days, then "the application is deemed approved." Another bill, Senator David Vitter and Representative Rob Bishop's "3-D Act" (as in "Domestic Jobs, Domestic Energy, and Deficit Reduction") would require Interior to "approve or disapprove an application for a permit to drill . . . not later than 20 days after the date the application is submitted to the Secretary." If the sponsors believe that setting deadlines will result in Interior issuing more drilling permits, then they likely will be disappointed.

To understand why new statutory deadlines cannot achieve the change their sponsors seek, consider the statutes underlying the offshore drilling scheme. More to the point, consider how those laws assign the "burden of proof."

The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA), which governs offshore drilling permits, places the burden of proof on the *applicant*. Specifically, OCSLA requires Interior to reject a drilling permit application "if the [applicant] fails to demonstrate that he can comply with the requirements of this act or other applicable Federal law."

In other words, if Interior concludes that the applicant has not yet carried its burden of proving that it is entitled to a drilling permit when the new statutory deadline expires, then Interior will reject the application.

The newly proposed deadlines do not shift the burden of proof from the applicant to the government. And so even if Interior were required to make a final decision within 20 or 60 days of receiving the application, the ultimate outcome would not likely change. Most obviously, permit applications that fall far short of convincing Interior would not benefit from a deadline. At the end of the statutory period, Interior will reject those applications.

But even applications seemingly more deserving of approval will probably not benefit from the deadline. Even with a deadline on the books, Interior likely could claim discretion to belatedly approve applications; federal courts have recognized that a statutory deadline for agency action may not, by itself, prevent the agency from issuing a final decision even after the deadline has expired.

Armed with that discretion to hold out hope for belated approval, Interior would easily be able to convince applicants to *waive* the deadline. Better for an applicant to await a belated approval than to force a timely rejection.

But if deadlines alone will not suffice to force prompt Interior review of drilling applications, then what would? A seemingly obvious remedy would be to combine a deadline with a reversal of the burden of proof: require Interior to grant permits before the deadline, unless Interior proves that the applicant should not be allowed to drill.

Such a combined proposal would foster more drilling—but at what cost? It is not clear how, under this system, Interior could obtain from the applicant all of the information that it needed, and analyze that information, before the deadline expired. Given how complicated any drilling project is, and the risks that often remain hidden from even the most inquisitive regulators and operators (as seen in the Deepwater Horizon incident), Interior might not even know which questions to ask to cover all possible project-specific contingencies. And that is precisely why laws traditionally assign the burden of proof to the party that has the best access to the information at the center of the dispute, or to the party that seeks to change the status quo. In other words, the would-be drillers, not the regulators. If Congress's goal is to force Interior to approve *good* projects, then the burden of proof should remain with the applicant.

Another option would be for

Congress to take the permitting statutes, which are phrased in very broad terms, and to narrow the scope of the agency's discretion by specifying in great detail precisely what a "good" project must demonstrate in order to receive a permit.

This proposal, too, has clear virtues. Too often, the agency malfeasance that Congress denounces is simply the product of poorly drafted statutes—a prime example being overbroad grants of power to agencies that allow Congress to take credit for "tackling" a policy problem, while leaving the agencies responsible for translating the broad mandate into actual policy. Under this theory, Congress has only itself to blame for the inevitable problems that result from giving agencies far too much discretion over a given issue. If Congress doesn't like how agencies administer statutes, then it should amend the statute, and specify precisely what factors it wants the regulators to examine.

But federal statutes providing for approval or disapproval of energy infrastructure development, as it happens, have always been broadly worded precisely to give the relevant agency maximum discretion to identify, evaluate, and resolve the complicated technical problems that surround complex infrastructure. Narrowly specifying the considerations that Interior can consider in reviewing drilling permit applications would depart from the history of energy infrastructure regulation, and would risk preventing the agency from exploring issues crucial to public safety yet beyond the statutory mandate.

These concerns illustrate the fundamental problem with Congress's new deadline-centered approach: On questions of law and regulation, there often are issues that legal draftsmanship cannot solve. Stated differently, sometimes the problem isn't the prescription; it's the personnel. The statutes governing offshore drilling almost certainly give regulators the tools they need to promptly and effectively approve good drilling proposals and disapprove bad ones. If the Obama administration personnel are not faithfully administering those laws, then Congress's recourse is political, not legal.

And the political tools at Congress's disposal are myriad. It can convene hearings designed to browbeat regulators; it can hold up executive or judicial branch nominations; it can use the power of the purse to defund other administration priorities; it can appeal directly to the voters, stating the pro-drilling case and driving the public to pressure the administration.

Congress is doing many of these things already; the House Oversight Committee has held hearings and issued a report condemning the Obama administration; Louisiana's senators, Vitter and Mary Landrieu, have held up administration appointments as payback for drilling permit delays. In the end, Congress will find much more success in a vigorous strategy focused on such political leverage than it will in even the most elegantly drafted legislation. ♦

The King's Speech

Morocco's constitutional reform deserves support in Washington. BY LEE SMITH

On July 1 Moroccans will vote on a set of constitutional changes proposed by their king, Mohammed VI. These new amendments guarantee the full equality of women and the rights of minorities, like the Berbers, whose language, Amazigh, will now be an official language alongside Arabic; they criminalize torture, establish the independence of the judiciary, and invest more executive authority in a head of government chosen from the party that wins the most seats in parliament.

Mohammed VI

The king's speech announcing these proposed amendments didn't win the international attention afforded the street demonstrations that brought down longstanding authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, but here's a Muslim-majority Middle Eastern state where reform has become a reality, not a slogan. The pity is that the Obama administration seems oblivious.

The Moroccan reforms issue from negotiations and consultations that began in March, after Tunisia's Ben Ali and Egypt's Mubarak had already been swept away. Still, the reform process began much earlier than that, when Mohammed VI succeeded his father Hassan II on the throne in 1999. Over the last decade, opposition parties became restless and demanded the monarchy follow through on its promises. The Arab Spring filled the sails of reform. The proposed amendments, expected to pass by a large majority, will set Morocco on course for a constitutional monarchy resembling Spain's—and, according to some analysts, will actually cede more power than Spain's reformer king Juan Carlos was first willing to give up.

Still, Morocco has some way to go before it becomes a full democracy, since the king has reserved

Lee Smith is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard. *His book* The Strong Horse: Power, Politics, and the Clash of Arab Civilizations *(Anchor) has just been published in paperback.*

some key portfolios for himself. As a direct descendant of the prophet of Islam as well as commander of the faithful, he is still in charge of the religious establishment and military affairs. Also he has retained the role of supreme arbiter to resolve all conflicts within the government. Nonetheless, where sovereignty was previously invested in the person of the king, the effect of these constitutional changes—assuming they are endorsed by the voters, will be to distribute authority and turn subjects into citizens, participants in what the self-described "citizen king" calls a "citizenship-based monarchy."

Some Moroccans are concerned that the country isn't ready for such an experiment just yet. They argue that the wide gap between social classes, where there is almost no middle-class bridging the very wealthy and extremely poor, as well as a deeply flawed education system, may render Moroccan politics vulnerable to demagogues and oligarchs. However, most of the opposition will come from the hard left and the Islamist right, like the Justice and Spirituality party, which intends to boycott the referendum. But if turnout is low, it will probably be because the electorate believes that the outcome is already certain.

The White House's apparent lack of interest is less easy to understand. The administration has had little to say beyond a few lines from a State Department spokesman during a daily briefing at Foggy Bottom. Morocco, the first country to recognize the United States in 1777 and perhaps our oldest bilateral partner, merits better from Washington.

The Europeans, especially France and Spain, have been much more enthusiastic than the White House about developments in Rabat, which stands to reason given their geographical proximity and historical ties. To be sure, stable allies are rarely a priority for Washington, especially given the nature and scope of the other issues the State Department handles in its Middle East and North Africa file. It is a volatile portfolio at any time but particularly over the last six months.

The early excitement over Egypt's revolution has turned to profound concern as a key U.S. ally that is hemorrhaging money, teetering on the verge of a food crisis, and showing signs of spinning out of Washington's orbit. In Libya, the White House committed itself to a NATO action with the intention of proving America's willingness to back its European allies—but without understanding that when Washington fails to lead the alliance flounders. Qaddafi has shown himself to be something rather more than a Bedouin harlequin with oil wells, and it requires American will to vouchsafe the American prestige that was spent too cheaply by embarking on a military campaign without a military or political strategy.

In Syria, because the administration frets that it has no leverage to stop Bashar al-Assad from slaughtering his unarmed opposition, it refuses to call for his ouster, still holding out hope that he may yet reform. Washington's leverage is simply this—by turning its back on Assad and declaring his rule illegitimate, we would signal our willingness to entertain offers from the men of ambition seeking to replace an Arab dictator who has set himself against the United States and its allies during the decade that he has ruled Syria. Instead, the administration is unconscionably urging a national dialogue between the Syrian president and an opposition whose children he has been shooting in the streets.

In Bahrain, the White House has allowed Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council forces Riyadh dispatched to Manama in March to give cover to a regime that needs no outside help to repress its own citizens. Bahrain is about to embark on its own national dialogue, essentially a glorified session of parliament where the opposition will have to rehearse its case through pro-government mediators before it reaches the real decision-makers in the royal court. The crown prince, who has the opposition's respect, will not take part in the national dialogue as he did in the early spring, before the GCC forces arrived. A group of regime-allied members of parliament visiting Washington explained the crown prince's absence: In our culture, one deputy said, it would be a humiliation for him to go back again after he was snubbed the first time. Fine, but then don't say you're democratic. Democratic politics entails the risk of not getting what you want, of almost always not getting exactly what you want. If you call that humiliation, then you're not democratic and you're not even heading in a democratic direction.

Morocco, by contrast, is on its way to democracy. Of course, there is no precise model that Rabat can establish for other Arabic-speaking states to follow. In a sense Morocco's reforms have effectively set the country apart, not only from the region generally but from the other monarchies and from the kingdom of Saudi Arabia in particular. The rumor floating around the region the last few months was that so long as Morocco and Jordan held out against reform, Saudi money would float their economies. Whether there was anything to that story, the fact that the Moroccans have struck out on their own underlines the Saudi position, which is not conservative but reactionary.

What Morocco's new constitution illuminates is that there is a cultural conflict in the region even more significant than the strategic crisis that we've come to call the Saudi-Iranian cold war. In the end, Riyadh and Tehran represent the same vision for the region, exporting repression and repressive ideologies, differing only in their confessional dimension—Sunni or Shia. If there's no pattern to cover the region as a whole, at least we now have a shorthand for this more fundamental confrontation, between obscurantism and democracy: We can call it Saudi/Iran versus Morocco. It shouldn't be hard for the White House to choose sides. ♦

At the Bottom of the Slippery Slope

Where euthanasia meets organ harvesting.

BY WESLEY J. SMITH

In 1992, my friend Frances committed suicide on her 76th birthday. Frances was not terminally ill. She had been diagnosed with treatable leukemia and needed a hip replacement. Mostly, though, she was depressed by family issues and profoundly disappointed at where her life had taken her.

Something seemed very off to me about Frances's suicide. So I asked the executor of her estate to send me the "suicide file" kept by the quintessentially organized Frances and was horrified to learn from it that she had been an avid reader of the (now defunct) *Hemlock Quarterly*, published by the aptly named Hemlock Society (which was since merged into the assisted-suicide advocacy group, Compassion and Choices). The HQ taught readers about the best drugs with which to overdose and gave precise instructions on how to ensure death with a plastic bag—the exact method used by Frances to end her life.

I was furious. Frances's friends had known she was periodically suicidal and had intervened to help her through the darkness. The Hemlock Society had pushed Frances in the other direction, giving her moral permission to kill herself and then teaching her how to do it. This prompted the first of the many articles I have written over the years against assisted-suicide advocacy. It appeared in the June 28, 1993, *Newsweek* and warned about the cliff towards which assisted suicide advocacy was steering our society:

> We don't get to the Brave New World in one giant leap. Rather, the descent to depravity is reached by small steps. First, suicide is promoted as a virtue. Vulnerable people like Frances become early casualties. Then follows mercy killing of the terminally ill. From there, it's a hop, skip, and a jump to killing people who don't have a good "quality" of life, perhaps with the prospect of organ harvesting thrown in as a plum to society.

The other shoe—"organ harvesting"—has now dropped. Euthanasia was legalized in Belgium in 2002. It took six years for the first known coupling of euthanasia and organ harvesting, the case of a woman in a "locked in" state—fully paralyzed but also fully cognizant. After doctors agreed to her request to be lethally injected, she asked that her organs be harvested after she died. Doctors agreed. They described their procedure in a 2008 issue of the journal *Transplant International*:

> This case of two separate requests, first euthanasia and second, organ donation after death, demonstrates that organ harvesting after euthanasia may be considered and accepted from ethical, legal, and practical viewpoints in countries where euthanasia is legally accepted. This possibility may increase the number of transplantable organs and may also provide some comfort to the donor and her family, considering that the termination of the patient's life may be seen as helping other human beings in need for organ transplantation.

The idea of coupling euthanasia with organ harvesting and medical experimentation was promoted years ago by the late Jack Kevorkian, but it is now becoming mainstream. Last year, the Oxford bioethicist Julian Savulescu coauthored a paper in *Bioethics* arguing that some could be euthanized, "at least partly to ensure that their organs could be donated." Belgian doctors, in particular, are openly discussing the nexus between euthanasia and organ harvesting. A June 10 press release from Pabst Science Publishers cited four lung transplants in Leuven from donors who died by euthanasia.

What's more, Belgian doctors

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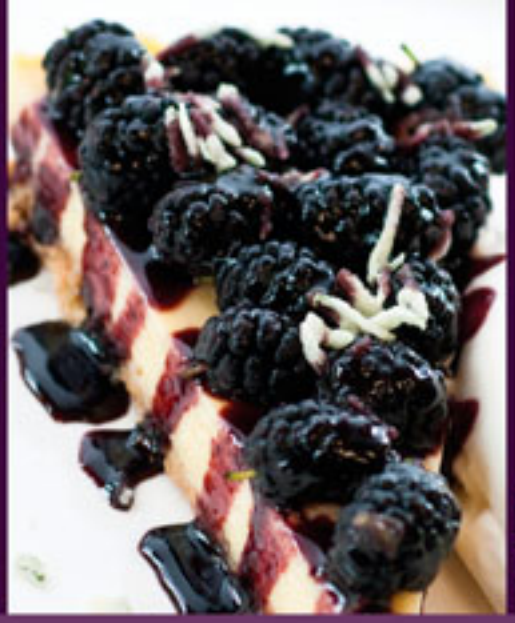


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and bioethicists now travel around Europe promoting the conjoining of the two procedures at medical seminars. Their PowerPoint presentation touts the "high quality" of organs obtained from patients after euthanasia of people with degenerative neuro/muscular disabilities.

Coupling organ donation with euthanasia turns a new and dangerous corner by giving the larger society an explicit stake in the deaths of people with seriously disabling or terminal conditions. Moreover, since such patients are often the most expensive for whom to care, and given the acute medical resource shortages we face, one need not be a prophet to see the potential such advocacy has for creating a perfect utilitarian storm.

Some might ask, if these patients want euthanasia, why not get some good out of their deaths? After all, they are going to die anyway.

But coupling organ harvesting with mercy killing creates a strong emotional inducement to suicide, particularly for people who are culturally devalued and depressed and, indeed, who might worry that they are a burden on loved ones and society. People in such an anguished mental state could easily come to believe (or be persuaded) that asking for euthanasia and organ donation would give a meaning to their deaths that their lives could never have.

And it won't stop there. Once society accepts euthanasia/organ harvesting, we will soon see agitation to pay seriously disabled or dying people for their organs, a policy that Kevorkian once advocated. Utilitarian boosters of such a course will argue that paying people will save society money on long-term care and allow disabled persons the satisfaction of benefiting society, while leaving a nice bundle for family, friends, or a charitable cause.

People with serious disabilities should be alarmed. The message that is being broadcast with increasing brazenness out of Belgium is that their deaths are worth more than their lives. ♦

GARY LOCKE

Which Party Has a Tax Problem?

The media say Republicans, but it's actually the Democrats.

BY JAMES PETHOKOUKIS

When a group of Republican senators recently voted to eliminate the $6 billion in tax subsidies handed out annually to the ethanol industry, hopes for a coming conservative crackup were thick in the air. Senator Chuck Schumer, the New York Democrat, immediately blasted out an email: "In Watershed Moment, 34 Senate Republicans Broke With Right Wing Ideology Yesterday—Vote Means Tax Expenditures Now Fair Game To Reduce Deficit." Cable host Lawrence O'Donnell was positively gobsmacked. "This is the most dramatic development in Republican tax policy in the 21st century," he declared. "Is this the first flicker of hope that the Republican tax cut fever might be fading?"

Less attention was devoted to the aftermath. Republicans later helped shelve the bill with the ethanol amendment when it didn't include an offsetting measure to kill the death tax, thus avoiding a net tax increase. Americans for Tax Reform, a powerful antitax group, celebrated that its widely signed no-tax pledge remained inviolate. Next, Republican Senate boss Mitch McConnell said tax revenue increases were not going to be part of negotiations over raising the debt ceiling—and indeed, the talks seem to have broken up over that issue. Various versions of the oft-repeated talking point—"We have a spending problem, not a revenue problem"—were reiterated by Republican guests on Fox News Channel and talk radio. And good luck finding anyone on the right pushing hard for higher marginal tax rates.

Upon close examination, however, one can detect at least a slight wobble in the generational Republican and conservative opposition to tax hikes of any sort, for any reason, at any time. That's significant. For more than two decades, Republicans have stayed stubbornly and successfully on message: no new taxes. But the deluge of debt that's flowed from the Great Recession and President Barack Obama's spendthrift response to the downturn may be causing a rejiggering of calculations.

For some, fear of a debt crisis outweighs the political and economic risks from higher taxes. Getting Democrats to agree to deep spending cuts is more important. Last December, three conservative GOP senators on Obama's bipartisan debt commission—Tom Coburn, Mike Crapo, and Judd Gregg—voted to eliminate business tax breaks and scale down those for individuals. Part of the savings would be used to lower tax rates, but the rest—nearly $1 trillion over ten years—would go toward debt reduction.

Another data point: While Americans for Tax Reform helpfully reminded its pledge signers to balance the tax increase from eliminating those ethanol subsidies with a subsequent

James Pethokoukis is a columnist for Reuters.

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tax cut, the equally influential Club for Growth made no such demand or recommendation. "We're the Club for Growth, not the Club against Tax Increases," says Chris Chocola, the group's president. As he sees it, eliminating market-distorting subsidies is a good thing in and of itself. Chocola said his organization will judge other tax expenditures—there are currently more than $1 trillion worth embedded in the U.S. tax code—on a "case-by-case basis."

Also note that Republicans who were negotiating with Vice President Joe Biden on a deal to raise the federal debt ceiling didn't rule out a rather sneaky and technocratic way of boosting taxes. Income tax brackets and Social Security benefits are indexed to inflation. Many economists think the cost-of-living measures Uncle Sam currently uses tend to overstate price increases. Using a different type of index, one that takes into account how consumers change their shopping habits as prices rise, would slow inflation adjustments to the tax code. Savings over a decade could be as much as $300 billion.

Even some leading conservative wonks seem willing to consider the need for more tax revenue. The debt-obsessed Peter G. Peterson Foundation asked a bunch of Washington think tanks—including the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation—to design budget plans putting America on a sustainable fiscal path. Heritage produced a plan well within the bounds of Republican economic orthodoxy of the past 30 years. It would balance the budget within a decade while instituting a flat tax that would keep tax revenue at 18.5 percent of GDP, roughly the historical average.

But AEI's scholars created a plan that would boost tax revenue to a consistent 19.9 percent of GDP by replacing the income tax with a broad consumption tax and substituting a carbon tax for alternative energy subsidies. Only three years in U.S. history have seen higher tax levels as a share of output. The team's explanation: "We cannot simply tax our way to a balanced budget without suffering the consequences of a sluggish economy and reduced prosperity. We also cannot simply cut spending without risking the loss of essential services for an aging population, undercutting our infrastructure on which economic growth builds, and reducing our ability to defend the country against its enemies."

So does all this amount to a schism on taxes or repudiation of an economic approach that brought the Republican party out of its post-World War II political wilderness and helped extend America's global economic superiority into the 21st century? Not so much.

Actually, it's Democrats who face dangerous fiscal fissures. Here's why: Under an alternate financial forecast from the Congressional Budget Office—one more likely than its

baseline prediction—spending as a share of the economy is headed toward 34 percent of GDP by 2035 versus 21 percent historically and 24 percent today. But the economy would never arrive at this point without being crushed under a monstrous tax and debt burden. The mainstream economic and political consensus—except among liberal Democrats, really—is that spending needs to be closer to 21 percent of GDP. The Obama commission would cap spending at that level, as would bipartisan plans fashioned by Senators Bob Corker, a Tennessee Republican, and Claire McCaskill, a Missouri Democrat.

The left hates this idea for two reasons. First, it means at least 85 percent of future debt reduction ultimately would come from cutting government. As it so happens, that 85-15 ratio of spending cuts to revenue increases is typical of the fiscal policy mix other countries have used to successfully escape from debt traps. Second, hitting that 21 percent mark would mean—perhaps—modest tax concessions from Republicans. Democrats, on the other hand, almost surely would need to agree to sweeping entitlement reform, probably along the lines advocated by Rep. Paul Ryan. The union-backed Economic Policy Institute, for instance, has a debt plan that puts spending at 28 percent of GDP by 2035 thanks to its embrace of a government-centric health system. At some point, Democrats will need to have an interesting internal conversation about whether a social safety net designed for the demographics of the 20th century is appropriate for this one.

What's more, there's every reason to believe that pro-growth policies can produce added tax revenue by making the U.S. economy bigger. The AEI plan, for instance, was required to use the gloomy economic forecasts of the CBO, which assume long-term GDP growth of around 2 percent. But many economists believe replacing the current income tax system with a more economically efficient consumption tax would boost long-run output. If growth were substantially higher than the CBO assumes, then the long-run revenue requirement to make the numbers work could be in the neighborhood of 19 percent of GDP—the same as in Ryan's "Path to Prosperity." But the pie would be bigger.

And there's a lot more that can be done to increase growth beyond tax reform. The AEI plan, for instance, doesn't touch on regulatory reform or increasing high-skilled immigration or implementing market-friendly approaches to infrastructure and basic research spending. All would boost tax revenue by boosting long-run GDP growth.

The prospect of modest tax hikes in exchange for radical entitlement reform is no reason for the American right to fracture. But with smart pro-growth policies, there would be no reason to raise taxes at all. ♦

Shame On You, Mr. President!
Shame On You Congress!

For Trying to Foist this Outrageous "Free Trade" Agreement on the American People.

KORUS FTA (Korean-U.S. Free Trade Agreement)

Now Pending and if Passed Will Be the Final Nail in the Coffin of the American Economy

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We know that NAFTA - the North American Free Trade Agreement - was instrumental in completely destroying our ability to manufacture competitively in the U.S. by outsourcing our manufacturing to Mexico and other countries with labor rates as low as $2 an hour. This has allowed them to ship products back here duty and tariff free - totally destroying our ability to manufacture competitively, unless we want to change our wage rates to $2 per hour.

The KORUS FTA will not only further deplete our manufacturing base, it will also take international trade, banking and finance out of our control.

To even consider this disastrous proposed trade agreement is to contemplate economic suicide.

The following points detail why the KORUS FTA will be disastrous for America:

1. According to the Economic Policy Institute the KORUS FTA will dramatically export more jobs not our merchandise as promised, causing our trade deficit to explode.

2. Korea will gain unhindered liberties to change U.S. law. Even prevailing wage laws can be challenged *(see chapters 11, 13 & 19 of the agreement)*.

3. The U.S. government will lose the ability to regulate the American banking industry.

4. KORUS will facilitate takeovers of U.S.companies by Korean companies.

5. Korea will be able to insource low-wage jobs to the U.S., but American companies will NOT get the same access to South Korea.

6. The textile tariff reductions are not equal, American textile workers will be put further in harm's way.

7. The U.S. beef industry will suffer.

8. More foreign food is projected to legally enter the U.S., increasing our chances of importing even more unchecked contaminated food.

9. "Buy American" food support will become illegal *(see chapter 2 & 6 of the agreement)*.

10. South Korea will still use import barriers that the U.S. does not use.

11. U.S. taxpayers could become liable to South Korean companies for lost profits *(see chapter 4 of the agreement)*.

12. There is nothing in the KORUS FTA to stop South Korea's currency manipulating practices.

This is another "free trade" agreement that will take away our right to do what is in the best interest of our country. Under the conditions of this "free trade"agreement it would not be possible to accumulate anything other than a massive trade imbalance with South Korea. By selling to us below our cost, they are by design forcing our companies to move out of the country, sell out or go out of business – which has already been happening at an accelerated rate. The KORUS FTA will only hasten our demise.

Approving a trade deal with South Korea will NOT make things better for the U.S. Americans must start asking the important questions – namely, **who are our leaders working for?** Signing a deal like this can only mean our leaders are not reading what they are signing or are working for the best interest of multinational corporations, special interest groups or foreign powers.

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article by Pat Choate, author and economist

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Queen of the Tea Party

The presidential campaign of Michele Bachmann

By Matthew Continetti

If she'd fallen backward, she'd have been killed. It was September 2009, during her second term in Congress, and a magazine had sent a photographer to shoot Michele Bachmann. He escorted her to the third floor rotunda in the Cannon House Office Building on Capitol Hill, where he positioned a large orange crate next to the balustrade. He told her to stand on it. She reluctantly obliged. Behind her were three stories of empty air.

The magazine had also sent a videographer, who wanted Bachmann to gesture ecstatically for the camera. "And I said, 'That's not what I do,'" Bachmann remembered during a recent interview at her temporary campaign headquarters in downtown Washington. "'I'm a serious member of Congress.'" So she got off the crate. The photo shoot soon ended, and the pictures were never published. "I think they didn't get what they wanted," Bachmann said. "They wanted this freak caricature."

The announcement: Bachmann in New Hampshire

We were speaking a few days after Bachmann's well-received performance at a Republican primary debate in Goffstown, New Hampshire, on June 13. Bachmann's poise and deft answers, and her announcement that she'd filed the paperwork to run for president, made her stand out from the other candidates. Perhaps the caricature has begun to fade.

Energetic, charismatic, intelligent, and attractive, the 55-year-old Bachmann is no stranger to publicity. Since she arrived on the national scene in 2007, her prominence in the conservative movement has skyrocketed. In the world of talk radio and cable news, she possesses something like Most Favored Guest status. She plays the outside game, using media appearances to further the right's agenda. She's been featured in calendars of female conservative superstars. There's even a Michele Bachmann action figure.

What Bachmann lacked until recently was mainstream credibility. And the skepticism was bipartisan. Democrats loathed her—and still do—because she's about as far from an apologetic conservative as you can get. But plenty of Republican officials and consultant types also didn't like Bachmann. Republican elites muttered that she was a show horse, not a work horse. Her fame alienated colleagues. One congressman recently told me that Bachmann had been upbraided during a House GOP conference meeting for undermining the leadership's message on fiscal issues. Bachmann's tendency to shoot from the hip is said to limit her appeal. "I think Bachmann's chances of landing on Jupiter are higher than her chances of being nominated," Republican strategist Mike Murphy told me in an April interview for Washingtonpost.com.

Well, get ready for an interplanetary expedition. Bachmann is a far more serious candidate for the Republican nomination than her reputation would suggest. She's a talented fundraiser who raised $13.5 million for her 2010 reelection campaign. She's a television star who appropriately tailors her message to her audience. Her combativeness will delight conservatives eager to fight Barack Obama. Her movement credentials—she founded the House Tea Party Caucus—put her at the cutting edge of right-wing politics. And in a primary campaign where authenticity counts, no other candidate has Bachmann's unique history: an Iowa native who put herself through law school, raised her five children and took in 23 foster children, and has never lost an election for state or federal office.

Since 2009, millions of Americans have attended rallies, joined Tea Party groups, and become involved in politics. They're scared for the future of the country, and they want

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Matthew Continetti is opinion editor of The Weekly Standard *and author, most recently, of* The Persecution of Sarah Palin.

to stop America's decline. Many of these activists are parents or grandparents who simply weren't political before government policies drove them into the arena. Michele Bachmann is uniquely positioned to speak to these voters—because she's one of them.

Michele Amble was born on April 6, 1956, in Waterloo, Iowa, the second of four children and the only girl. Her childhood was modest. Her parents owned a small home and rented out the top floor for income. Her father was studying to be an engineer. When Michele was four, the family moved into a three-bedroom rambler. "It was probably lower middle class," she said, "and then, as families do, we moved up to middle class." She was baptized and raised in the Lutheran church.

The Ambles come from Norwegian immigrants who arrived in America in the middle of the nineteenth century. They trace their roots in Iowa back seven generations. They were Democrats. The one Republican Michele knew well as a child was her paternal grandmother, a devoted *Wall Street Journal* and *Time* magazine reader who, like her other grandparents, worked in a factory. David Amble, Michele's father, was the first in the family to go to college.

When Michele was in elementary school, her father got a job designing ordnance at Honeywell. The work took the Ambles to Anoka, Minnesota, north of the Twin Cities. Then came a time of upheaval. Her parents divorced. Her father moved to California. Michele and her brothers remained in Minnesota with their mother, Jean. The family fell into poverty overnight. "My mom made about $4,800 a year," Michele said. Jean was a bank teller.

Michele was 13 years old. She and her mother had a conversation. "My mom said, 'One thing that can never be taken away from you is your education,'" Bachmann told me in a 2009 interview. If she worked hard in school, her mother went on, she'd have a foundation for life. Michele became a devoted student at Anoka High, graduating early. She was popular and was elected to the homecoming court in the fall and winter semesters. She was never queen, though. "I won Miss Congeniality once," she said.

Both of her parents remarried by the time Michele finished high school. She has two stepsiblings through her stepmother and five through her stepfather. Just as important as her changing family, however, was her turn to religion. She'd attended church as a child without really hearing what was said. Then, when she was 16, she made a commitment. "I believe God is real," she said. "I believe he's real, I believe he's true, I believe that there is a heaven, and that's where I want to go." She considers herself an evangelical Christian. As an adult, she's attended both a Lutheran church and a nondenominational Christian church.

Her faith led her to some interesting places. The summer after she finished high school, Michele went to Israel and worked on a kibbutz. The trip was sponsored by Young Life, a Christian ministry. "I always had this love and appreciation for Israel because I was a Christian," she said. "It's the foundation of our faith. All of the Bible is about Israel." She wanted to see the land for herself. What she found wasn't a high-end vacation destination. She remembers the hurly burly of Ben Gurion airport, 1974: heat, soldiers with guns, customs officers at card tables on the tarmac. Chickens were everywhere. "It was pretty grubby," she said.

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The youth housing on the kibbutz was called the ghetto. Lizards climbed the walls. She would wake up at 4 A.M. and get on a flatbed truck that was pulled by an old diesel tractor. Occasionally Michele operated the rig: "It was my first time driving a clutch." They would drive out to cotton fields to pull weeds. Armed soldiers escorted them wherever they went.

The soldiers searched for mines as the kids cultivated the soil. "You're hoping at 4 o'clock in the morning that they see everything," she told me. The group would work until noon, drive back to the kibbutz, make lunch in the kitchen, and promptly conked out.

The experience has never left her mind. "If you consider what it was like in 1948," she said, "and literally watch flowers bloom in a desert over time—I don't know if any nation has paralleled the rise of Israel since 1948." A member of Christians United for Israel, she's one of Israel's strongest supporters in Congress. One Jewish Minnesota Republican has told me of speeches at local Republican Jewish Coalition events where Bachmann has brought cheering audiences to their feet.

When she returned to the States, Michele enrolled at a community college near Anoka. Money was tight. She'd often work three jobs—school bus driver, restaurant hostess, all sorts of things. The following summer she went to Alaska, where she worked for an uncle who lived in the

Aleutian Islands. Alaska's oil boom was just beginning, and geologists scoured the rocks for signs of petroleum. Michele tarred roofs, cleaned fish, washed dishes, and cooked meals. In Alaska she fell into conversation with a geologist who wanted to know her plans. Michele told him she didn't want to go back to community college, and she also didn't have any money. The geologist recommended Winona State University in the southeastern part of Minnesota, near the Mississippi River.

Michele sent away for the catalog, applied, and was accepted. The first time she ever saw Winona State was when she arrived on campus to enroll. Luckily, it was a perfect fit. There she discovered, among other things, the work of theologian Francis Schaeffer, whose *How Should We Then Live?* is a popular Christian interpretation of Western intellectual and cultural history.

Schaeffer was important because he widened the scope of evangelical thought and criticism. Study and interpretation needn't be limited to Scripture, he argued, but should include the whole of Western civilization. "Essentially, his argument is that faith, the Bible—Old and New Testament—has something to do with all of life, in a positive way," Michele said. "He goes through history and he shows how Michelangelo and Da Vinci and great artists were inspired by their faith."

It was at Winona State that Michele began to date Marcus Bachmann. The couple volunteered on Jimmy Carter's 1976 presidential campaign. They handed out flyers in college dorms supporting the Georgia governor and his Minnesotan running mate. When Carter won, Marcus and Michele received an invitation to attend the presidential inauguration. They'd never been to Washington. Michele was on the racquetball court when Marcus told her they could travel to D.C. for $100. At first she resisted. "I said, 'A hundred dollars to go to Washington, D.C.?'" Too much money.

But Marcus was convincing. Before long, they were on their way in a van from Winona with six other students. "It was kind of like the Beverly Hillbillies," she said. "I remember we came over this hill and saw the horizon, and there was the Capitol, and honest to God, tears were coming down my face."

Carter's was the last inauguration to take place on the Capitol's east portico. The day was freezing. What really stood out, though, was all the grub. The young Minnesotans went from ballroom to ballroom, and each location was stocked with huge trays of brownies and deli meats and cheeses. Michele had never seen anything like it. She and Marcus participated in the ancient ritual, known to interns everywhere, of surviving off free food.

The students returned to Minnesota and followed Carter from afar. It soon seemed the apogee of Carter's presidency had been Inauguration Day. "We were *extremely* disappointed," she said. "We were disappointed on almost every level." Stagflation reigned. Carter was feckless on the international front. And on social policy he was awful: Carter's task force on the family couldn't even agree on the definition of their subject. "A three-year-old knows what a family is," Michele said. "And they weren't able to do that. And I thought, Jimmy Carter's supposed to be a born-again Christian. What's going on here?"

The disillusionment was irrevocable. One day while she was in college, Michele took the train from Minneapolis to Winona. She'd brought along a copy of *Burr*, Gore Vidal's fictional portrayal of America's Founders, to pass the time. What she read horrified her. Told from the point of view of Aaron Burr, Vidal's novel makes endless fun of Washington, Jefferson, and Hamilton. At one point the narrator says America's first president had a large rear end. "It was so disgusting to me," Michele said, "talking about how he was waddling or something." She put the book down and looked out the window at the passing landscape. *He's mocking the Founders*, she thought. *That's not who these men were*. Then she thought: *I don't think I'm a Democrat*.

"And at that moment, I became a Republican. I was done."

Michele and Marcus married after graduating from college in 1978. They spent the next year working in Minnesota, Michele at the Buffalo County judge's office, Marcus in social work. Then began the long juggling act of continuing their education while holding jobs and raising kids. The family moved to Tulsa, then Virginia Beach, for graduate school. By the time they wound up in Stillwater, Minnesota, in the late 1980s, the Bachmanns had a law degree from Oral Roberts (Michele), a master's in tax law from William and Mary (Michele), a master's in education and counseling from Regent University (Marcus), and a growing family.

Marcus went on to open two successful Christian counseling clinics. Bachmann worked as a federal tax attorney until the birth of her fourth child. She always had plenty to do. "We taught all of our children to read and write at home before we sent them to school, and we sent our biological children to Christian school," she said.

The Bachmanns also opened their home to teenage girls with eating disorders. The maximum number of kids, biological and nonbiological, they had at one time was nine. There came a moment when "we found ourselves with a seventh grader, a first grader, a four-year-old, a two-year-old, and a nursing newborn," Bachmann said, "and four foster children." There were so many kids in the house the family applied for a group home license.

Bachmann was involved in all aspects of her children's education. In the early 1990s, she joined the board of a Christian-influenced charter school in Stillwater. She left that position in 1993, but remained interested in civic life. She and Marcus were active in the pro-life movement. Curriculum reform, though, was the issue that eventually drove her into politics.

In 1998, in order to secure federal education money, Minnesota adopted a state curriculum called Profile of Learning. "In a nutshell, the Profile of Learning amounted to the bureaucrats writing the lesson plans for the teachers," said Minnesota Republican Allen Quist, whose wife Julie would go on to work in Bachmann's congressional office. "Whoever writes the lesson plans really controls what's being taught." Also, the standards were shockingly low.

The life of the Tea Party: Bachmann at a rally on Capitol Hill, March 31, 2011

How low? One day in the late 1990s, one of Bachmann's foster daughters, then in the eleventh grade, took out her math homework. It was a poster. The assignment was to color it.

Bachmann was shocked. She began to investigate why students were playing with crayons a year before they graduated from high school. Things were worse than she anticipated. Not only were the standards poor, but she regarded the Profile of Learning as tantamount to liberal brainwashing. "What you might call a kind of radical left political indoctrination was coming in that wasn't necessarily reflective of the attitudes, values, and beliefs of parents," she told me.

Bachmann delayed her plans to return to tax law. She wanted to focus on defeating the Profile. She became involved in a group called the Maple River Education Coalition, organized by Quist and others. "What was really impressive about Michele was that she absolutely threw herself into researching this stuff," said activist Karen Effrem. "She spent hundreds if not thousands of hours reading the federal laws, and all of these different contracts, and the standards themselves."

Bachmann and members of Maple River organized a kind of road show. Beginning in December 1998, she criss-crossed Minnesota at her own expense, traveling up to three times a week, urging parents to reject the Profile. Her shtick was part Phil Donahue, part Carrie Nation. "I would go into a gymnasium," Bachmann said, "and by the time the two hours were up, people who'd known nothing about the Profile were ready to grab a pitchfork and say, 'Not with my kid you don't!'"

Audiences loved it. "It was a very positive reaction," Minnesota state senator Dave Thompson said. "She's got a lot of charisma, a lot of personality, and she's very passionate." Bachmann caught the eye of a local GOP official, who suggested in 1999 that she run for the Stillwater school board. That contest is the only election she's ever lost.

In April 2000, as the fight to overturn the Profile of Learning continued, Bachmann attended her local nominating convention for state senate. The incumbent, moderate Republican Gary Laidig, had 28 years' experience. But he was increasingly out of step with the conservative families pouring into the St. Paul suburbs. As the convention began, Bachmann conversed with her fellow activists. Laidig had to go, they said. Someone suggested Bachmann run against him.

She didn't know what to do. She was wearing jeans and tennis shoes and a sweatshirt with a hole in it. She'd had no business leaving the house that morning, she said.

But Bachmann went on stage and delivered a five minute speech on freedom. Then she sat down. "I'm sitting there, and I had to be neutral," former Minnesota state GOP chairman Ron Eibensteiner told me in 2009. "But I'm thinking to myself, boy, would I love to have her run." Laidig gave a speech, and the convention took a vote. Bachmann won a supermajority on the first ballot.

Shocked, Laidig decided to challenge her in a primary. Bachmann won handily. It was no mystery why. "She tells it like it is," Minnesota GOP state chair Tony Sutton told me two years ago. "She doesn't pull any punches. That's why she has such a strong following."

Bachmann won the state senate seat in November 2000. The question was how long she'd be able to keep the office. Redistricting forced her to run against a 10-year

AP / EVAN VUCCI

Democratic incumbent, Jane Krentz, in 2002. A committee chairman, Krentz had the support of environmental and women's groups. The Democrats who controlled the state senate had created the new district with her in mind. During the campaign, Bachmann stressed the Profile of Learning and drew contrasts between her conservatism and Krentz's liberalism. Bachmann won again, 54 percent to Krentz's 46 percent. Minnesota repealed the Profile of Learning the following May.

Bachmann went looking for a new cause. "I see her as an activist who happens to be a legislator," said Tom Prichard of the Minnesota Family Council. "She just pours herself 100 percent-plus into whatever she's engaged in." In late November 2003, when the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples had a legal right to marry, Bachmann proposed a state constitutional amendment limiting marriage to one man and one woman.

"People saw that something was changing in our country," Bachmann said. "For the first time a state supreme court, in Massachusetts, had ordered its legislature to pass a law conforming with the views of those who sat on the court." Bachmann's amendment never passed the legislature. But it did make her more prominent and controversial. Local columnists ridiculed her. There were calls for a boycott of Stillwater businesses. A group of Democratic activists started the "Dump Bachmann" blog. The site became the place where one could find every last Bachmann speech, letter, and article—even pictures of her car.

Things got a little weird. In April 2005, when gay rights activists rallied in front of the state capitol in St. Paul, a local photographer captured Bachmann as she seemed to be peering through some bushes at the protesters. Bachmann and those with her said she was sitting down after standing for awhile in high heels. Around the same time, Bachmann filed a report with the Washington County Sheriff's Office in which she said that two women had accosted her in the ladies' room of a local community center after a meeting on the same-sex marriage amendment. As the anti-Bachmann bloggers began to track her closely, she removed her home address and telephone number from the state senate directory. She requested security protection.

By then, Bachmann was a candidate for federal office. In February 2005, her congressman, Republican Mark Kennedy, had announced he was running for U.S. Senate. Within days, Bachmann said she'd run to replace him. The race for the Sixth Congressional District became one of the closest in the country. Bachmann's Democratic opponent was Patty Wetterling, a nationally recognized spokeswoman for missing and abused children. The two campaigns spent copious sums: $3 million for Wetterling, $2.7 million for Bachmann. The national campaign committees and affiliated groups spent much more.

The Sixth District had been designed for Kennedy, who'd held the seat since 2002. The population is wealthy (median income $68,195), young (median age 34), growing (up 17 percent between 2000 and 2007), and bright red. Republicans have won the district handily in the last two presidential elections. A McCain-Palin rally in Blaine in September 2008 drew an estimated 13,000 people. The race was Bachmann's to lose.

And she didn't lose. Despite a last-minute surge for the Democrat when the Mark Foley scandal broke in September 2006, Bachmann defeated Wetterling 50 percent to 42 percent. She was one of only 13 Republican freshmen elected in 2006. Hers was the smallest freshman GOP class since the House expanded to 435 members in 1911. There was no way that she'd get lost in the crowd.

"Coming from the outside, my view was that Congress was made up of boozing, skirt-chasing slackers," Bachmann told me. That wasn't what she found, for the most part.

A freshman congressman, especially one in the minority, faces a choice. She can be an inside player and keep a low profile while building coalitions and working on legislation. Or she can play outside and use her office as a platform to advocate for her party and ideas. Bachmann chose the latter course.

Representative Steve King of Iowa, a Bachmann ally, remembers when he first noticed the lady from Stillwater. King, then in his third term, was in charge of scheduling after-hours speeches one night in early 2007. Bachmann accepted his invitation to speak to the C-SPAN cameras from the House floor. There was one potential hitch: When King told her what the leadership wanted her to talk about, Bachmann said she didn't know anything about it.

"And I said, 'Well, that really doesn't matter here,'" King joked last week. "And I gave her a sheet of paper with a few sentences on it. When she came back in about 15 minutes, she had become an expert. She streamed it off the top of her head with extreme clarity." Here's someone who's a quick study and extremely intelligent, King thought.

In the summer of 2008, when gas was $4 a gallon, then-minority leader John Boehner led a group of 10 House freshmen to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Bachmann was among them. At the end of the trip the group had dinner in Fairbanks with Alaska's governor, Sarah Palin. "It was wonderful to be able to meet her before all of the media attention and just get to know her on that basis," Bachmann said. "So we had a wonderful meeting with her, and then I met her again when she came to Minnesota as a vice presidential candidate at the convention." Palin, who campaigned for Bachmann in 2010, remains a friend.

The two women are compared constantly. Both have five children, both are Christians, both were drawn into politics through their children's education, and both are Republicans whom Democrats love to hate.

But there are also some differences. Whereas Palin makes emotional and cultural appeals to her supporters, Bachmann formulates an argument. She talks like a litigating attorney, and her speeches, op-eds, and interviews are littered with references to books and articles. Not all of her references are conservative. During our recent interview, Bachmann cited Lawrence Wright's history of al Qaeda, *The Looming Tower* ("I love that book!"), to illustrate a point about the rise of radical Islam.

What unites Bachmann and Palin, above all, is the contempt with which they are treated by liberals. "I'm just mocked and marginalized, Sarah Palin is mocked and marginalized," Bachmann told me. "If you are unashamed and vocal about your position as a conservative, that's what happens. That's what happened to Reagan, that's what happened to Newt Gingrich, that's what happens to anyone who's not afraid to be a conservative. It's part of the job."

The closest Bachmann has come to marginalization—and defeat—was on October 17, 2008, when she appeared on *Hardball with Chris Matthews* as a surrogate for the McCain-Palin campaign. The topic was Barack Obama's associations with ex-Weatherman Bill Ayers and Reverend Jeremiah Wright. In the course of the interview, Bachmann said she was "very concerned" that Obama "may have anti-American views." Then, after minutes of baiting by Matthews, Bachmann said, "I wish the American media would take a great look at the views of people in Congress and find out, are they pro-America or anti-America?"

One immediately sensed that Bachmann was in trouble. Her DFL opponent in 2008, former Blaine mayor Elwyn Tinklenberg, received $1.5 million in donations after the *Hardball* interview went viral on liberal websites. The Democrats unloaded more than $1 million in television ads in Bachmann's district. The influx of money and energy worried Minnesota Republicans. "You're always concerned when a bunch of money comes from out of state," Tony Sutton said. Bachmann barely survived. She beat Tinklenberg 46 percent to 43 percent, running seven points behind McCain.

The *Hardball* incident was a classic example of the risks inherent in the outside game. The more prominent you are as a political figure, the more likely you are to make gaffes or statements that offend the media's sensibilities. Even Bachmann's greatest fans would admit that sometimes her mouth runs ahead of her internal censor. She's said that Iran had a secret plan to partition Iraq. She's used Michael Barone's phrase "gangster government" to describe the Obama administration.

She gave a speech where she said that, under the Democrats' health care reforms, "if you are a grandmother with Parkinson's or a child with cerebral palsy, watch out." She gave another speech where she said, "What we have to today is make a covenant, slit our wrists, be blood brothers" so the Democrats' plans do not pass Congress. More recently, in an interview on *Fox News Sunday*, she quoted a Libyan official who falsely claimed that NATO airstrikes had killed 30,000 civilians in his country. None of these statements, suffice it to say, helps Bachmann expand her political base.

But they are not necessarily a major impediment to the GOP nomination. Even when she goes over the top, the Minnesota congresswoman is eerily in tune with the grassroots. And the reason she's so well situated is simple: Michele Bachmann was Tea Party before Tea Party was cool.

In 2009, soon after he came into office, President Obama went to Capitol Hill to meet with the House Republican conference. The session was closed to the press. Obama tried to convince Republicans to support his $1 trillion stimulus bill. Bachmann sat there skeptical. The president took only a few questions. Bachmann was startled by one of his answers. "He said that he would prefer to pass his agenda and be a one-term president rather than *not* pass his agenda and have two terms," she told me. "Which means he is committed to his ideology."

The stimulus passed without a single Republican vote. "That was one of our finest hours," Bachmann said. What happened next is well documented: a large, spontaneous uprising against government bailouts, debt, taxes, and Obamacare. The Tea Party was beginning. The movement was populated with people like Michele Bachmann. "They see that Obama just seems to be *completely* clueless," Bachmann said. "And everything he's done has turned to dust. He has the opposite of a Midas Touch."

What no one anticipated was a revolution in the character of the conservative movement. Social and economic conservatives had been distinct groups within the Republican party for decades. They were often at odds. But the Tea Party fused economic and social conservatism in a novel way. Most Tea Partiers focus on the looming insolvency of the United States, but they also hold traditional positions on social issues.

The kind of normative politics that's long existed in the social conservative movement, where voters take their positions from a fixed moral code, is now being applied to government spending and taxation. "You cannot separate the fiscal issues from the moral issues," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

The fight over health care is important to conservatives for this reason: How America provides health insurance isn't only a question of finance. To the extent that health care law affects how one lives, and determines which behaviors government legitimizes through subsidy, it too is a question of morality. And when the Tea Party arrived at the crossroads of economic and social conservatism, Michele Bachmann was there waiting.

On the last Thursday of October 2009, the House Democrats unveiled their health care bill. The House Republicans met to discuss it. The message from leadership was that the bill was going to pass. There was nothing Republicans could do to stop it. Several members stood up and said the GOP couldn't simply accept defeat. Yet the meeting adjourned without resolution. Most congressmen left for the weekend.

Rep. Steve King had been out pheasant hunting the week before with decorated war hero Colonel Bud Day. They'd talked about health care. Day urged King to call a rally outside the Capitol building. Jam the Capitol, Day said. Surround it. If you do that, he went on, the Democrats won't be able to pass the bill.

King related this conversation to Bachmann as they walked out of the Capitol after the meeting. Bachmann looked at King and asked, Can we do that? King said he couldn't see why not. Let's do it, Bachmann said. "We spent the weekend putting that together," King explained, "sending out emails and making phone calls and getting the talk radio people to light it up." The rally was held the following Thursday, November 5. Thousands of Tea Partiers showed up. "That's when it was real clear," King said, "that Michele Bachmann had the instincts, charisma, and ability to move people."

Bachmann's activism had found a new purpose: stopping the president. The contest over Barack Obama's policies was the Profile of Learning controversy writ large. King and Bachmann organized another rally for March 20, 2010, when Congress passed Obamacare.

This was the moment Bachmann began thinking of running for president. "I knew that whoever our nominee is, they have to be committed to the repeal of Obamacare," she said. "Because that is the foundation stone that will ultimately give us socialized medicine." The repeal of any law is difficult; the repeal of Obamacare requires the courage to fight the status quo in both parties.

Michele and Marcus discussed a possible presidential bid. Their youngest child would be off to college after the spring of 2011. And Bachmann continued to be disappointed in the GOP message. "I felt that we could do better to reflect the pulse of the people," she said. Why not take this opportunity? Obama was looking more and more like Jimmy Carter. Michele remembered standing in her kitchen way back in 1979, fixated on the televised images of the Ayatollah Khomeini being welcomed into Tehran. The lack of American leadership then was not so unlike what's happening in the Middle East today. "As bad as the economy is," she said, "my concerns are the greatest on the foreign policy front."

Bachmann supported the war in Iraq and wants to finish the job in Afghanistan. But she opposes Obama's action in Libya. "Not only did he take his eyes off the real issue in the room, which is Iran with a nuclear weapon, he's created an even worse problem in Libya," she said.

She also dislikes the president's energy policy. "We've got so much," she said. "And here you've got Denmark trying to claim ownership" of territory in the oil-rich Arctic. "Denmark?" She waved her hand dismissively. "Get out of here, you pipsqueak! This is ours! We should be drilling everywhere for oil, and natural gas, and shale, and all of it. Do every bit of it."

The extent of Bachmann's disagreements with the president propelled her nascent candidacy. She saw a field divided between establishment types lacking a connection to the Tea Party and gadflies without much potential. And all of them were men. The departure of Mike Huckabee from the race cleared the way for Bachmann in her native Iowa. Many of Huckabee's former staff joined her team. Bachmann was encouraged by the response to hints she might run for president. Momentum was building. It would soon be time to make an announcement.

A talented politician uses television appearances to make news. When Bachmann walked onstage at the CNN debate in Goffstown on June 13, she had a plan. The stage was made of shiny metal, and surrounded by huge electronic screens filled with bright and endlessly changing graphics. The moderator, John King, asked each candidate to deliver a short introduction. Then the questions began. The first topic was economics. What would each candidate do to create jobs and growth?

Herman Cain answered first. Then Rick Santorum, then Tim Pawlenty, then Mitt Romney, then Newt Gingrich. Finally it was Bachmann's turn.

"Before I fully answer that," she said, "I just want to make an announcement here for you, John, on CNN tonight."

Her eyes lit up.

"I filed today my paperwork to seek the office of the presidency of the United States," she said. "And I'll very soon be making my formal announcement. So I wanted you to be the first to know."

Applause broke out. Bachmann beamed. The other candidates smiled nervously. And grassroots conservatives across America understood: The queen of the Tea Party had arrived. ♦

Broken Families, Broken Economy

The real obstacle to growth

By Mitch Pearlstein

Don't look now, but the fiscal mountain blocking our path is rockier than usually advertised. Why? Because even if House Budget chairman Paul Ryan prevails on every contentious detail of his long-term plan for prosperity, family fragmentation—more severe in the United States than in any other industrialized nation—will make it more difficult than generally assumed to balance our books.

Very high rates of family breakdown, as it used to be known, are subtracting from what many American students learn in school and so holding them back economically. That harms the country by making millions of citizens less competitive than they should be in the worldwide marketplace—which, in turn, is dividing a nation that has never viewed itself as segmented by class. Governments, already stretched, are expected to offer remedies while social cohesion frays and increasing numbers of men and women, especially in the lower half of the income scale, grow more and more discouraged or angry.

It's easy to imagine, for instance, millions becoming less accepting than in the past of top CEOs' making hundreds of times more money than they do. Conservatives' attempts to debunk, say, tax increases on the rich as reflecting "class envy" and "class warfare" may be less effective than they have been till now.

The sheer numbers are staggering. In round terms, about 40 percent of all births in the United States are out of wedlock. That figure for the entire population conceals wide variation: Thirty percent of white children, 50 percent of Hispanic children, and 70 percent of African-American children are born to unmarried parents. As for divorce, 40 percent or more of first marriages break up, with the odds increasing to about 50 percent for second and subsequent marriages. How could rates like these *not* be a major drag on the country?

The linkages between family collapse and various forms of social failure were established decades ago. (A fine roundup of solid social science is *The Case for Marriage*, by Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher.) Reams of sophisticated research have documented what everyday experience confirms: that family fragmentation damages enormous numbers of boys and girls. Not all children in tough family situations do poorly, but more than enough do. "It is very hard," two sober scholars concluded in a 2010 Educational Testing Service report, "to imagine progress resuming in reducing the education attainment and achievement gap without turning these family trends around." The very idea, they said, of a "substitute for the institution [of marriage] for raising children is almost unthinkable."

Others have developed ways of measuring the most obvious economic and social effects of family fragmentation. Perhaps the most elementary is to calculate how much money government spends to keep single mothers and their children out of dire poverty. In 2008, Georgia College & State University economist Benjamin Scafidi calculated that family fragmentation cost U.S. taxpayers $112 billion annually. And Scafidi purposely *left out* some quite substantial costs:

- The study considered only female-headed households, although male-headed households represent about one-sixth of single-parent homes.
- Scafidi disregarded a number of major government programs, notably the Earned Income Tax Credit, insofar as "existing data" didn't allow his team to "quantify them with confidence."
- He disregarded the not-trivial sums public schools wind up spending on social problems tied to out-of-wedlock births and divorce.
- He did not attempt to monetize the human and social capital that stably married parents provide their children, though the increase in young people's well-being reduces the likelihood of their requiring pricey governmental

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services when they repeat grades, burden the juvenile-justice and child-protective systems, and so on.

■ Scafidi assumed no benign effects of marriage on fathers' earning power, although it is well established that stable marriages tend to increase men's earnings while decreasing the likelihood of their committing crimes and being incarcerated.

■ Scafidi assumed that married households avail themselves of governmental services to which they are entitled at the same rate as single-mother households, though in fact lower-income married couples are only about half as likely as single mothers to take advantage of such benefits.

■ Scafidi disregarded the Medicare expenses associated with unmarried adults and the elderly even though, as he noted, "high rates of divorce and failure to marry mean that many more Americans enter late middle-age (and beyond) without a spouse to help them manage chronic illnesses, or to help care for them if they become disabled."

Like a good academic, Scafidi felt compelled to be methodologically cautious; perhaps overly so. But the rest of us are free to observe that the actual cost is considerably above $112 billion a year.

A second way of estimating costs is to figure out how much lower the poverty level would be if out-of-wedlock birth rates and divorce rates were lower. In 2009, Brookings scholars Ron Haskins and Isabel Sawhill wrote that if the "United States had the same proportion of children living in single-parent families as in 1970, all else equal, today's poverty rate would be roughly one-quarter lower than it is." Even more dramatically, Sawhill and another colleague earlier wrote that if family structure had not changed between 1960 and 1998, the poverty rate for black children in the latter year would have been 28.4 percent instead of 45.6 percent.

A third approach reflects the work of several econometricians on the connections between academic achievement and economic growth. In several invaluable studies, economist Eric Hanushek demonstrated the vital importance of a nation's competence in mathematics and science for its economic success. The quality of learning in these two subjects—which is significantly depressed by family fragmentation—is best measured by standardized tests that have been administered internationally since the 1970s.

"There is now considerable evidence," Hanushek wrote, "that cognitive skills measured by test scores are directly related to individual earnings, productivity, and economic growth. A variety of researchers document that the earnings advantages to higher achievement on standardized tests are quite substantial." But if the relationship between cognitive skills and individual productivity and incomes is strong, the relationship between labor force quality and economic growth for nations as a whole is perhaps even stronger. A more skilled society may generate more invention, enable companies to introduce improved production methods, and lead to faster introduction of new technologies. And while these patterns hold for developed and developing nations alike, Hanushek wrote, enhanced cognitive skills have their "greatest positive economic impact" in nations with the most open economies—like the United States.

Here it is natural to wonder why the U.S. economy remains dominant when our students do so poorly in math and science. Hanushek noted that many factors determine a nation's economic vitality. In our case, the openness and fluidity of markets, including a comparative lack of governmental intrusion, may be decisive. But in a 2002 essay, Hanushek warned that a day of reckoning was approaching. The expansion of education in the United States, he argued, outpaced that of the rest of the world in the 20th century. We opened secondary schools to all our citizens and enlarged higher education by further developing land-grant universities, adopting the GI Bill, and funding grants and loans to students. The U.S. labor force came to be better educated—despite the lesser achievement of our high school graduates—than that of most other countries. In other words, Hanushek argued that "more schooling with less learning each year" had yielded more human capital than found in nations with fewer years of schooling but more learning in each of those years. That approach, however, "appears on the verge of reaching its limits."

Even if it is not possible to calculate the precise degree to which educational shortcomings burden our economy, the sequence is inexorable: Family breakdown weakens educational performance, which in turn weakens economic performance.

Now, it might still be the case that the U.S. economy has enough going for it that high family fragmentation is not yet drastically damaging. But we can already observe the fallout in individual cases, as men and women who grew up in fractured families and performed poorly at school simply lack the tools to succeed in an economy that continues to demand strong cognitive and other skills—with similarly constrained fates awaiting disproportionate numbers of their own children and grandchildren.

What might this portend for our social and political fabric? Clearly nothing good, as family breakdown can only deepen social cleavages in un-American ways. It's hard to ignore the fact that from 1980 to 2005, according to one calculation, more than 80 percent of the increase in Americans' income was enjoyed by the top 1 percent of earners. Meanwhile, there is now less upward mobility in the United States than in countries like Canada, France, and Germany. Recent data have led Sawhill, the Brookings scholar and former Clinton administration economist, to

underline three core points: Income in the United States is less equally distributed than it was several decades ago; income is more closely correlated with education; and it's more closely correlated with family structure.

Americans don't like to think of individuals, cohorts, or generations locked into a fixed social or economic condition. But with family fragmentation making it hard for people to achieve the higher educational level demanded by worldwide changes, debates about class are becoming difficult to avoid.

Among the few who have not shied away is the writer Kay Hymowitz. In *Marriage and Caste in America: Separate and Unequal Families in a Post-Marital Age*, she describes "poor or working-class single mothers with little education having children who will grow up to be low-income single mothers and fathers with little education who will have children who will become low-income single parents—and so forth." That perverse cycle is producing what Hymowitz calls "a self-perpetuating single-mother proletariat." She asks, "Not exactly what America should look like, is it?"

Not that high nonmarital birth rates and high divorce rates are exclusively a low-income phenomenon. Bradford Wilcox leads the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia and Elizabeth Marquardt is director of the Center for Marriage and Families at the Institute for American Values. Their 2010 study describes growing family fragmentation among the "moderately educated" middle, the 58 percent of the adult population who have graduated from high school but don't have four-year college degrees. Today, the marital patterns of the men and women in this group increasingly resemble those of the least educated. As Wilcox and Marquardt report:

■ In the early 1980s, only 2 percent of births to mothers with four-year college degrees were outside of marriage. For moderately educated mothers the figure was 13 percent, and for mothers who didn't finish high school it was 33 percent. The recent figures on out-of-wedlock births for these three educational groups are much higher: 6 percent, 44 percent, and 54 percent respectively.

■ Between the 1970s and the 2000s, the percentage of 14-year-old girls with highly educated mothers who lived with both parents was stable, at 80 to 81 percent. The percentage of 14-year-old girls with moderately educated mothers who lived with both parents fell markedly, from 74 to 58 percent, while the corresponding number for girls with the least-educated mothers fell, but less sharply, from 65 to 52 percent.

Wilcox and Marquardt sum up: "The family lives of today's moderately educated Americans increasingly resemble those of high-school dropouts, too often burdened by financial stress, partner conflict, single parenting, and troubled children." Moderately educated Americans are decreasingly likely to embrace "bourgeois values and virtues" such as delayed gratification, temperance, and an emphasis on education—the "sine qua nons of personal and marital success in the contemporary United States." Most highly educated Americans, by contrast, still "adhere devoutly" to the sequence education, work, marriage, and only then childbearing, thus maximizing their chances of "making good on the American dream and obtaining a successful family life."

What, then, is the conservative remedy for all of this? Free-market principles, of course, are sound and fitting whenever economic hurdles are to be jumped. And a cultural and religious revival would be welcome, if hard to summon up. But what else might reverse the family bleeding? Here is just one idea.

Under normal circumstances, boys grow up and marry the women who become the mothers of their children. If, however, they reach adulthood unable to hold a job, stay sober, or keep out of jail, they quickly find that desirable women have little interest in hitching themselves to them. In communities where marriage is vanishing, it cannot be revived unless millions of boys (and girls) get their lives in decent order. Aimless or felonious men are not the only reason for the decline of marriage, but they are a sizable one.

Many of these young men grew up without their fathers and suffered what some call "father wounds." Would it not make sense for such boys to attend schools properly described as "paternalistic"? These would be tough-loving places, like the celebrated (but still too few) KIPP Academies, with their Knowledge Is Power Program. Would it not also make sense to allow many more boys and girls to attend religious and other private schools, which have their "biggest impact," according to Harvard's Paul Peterson, by keeping minority kids in "an educational environment that sustains them through graduation"?

That idea of "sustenance" deserves pondering. Minor wounds usually heal fast. Deep ones take longer. Children scarred by father wounds and other family absences and disruptions, very much including missing mothers, need *sustenance* of the most personal and vital kind. Such sustenance can be provided by some kinds of schools. I once asked a nun, the principal of a Catholic elementary school, what her school's mission was. As best I remember, her words were, "To manifest God's love to every child." As educational mission statements go, this is one of the briefest yet meatiest ever devised. Schools with this purpose might powerfully nourish the boys and girls—fathers and mothers in training—who are most in need of food.

One more reason for real school choice, then, is to prevent a divided and declining postmarital America from wrecking Paul Ryan's plan to rekindle our prosperity. ♦

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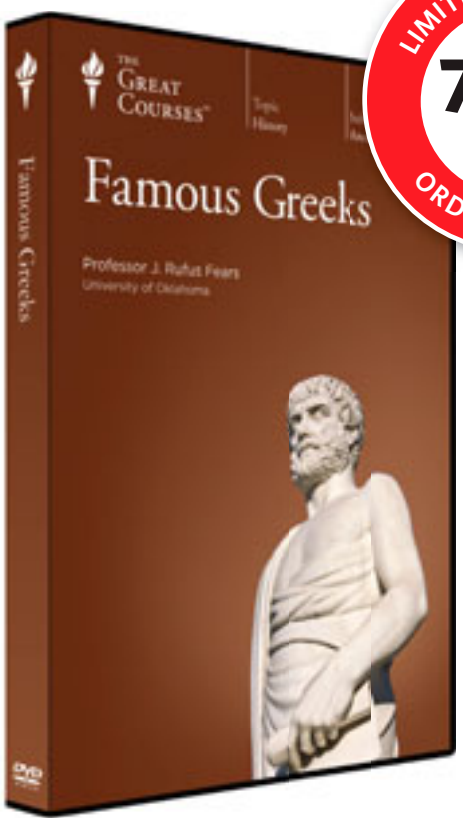

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Billy Graham, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Bill Clinton at the National Prayer Breakfast, ca. 1994

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God and Man and Politics

A Christian perspective on the public square.

BY PETER BERKOWITZ

It is commonly supposed that liberal democracy gives rise to a dangerous and insuperable conflict between faith and politics. Many progressives, even as they regard democracy as an all-embracing belief system, contend that to respect the separation of church and state, it is necessary to banish not merely religion but also religiously inspired language, thought, and conduct from politics. Libertarian conservatives often adopt an adversarial stance toward religious faith because they identify it with a determination to expand government by authorizing it to implement a divinely sanctioned moral order. And not a few religious conservatives, by equating liberty with libertinism and equality with leveling, provide support for the view that liberal democracy and religious faith can at best enjoy a cold peace.

The City of Man
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Our universities reinforce these common opinions. The liberalism of John Rawls—which has long dominated in philosophy departments, the theory wing of political science departments, and law schools—regards religious opinions as unwelcome in the public sphere because they rest on assumptions that not all citizens share. In the academy, Rawlsian liberalism's most popular competitors, postmodernism and multiculturalism, also

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encourage the exclusion of religion from public life. Postmodernism purports to authoritatively and absolutely discredit all absolutes, foremost among them religious faith. Multiculturalism officially proclaims respect for all cultures but, in practice, treats Western civilization (and within it, Christianity) as uniquely corrupt and corrupting.

Add to all this the failure of our universities to make study of the fundamentals and history of religion an essential part of liberal education, and it is small wonder that the conviction that liberal democracy and religious faith must adopt an adversarial stance toward each other is especially strong among the educationally well-credentialed.

Contrary to the common conviction, Michael Gerson and Peter Wehner show in this succinct, measured, and incisive volume that Christian faith is compatible with, indeed can exemplify, the liberal and democratic spirit. What's more, Gerson and Wehner suggest—both by their supple argument and generous tone—that Christian faith, when true to its sacred sources, may provide indispensable support for liberal democracy.

The City of Man is part of the Moody Cultural Renewal series, which "brings biblical thought to bear on matters of contemporary concern." One of the general editors of the series, Timothy Keller, senior pastor at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York and bestselling author of *The Reason for God*, observes in the foreword that "in each society, time, and place, the form of political involvement has to be worked out differently, with the utmost faithfulness to the Scripture, but also the greatest sensitivity to culture, time, and place." Keller, as well as Gerson and Wehner, emphasize that the political moment is a challenging one for Christians: Progressive mainline Protestant churches are declining, conservative evangelical churches are growing, secularism remains on the rise, the leaders of the religious right of the 1970s and '80s are fading from the scene, and conservatism is enjoying a popular renewal in significant measure in response to President Obama's transformative domestic agenda.

The authors are experienced public officials and serious thinkers. Gerson, a former policy adviser and speechwriter to President George W. Bush, writes a syndicated column; Wehner, former deputy assistant to President Bush and director of the White House Office of Strategic Initiatives, is a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, prolific blogger, and regular contributor to magazines and newspapers.

Gerson and Wehner are also evangelical Christians, and they have written *The City of Man* to address the challenges that conservative Christians, in particular, face in fulfilling both their religious obligations and civic duty. But their analysis will be of interest to all who wish to understand the place of religion in a free society.

The authors bring to their task a keen appreciation of its complexity. They know that faith is personal but that political theology—religious teachings about political life—has public consequences. To take two opposing cases: Whereas German Christians in the 1930s were encouraged by their faith and some religious leaders to accommodate Nazism, in the 1950s and '60s African-American and mainline Christian churches inspired the overturning of discriminatory laws. The authors know that men and women of faith are prone to conflicting mistakes: Some invoke religious authority for partisan ends and enlist it on behalf of schemes of oppression while others cover themselves in religious authority to justify turning away from political life and to ignore grave affronts to human dignity. And the authors know that the Bible is multifarious and appears contradictory, not least in its admonitions both to reform civic life *and* withdraw from politics.

Gerson and Wehner follow Saint Augustine, who taught that the tension between faith and politics is real—as is the connection between them. The City of God should be the object of man's highest hopes, according to Augustine, but while dwelling in the fallen and flawed City of Man, human beings should pursue justice, of which politics and government are a necessary part, in light of man's ultimate ends but also in awareness of the deficiencies of human nature.

Gerson and Wehner offer five propositions or precepts to guide the harmonization of politics and religious faith in a free society. First, the state's powers and responsibilities, which begin with protecting citizens, differ from the moral obligations of individuals and, therefore, political morality differs from individual morality. Second, and similarly, the duties of the church, which has responsibility for a diverse community of believers, differ from those of individual Christians. Third, while Scripture sheds light on the spirit in which politics should be practiced and on the principles that should guide social life, it does not articulate a plan for good government, issue public policy prescriptions, or prescribe the prudential steps necessary to achieve even those ends on which Christians tend to agree. Fourth, the obligations of a Christian citizen are relative to the regime under which he or she lives: In a liberal democracy, which respects rights and is grounded in the consent of the governed, citizens are generally obliged to respect the law even where it is necessary to change particular policies and enactments. In an authoritarian or totalitarian state, which "engages in acts that are intrinsically evil," it may become necessary to resist the law and rise up against the state. And fifth, it is a mistake to suppose that one can read God's will in earthly events.

Such considerations have not always governed Christians in their role as citizens, and the authors are acutely aware that Christian involvement in American politics over the past 40 years has left much to be desired, religiously as well as politically. At the same time, Gerson and Wehner show sympathy for the religious right's original grievances arising, in the 1970s, out of the progressive elite's aggressive use of public policy to impose their views on the country. They also credit the religious right with reintroducing into public debate the importance of character, discipline, and authority. And they stress the diversity of strands within the evangelical movement—

pointing out, for example, that as early as 1973 the Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern called for assisting the poor and oppressed and overcoming racism. But Gerson and Wehner firmly reject the religious right's "narrow agenda," its tone, at once "apocalyptic, off-putting, and counterproductive," and its theologically misguided determination to view America as a Christian nation rather than as a nation "informed by a Jewish and Christian understanding of human nature" and, therefore, "designed to be a nation where all faiths are welcomed, not one where one faith is favored."

Christian conservatives' political views, though, have been "changing and maturing." They remain firmly set against abortion, and opposition to same-sex marriage is strong, even as a new attitude of tolerance toward gay marriage is emerging. Other issues, moreover, are coming to the fore: These include protection of the environment, defense of religious freedom and relief of suffering around the world, and, not least, reversal of the Obama administration's spending increases and expansion of the federal government, which Christian conservatives see as a threat to prosperity and freedom. At the same time, newer leaders such as Rick Warren, the bestselling author and senior pastor of Saddleback Church in southern California, have brought a less partisan and more positive tone to public debate.

The moment is ripe, Gerson and Wehner argue, to build on these developments and craft a new approach. In foreign affairs, Christians should embrace that form of American exceptionalism that sees the U.S. role in the world as a "calling, rooted in the philosophy of the founding, to defend and exemplify" the principles of human freedom and equality. Whereas philosophical schools (Rawlsians, postmodernists, multiculturalists) tie themselves in knots to coherently justify the moral premises of liberal democracy, their defense, argue Gerson and Wehner, should come readily to those who have learned from the Bible "that men and women are created equal in worth, in the image of God."

In addition, Christians should develop a well-rounded view of the state, one that recognizes the reality of power and respects the ends to which power is properly directed and by which it is rightly limited. The first end is the establishment of order, grounded in the rule of law and devoted to securing basic rights. Order must be supplemented by a dedication to justice which, the authors emphasize, as a result of Jewish and Christian teaching we understand as centrally concerned with "caring for the weak, the disadvantaged, and the oppressed." Both order and justice depend on virtue. Indeed, the authors agree with James Madison's contention (in *Federalist* 55) that self-government, more than any other form, depends on citizens' virtue. And they reaffirm the opinion, generally held by the Founders, that religion, which must remain independent of the state, is vital to the inculcation of the virtue on which self-government depends.

Pope Paul VI, Lyndon Johnson, 1967

GAMMA-KEYSTONE / GETTY IMAGES

Finally, Gerson and Wehner argue that, despite the biblical strictures about the snares of wealth, Christians today have good reasons to defend capitalism. Through the unrivaled economic growth it generates, capitalism has created large middle classes, lifted countless people out of poverty, unleashed great scientific and technological advances, and fostered a climate friendly to freedom in which individuals learn to pursue their interests and take responsibility for their lives. They emphasize the vital importance, amidst capitalism's constant churn and change, of social safety nets and market regulation, while stressing that the need for them does not count as an argument against capitalism but rather for prudence in the enactment of necessary and just laws.

Prudence, the authors note, must also govern political rhetoric. In entering the public square of a free society, and in making their case to fellow citizens, many of whom will not share their religious beliefs, Christians should emulate two heroes of freedom, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Their "lives were committed to reversing two great sins in American history, slavery and segregation," write Gerson and Wehner. Both "used religious symbolism and biblical language to state their case

even as they spoke in a style and parlance that resonated with all people, not just people of faith."

The authors' new approach to faith and politics is a model of moderation in the service of self-government. It depends on a recovery of the venerable teaching of St. Augustine and its thoughtful application to today's circumstances. And it performs the enlightening service of demonstrating that Christians can not only accommodate the principles of liberal democracy without compromising their faith, but that their faith, well understood, prepares them to be among the most subtle and effective guardians of liberty and democracy. ♦

B&A

Founding Partners

The Adams love affair, in word and deed.

BY EDWARD ACHORN

Before her death in 1802, Martha Washington took care to burn all but two of the letters she had exchanged with her husband, the greatest man in American history. That act deprived George Washington's critics of unguarded moments to be used as raw material for casting his actions in the worst possible light—a cottage industry to this day—but it robbed the rest of us of priceless insights into the private life and personal reflections of this now eternally aloof and godlike figure.

So we are forever fortunate that a similar fate did *not* befall the correspondence of John and Abigail Adams, which Joseph J. Ellis aptly calls "a treasure-trove of unexpected intimacy and candor, more revealing than any other correspondence between any prominent American husband and wife in American history." Their 1,016 surviving letters to each other constitute a marvelously literate, loving, and detailed look into their lives and times—fodder for Adams haters, to be sure, since John all too often stewed over his prejudices and wounded pride, but a nonetheless fascinating look into two compelling people and the world-shaking events they hastened.

First Family
Abigail and John Adams
by Joseph J. Ellis
Knopf, 320 pp., $27.95

In an age obsessed with private lives, and one that increasingly recognizes women's crucial influence on history, these letters have precipitated a kind of mania for John and Abigail in recent years. There was David McCullough's luminous biography of John Adams and the entertaining HBO series it spawned. There have been other relatively new and excellent biographies and studies of John (James Grant's *John Adams: Party of One* and C. Bradley Thompson's *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty*) and Abigail (*Abigail Adams* by Woody Holton and *Dearest Friend* by Lynne Withey) as well as a rich collection of their letters, *My Dearest Friend*, published by Belknap Press. Ellis contributed his own classic study, *Passionate Sage*, which looked at John Adams's life through the prism of his declining years.

Is there any point, then, in Ellis's adding to the pile? There is, because Ellis is a beautiful writer, knows his material intimately, and tells a story with sensitivity, balance, and insight. As much as I have read about these two, I came away from this account feeling I know them better. *First Family* follows the two Adamses from their initial glimpse of each other (1759) in the stuffy parlor of Abigail's father, the Rev. William Smith, in Weymouth, Massachusetts. Abigail was 14 years old and John 24. John was short, even for his time, and already getting bald and round, while Abigail was on the scrawny side, with dark brown hair and brown eyes.

"Neither one of them, at first glance," Ellis notes, "had the obvious glow of greatness." What they did have were sharp tongues and minds, and the desire to use them. From the start, John loved that Abigail was (his word) "saucy." And Abigail, writes Ellis, "despite the lack of any formal education, could match John with a pen, which was saying quite a lot, since he proved to be one of the master letter writers in an age not lacking in serious contenders."

Of course, the often-exhausting act of writing forces the writer to wrestle ideas to the ground before he or she can express them clearly, exercise that greatly sharpens the mind. Indeed, Abigail was in some ways John's superior, something that remained apparent during their 54-year marriage.

> Together with his gargantuan ambitions and overlapping vanities, he brought massive insecurities to the relationship: a nervous, excitable, at times irritable temperament rooted not so much in self-doubt—he was completely confident of his abilities—but rather uncertainty that the world would allow him to display his talents.

John was determined never to be "a base weed and ignoble shrub." Abigail was his "ballast," steadying him, reassuring him, providing him sage political advice. It is a keen historical irony that we owe the intimate record of this extraordinary marriage to the fact that the two were forced to be apart for most of John's 27 years of public service—from 1774, when he went off to serve in the Continental Congress, to 1801, when he returned to Quincy after a storm-tossed term as president. In what Ellis calls the "paradox of proximity," we know less about John and Abigail

Edward Achorn, deputy editor of the editorial pages at the Providence Journal*, is the author of* Fifty-nine in '84: Old Hoss Radbourn, Barehanded Baseball and the Greatest Season a Pitcher Ever Had.

the closer they are to each other—and much more about them, through their letters, when they are distant, lonely, and driven to write.

These letters often crossed in the mail, so it was difficult for John and Abigail to respond to one another. Eighteenth-century letters "were less an ongoing conversation than a time-bound exchange of ruminations, more thoughtful and self-consciously composed than our Internet communications, but also less interactive," Ellis writes. He powerfully conveys Abigail's feelings of loneliness and betrayal, as John pursues his ambitions as a European diplomat for revolutionary America while she fights to maintain the family home in Braintree. Abigail sinks into depression and despair, "sitting in my solitary chamber, the representative of the lonely love," describing her fate as her "cruel destiny." She agonizes over whether she is the partner who loves and cares more, and whether John no longer feels what he once did—an all-too-common torment in a marriage, never mind one separated by an ocean and widespread war in an age of dangerous travel and poor communications.

Abigail's fierce devotion to John, in the face of all this, is one of the stirring aspects of the letters and the marriage. When a cabal forms against John in Congress, she brands Benjamin Franklin a "False, insinuating, dissembling wretch" for his role in it. And as much as she is certain that John is in the right, she explains to a member of Congress: "Yet, it wounds me, sir. When he is wounded, I bleed."

For his part, John deeply admired Abigail and her letters for the rest of his life: "They give me more entertainment than all the speeches I hear," he wrote, when he served as Washington's vice president and suffered the acute agony of presiding silently over Senate windbags. "There is more good Thoughts, fine strokes and Mother Wit in them than I hear in a whole Week." And after Abigail's death, John confessed to his son—and later president—John Quincy Adams that he no longer worried about dying: "The bitterness of death is past. The grim spider so terrible to human nature has no sting left for me." ♦

B&A

The Reign Explained

An argument for Britain's constitutional monarchy.

BY JAMES KIRCHICK

In the middle of May, Queen Elizabeth arrived in Ireland, the first British monarch to do so since the Emerald Isle became a republic in 1922. Royal visits tend to be symbolic affairs—with the sovereign visiting health clinics, greeting well-wishers, laying wreaths at war memorials—and this one featured all the typical fare. Yet the queen's journey to Ireland, a onetime component of the United Kingdom, whose six northern counties are still part of the U.K. and the cause of much violence in recent decades, was redolent of something more than symbolism. At a banquet in Dublin, she articulated a message of unity in the way that only a monarch—who, by virtue of her station, sits above the give-and-take of everyday politics—can do: "To all those who have suffered as a consequence of our troubled past," she said, "I extend my sincere thoughts and deep sympathy. With the benefit of historical hindsight, we can all see things which we would wish had been done differently, or not at all."

Monarchy Matters
by Peter Whittle
Social Affairs Unit, 91 pp., $52.10

Spoken by Elizabeth II, these words were probably more meaningful to the Irish than had they come from, say, David Cameron. For as even the most strident of Irish republicans could attest, the queen's trip was more than a series of ribbon-cuttings and photo ops. Even Gerry Adams, leader of the Irish Republican Army's political arm, Sinn Féin, told the BBC that the visit of the British sovereign was "sincere . . . a page in a book, and we need to write the next page and the next page and keep the process moving on." Not long ago, of course, the BBC would have been prevented from airing Adams's voice. That Gerry Adams would praise the British queen in an interview with the BBC is a symbol not only of how less troublesome "the Troubles" have become since the Good Friday Agreement, but also of the queen's unique and unparalleled role as Great Britain's head of state.

Several weeks before her visit to Ireland, Elizabeth was occupied with another royal event: the wedding of Prince William to his longtime girlfriend, Kate Middleton. Given the pomp and circumstance surrounding the ceremony, it provided republicans with easy fodder to make their case against the Windsors in particular and constitutional monarchy in general. How could a modern, racially diverse, 21st-century democracy countenance such an old-fashioned, inherently aristocratic, institution? Well, as an estimated two billion television viewers worldwide attest, whatever practical power these arguments possess has little effect: People are fascinated by royalty, and the British value their constitutional monarchy—even as celebrations might have been dampened by the biting austerity measures instituted by the Tory/Liberal Democratic coalition.

A cost-benefit analysis of monarchy, however, is not what Peter Whittle concerns himself with in *Monarchy Matters*, a monograph in defense of the institution published by the Social Affairs Unit, a conservative British think tank. Republicans and monarchists can

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Prince Philip, Queen Elizabeth, 1959

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throw numbers at each other disputing how much tourist revenue the royal family draws, but constitutional monarchy is too important a component of British culture to be defended on the level of the pecuniary. It ought to stand or fall on its own merits as a system of democratic government. And even the most steadfast of American constitutional republicans will find Whittle's case persuasive—certainly not as a formula for our own country, but as something that clearly works for Great Britain and the Commonwealth.

The most important function that a monarchy serves is an ineffable one, embodied by the rituals that the queen performed during her visit to Ireland: It provides a unifying figure around which the nation can rally, and through which it can represent itself abroad. "It became clear to me, living as I did in the U.S. through the horror of 9/11," Whittle writes, "just how deeply compromised a partisan figure such as the American president can be when it comes to fulfilling his role as the focus of a nation's loyalty or as the expression of its pride." It wasn't long before President Bush went from having 90 percent approval ratings to defending himself from accusations of war crimes. Such mood swings are to be expected in a democracy—Whittle cites Winston Churchill's landslide 1945 defeat, the same year he had finished saving Western civilization—since elected officials are accountable to voters, and citizens are free, indeed expected, to express whatever views they like about them. But amidst the rancor, venality, and corruption that inevitably accompany politics, it's useful to have a respected figurehead who rises above it all, someone around whom the country can rally in times not only of national success but distress. A more tangible benefit of the British monarchy, as well, is the positive role it plays enhancing Britain's international profile. Germany's head of state is the president of the Federal Republic. Do you know his name?

And for all the talk about how the monarchy is a racist, xenophobic, sexist, homophobic institution that encapsulates the rigidity of Britain's class system, respect for it cuts straight across societal lines. You could even argue that the monarchy—by furnishing a head of state not subject to populist whims—plays a positive role in negating and discrediting the ugly impulses of "blood and soil" that have haunted European history. Monarchy is a valve by which nationalist passions—good and not so good—can be funneled.

It's worth noting, for example, that far-right nationalist movements pose more of a threat in European countries with republican forms of government than those with constitutional monarchies. Take France and Hungary, where nationalism is on the rise. In Hungary, an openly fascist party with its own paramilitary wing won 17 percent of the vote in last year's parliamentary elections, and is the third largest party in the country. Meanwhile, Marine Le Pen, of the neo-fascist National Front, is beating Nicolas Sarkozy in French opinion polls. In Britain it is inconceivable that the xenophobic British National party would ever attract anywhere approaching such support. The same goes for Spain, home of the universally admired King Juan Carlos, who played an instrumental, some might say essential, role in that country's transition from dictatorship to democracy, and helped avert a military coup in 1981.

Of course, much of the case for the British monarchy rests on the performance of the present occupant of the throne, who will be celebrating her Diamond Jubilee—60 years as sovereign—next year. Elizabeth II has enjoyed approval ratings that any elected official would kill for—usually hovering around 80 percent—throughout her reign, and so singular a figure is the queen that "she is seen as distinct" from the monarchy, Whittle writes, effectively becoming "an institution in herself." This near-unerring performance as sovereign, however, presents as much a problem for the monarchy as it does a defense: Would the Prince of Wales command such public approval? If he abdicated the throne in favor of William, as some advocate, would that not discredit the hereditary principle?

Queen Elizabeth has ruled for so long—she has met weekly with every prime minister, a dozen in all, since 1952—that the notion of Great Britain without her is inconceivable to most of her subjects. But even the prospect of her absence doesn't appear to faze Britons who, when polled about their attitude towards the monarchy as an institution, continually offer overwhelming approval. Which, in the end, is the most important reason for why "monarchy matters," and one that belies the democratic pretensions of the antimonarchists: The people want it. ♦

B&A

Un-superman

An ordinary German in extraordinary times.

BY SUSANNE KLINGENSTEIN

In the spring of 2003, Peter Fritzsche, an insightful and respected historian of 20th-century Germany, discovered in the state archives of Berlin the extensive diaries of an ordinary German named Franz Göll. The diaries run from 1916 to shortly before Göll's death in 1984, at the age of 85, and cover a period in German history marked by extraordinary violence, social upheaval, and political and economic transformations.

There is very little that we do not know about 20th-century Europe. Multitudes of historians have combed through the remains of the two 12- to 14-year German regimes, the reckless Weimar Republic and the brutal Third Reich. Thousands have examined every move made in the two world wars, and every scrap of paper written during the Holocaust. We have more letters and diaries than we know what to do with—but the diaries, in particular, have tended to be those of well-educated, highly self-conscious intellectuals, from the aristocratic Count Harry Kessler to the caustic, melancholy professor of French literature Victor Klemperer.

The Turbulent World of Franz Göll
An Ordinary Berliner Writes the Twentieth Century
by Peter Fritzsche
Harvard, 288 pp., $26.95

Franz Göll, by contrast, was (as Fritzsche puts it) "uneducated but highly intelligent, the son of a luckless typesetter and a barely literate mother." His grandmother, however, was a minor aristocrat, Gertrude von Göll. Her son, born in 1864 when Gertrude was 24 and unmarried, was raised by her sister. The illegitimate son jettisoned the "von" but *his* son, in turn, always referred to himself as Franz von Göll. That "von" gave him social capital (he had no other) and "seemed to affirm his sense of mistaken identity and unrecognized genius." The would-be-genius Franz—the man who missed the boat of history because, as he wrote about himself, he was "just not a shaper. I cannot master my own destiny"—lived his entire life on Berlin's Rote Insel (red island), a small working-class neighborhood with strong socialist leanings, bordered on two sides by railway tracks. From this perch, and while working at various menial jobs in the Reich Coal Distribution Office, the post office, and, finally, for the publisher Julius Springer, he observed himself and German society for nearly 70 years.

The problem confronting Peter Fritzsche is whether he can pull a Rumpelstiltskin and spin the dull straw of a never-married German loser into the gold of intellectual discovery. Will Göll's diary finally reveal to us why the majority of Germans fell so fast for Hitler? Why they acceded so easily to their own political disenfranchisement? Why they remained unmoved by the public harassment, torture, and liquidation of German Jews? Why they went off in droves to fight another war for the greater glory of—well, what exactly? And why they did it when so many of them perfectly remembered the horrors of 1914-18? Will Göll's diary teach us something about the enigmatic mindset of ordinary Germans during the crucial period from 1914 to 1945?

Well, Fritzsche's problem with Göll is that his Franz is not quite ordinary enough sociologically, and all too ordinary as a thinker and writer. The way Fritzsche solves this problem is brilliant: He never lets us see the diary itself but presents an interpretation of it in six distinct and distinguished chapters. He begins with a social and psychological exploration of Göll's "graphomania." Physically a small man, Franz "felt a profound sense of alienation and humiliation and shame in his relations with society." He was uneasy around people, unsure how to approach women, uncertain

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how to manage his sexuality. He presents himself largely as an injured individual, passive, voyeuristic, maladroit. His ultrasensitive register of melancholy emotion turns him into "an accountant of loss, worthlessness, and incapacity." He played with dolls as a boy, and as a young man identified with the women in the food lines rather than the infantrymen returning from the front: "His failure to develop strong ties of association and loyalty left him disinclined to identify with the German nation." After a short spurt of enthusiasm for the Nazis in 1933, Franz was turned off by them. But he never opposed them in political actions because, as an injured soul, he was not cut out for a life of action—any action.

"One way to read the diary," writes Fritzsche, "is to understand it as a continuous transcript of his compulsive study of his battered self."

We know where this is going. Fritzsche wants to suggest connections to other modern melancholy diarists: Goethe, Hebbel, Henri-Frédéric Amiel. He cites the astounding diarist Arthur Inman's response to reading the diaries of Pepys, Rousseau, and Tolstoy: "Doors of chance into rooms of experience." A good quote, except that Franz Göll's rooms of experience are filled with straw, not gold. Nevertheless, Fritzsche is spinning hard and the yarn begins to shine in the second chapter, devoted to Göll's multiple selves. Fritzsche describes Göll's unaffectionate parents, whose influence on Göll was overwhelmingly negative and whom Göll himself calls "grossly neglectful." Add to them a miserly grandfather worthy of Dickens and a child's troubled psyche gains contours. Fritzsche's analysis of Göll's scrupulously kept household account books presents a fascinating picture of the material living conditions of a lower-middle-class household in Berlin. Conditioned by his grandfather and schooled by tough economic times, Göll develops borderline obsessive-compulsive traits, and the reader is relieved when it turns out that he goes to the movies several times a week.

The third chapter, about Göll's views of physical intimacy and relations with women, reveals the key to his psyche: the mother whom he didn't love and who, after the death of her husband in 1915 when her son was 16, became dependent on Franz. She infantilized him and relied on him to the point of suffocation. I'm reminded here of Elias Canetti's torturous relationship with his mother: Both mothers interpret their sons' slow moves toward independence as deep rejection, which leads to fierce quarrels and psychic melodrama.

"From the very beginning," wrote Göll, "the immaturity of my mother was at the center of my life." The tension was palpable: "Even the most trivial matter was like a spark in a pile of explosives … she apparently was always on the alert," watching for the next injury, real or imagined, because nothing is less tolerable than indifference. It's amazing, really, that Franz didn't run off to war at the first opportunity.

By the early 1930s, he is actually doing well. After a chapter on Göll's unoriginal thoughts on science, Fritzsche presents Göll's view of German history before closing with a section about Göll's comfortable life in the Federal Republic. Of course, by "German history" Fritzsche means the Third Reich and World War II and here, then, comes the surprise that really isn't a surprise because, despite being louche, Göll was indeed an ordinary German. By 1931 he has completely absorbed the current anti-Semitic rhetoric and targets Jews as predators: "Franz arrived at anti-Semitism before he got to the Nazis," writes Fritzsche, "and it never completely released its hold on him; as late as the 1970s he continued to distinguish Germans and Jews."

And Göll did eventually arrive at the Nazis. The surprise is that he didn't get to them when he felt downtrodden. Instead, he "mobilized himself in the broad National Socialist drive for power . . . after his period of despair had ended," when he had a steady (though modest) job, when he could go on vacations, when he had two female lovers with whom he romped through the city: "He became a Nazi and an anti-Semite from a position of strength."

We should not be surprised. Having established a tenuous hold on a bit of good fortune, Göll now felt strong enough to join the manly men who were going to protect it. In which case, Fritzsche's astounding book opens our eyes, once again, to the disappointing sight of an ordinary human being. And an ordinary human being is just that: ordinary. ♦

Ordinary Germans greet Hitler, ca. 1935

B&A

Poets of Mobility

The beckoning world, and closing ranks, of travel writers. BY THOMAS SWICK

Last year I gave a reading in New York City, and talking to people afterwards I was struck by how many were also travel writers, or at least survivors of a travel-writing course. It was refreshing to be around literate travelers. At home in Florida I usually address seniors, who like to ask me about cruise lines.

But reflecting later, I thought it unfortunate that the audience had not included more people with no professional interest: a few accountants, for instance, out for a good time. I wondered if travel writers had become like poets, who have long been accused of writing for each other.

It's odd, when you think about it, because both groups take on big, universal subjects: the world and life. Who isn't interested in those two things? (Though, admittedly, many Americans exhibit astonishing apathy toward the first.) The rap against poets is that they have forsaken their audience in an effort to dazzle their peers. Travel writers, for our part, can go overboard on small epiphanies and life-altering moments that may have little resonance for someone resigned to a two-week vacation. At the same time, what if Elizabeth Gilbert had focused more on India and less on herself? In a country where a mere 30 percent of the population possesses a passport, there is a thin, unnerving line between self-indulgence and bestsellerdom.

Both titles—poet and travel writer—suggest an element of luxury (time in the first case, mobility in the second) that tends to produce envy in people outside the club, and an unspoken challenge: This better be good (i.e., not a waste of my hard-earned leisure). While those of us in the business make no such demands, a colleague's work is always of interest because it gives us something to measure ours against. And the best travel writers, like the best poets, are generally unknown outside their small circle. Names like Colin Thubron, Sara Wheeler, even Pico Iyer, win you no points at the neighborhood cookout.

Poetry and travel writing also share an often irresistible appeal to wannabe writers. A poem is usually short (unlike a novel) and a travel story is simply (in the popular view) an account of one's vacation. As a result, both genres are riddled with unreadable writing. But travel writing is by far the broader designation, sheltering classics (*Out of Africa*, *In Patagonia*) as well as guidebooks under its roof. (No poems ever come with hotel recommendations.) And it is the consumer division of travel writing that enjoys the largest presence, as a stroll through almost any bookstore, a scan of any magazine stand, a glance at any newspaper travel section will indicate. This has had the paradoxical effect of bringing to travel writing a vast number of readers who are not really readers; they're people looking to go somewhere. Tell most people you're a travel writer and you'll be greeted with exclamations of envy. Ask them to name a travel book they've recently read and, almost inevitably, you'll be met with silence.

In the mausoleum of periodicals there is a small section for those in the travel game that catered to readers: *Holiday* (the great travel magazine of the mid-20th century); *Trips* (published in 1988 by Banana Republic and then discontinued after the first issue); *Grand Tour* (the quarterly created by Jason Wilson, now editor of thesmartset.com and series editor of *The Best American Travel Writing*); *Wanderlust* (from the early days of *Salon*). *Granta* is still with us, though it no longer publishes travel writers regularly, as it did in the eighties when travel writing was so hot even clothing companies promoted it (and *Rolling Stone* ran the essays of Jan Morris). Late last year the Travel Channel laid off the two editors (and founders) of the online travel magazine *World Hum*, which it had purchased in 2007 (and for which I was a columnist). After a hiatus the site has returned, with the original editors in a new "partnership," but their dismissal as employees seemed to reflect a corporate view that travel writing is not for the masses (an entity television cares deeply about).

Much of the problem for travel publications (even online ones) resides in the Internet. The diary-like nature of travel writing makes it ideally suited to blogs. You can almost picture Robert Byron posting installments of *The Road to Oxiana* on his website, while it's much harder to imagine T.S. Eliot doing the same with *The Waste Land*. In an age of mass tourism and instant communication it's no surprise that everyone is blathering about their trips. What's astonishing is that anyone outside a small circle of family and friends cares to read the blather. The irony, and the agony, for travel writers is that, after a lifetime of being dismissed as amateurs (traveling far from home and writing what we *don't* know), we are now being supplanted by the cult of amateurism.

So it's no wonder that, like poets, we rally around each other. But we are not the only ones. In an increasingly fragmented world, ours is an increasingly common fate. At a book fair a few years ago Richard Rodriguez complained of getting only Hispanics at his reading, while women waited outside—he could see them through the occasionally opened door—for the lesbian author who was to go on next. "Why couldn't I have," Rodriguez asked reasonably, "some of the lesbians?" This is the cry of every writer today—though it seems a little out of place in travel, which by nature is wide-ranging, all-embracing, anti-hermetic, conversant with multitudes.

If only we could get them as readers. ♦

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B&A

Alien Corn

A Steven Spielberg-produced tribute to Spielberg could have used Spielberg. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Super 8 is a great marketing idea for a movie—an evocation of the child-centric science-fiction films of the 1980s, the ones primarily directed or produced by Steven Spielberg. Indeed, *Super 8* is itself produced by Spielberg in an act of self-homage that makes Norman Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself* look like the Talmudic tractate on modesty. Set in an immaculately re-created and resolutely lower-middle-class pre-Reagan America, *Super 8* throws *E.T.*, *The Goonies*, *Poltergeist*, and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* into a pop-culture blender.

Super 8
Directed by J.J. Abrams

Joel Courtney as Joe Lamb

For me, the most interesting aspect of *Super 8* has little to do with what's actually on screen. And it's this: Thinking about *Super 8*'s primary inspiration, I was stunned to realize that *E.T.* was released nearly three decades ago. When I was a teenager in the 1970s, movies made in or about the 1940s seemed like bulletins from a different century, depicting as they did an America before television, the crime spiral, Vietnam, urban rioting, feminism, the civil rights movement, and on-screen cursing and nudity.

But surely to a teenager today, the 1979 portrayed in *Super 8* (or the world he sees when he watches *E.T.*) doesn't really seem all *that* long ago. People in *Super 8* watch television, and little boys film movies they dream of taking to film festivals. Today there's cable, and movies can be made on iPhones and posted to YouTube, but such change is evolutionary, not revolutionary.

Indeed, maybe the only real cultural difference I can see is the depiction of the U.S. military. *Super 8* is true to the movies it evokes with its hostile depiction of the U.S. military as a bunch of bullying totalitarian torturers (so common was it, in fact, that it even infected the comic fantasy of *Splash*, when Daryl Hannah's mermaid is captured by evil government scientists). But while such antimilitary attitudes are certainly prevalent in today's nonfiction media, they will come as a bit of a transgressive shock to young people who were toddlers during 9/11 and haven't been raised on a diet of Michael Moore and *Harper's* magazine.

That antimilitary bias is just about the only aspect of *Super 8* that isn't entirely routine. The idea for the movie might have been inspired, but between the idea and the reality falls the shadow, and the shadow's name is J.J. Abrams, who wrote and directed *Super 8*. Abrams was the creative force behind the television series *Felicity* and *Alias*, the producer of *Lost*, and the director of *Mission: Impossible III* and the recent reboot of *Star Trek* (in which Kirk and Spock and the whole crew were in their early twenties). What all these entertainments have in common with each other, and with *Super 8*, is just how wonderfully they begin and how amazingly unsatisfying they end up being as they at last stumble to the final blackout.

The collected works of J.J. Abrams are, as the star pitcher said of the gifts of the catcher in Mark Harris's novel *Bang the Drum Slowly*, "a million dollars of promise worth two cents on delivery." Everything is good about them at the start: the way they look, the way they establish their characters in familiar and amusing *milieux*, the way they drop hints about excitement and thrills and complications to come. But then the plot actually has to begin, and build on itself, and make sense, and tie up loose ends. Once he must move beyond the trappings, Abrams comes undone.

In *Super 8*, an alien escapes from a sealed train car. It then does all sorts of things. But why it does these things is never really explained to us, and we are never given a reason to care about those who suffer from what the alien does, or for the kids we're watching. I gather that, as was true with *Lost*, there are websites set up by the producers of *Super 8* that help illuminate aspects of the mystifying plot, featuring short films that will presumably also show up on the DVD. But we really shouldn't have to go to a website to find out what the movie ought to tell us itself.

And when Abrams tries to strum the heartstrings, Spielberg-style, he just doesn't have the gift for it. The epiphany of the movie comes near its final scene, when a motherless boy explains what's in his heart by saying, "Bad things happen." I think we're supposed to cry—at least that's what the exceptional musical score by Michael Giacchino, who may be establishing himself as the greatest composer the movies have ever seen, is instructing us to do.

But "bad things happen" just doesn't do it. The line and the scene lack the oomph of the moment they specifically echo in Rob Reiner's *Stand by Me*—not a Spielberg movie, but very much influenced by *E.T.*—when another motherless 12-year-old cries out, in words that have dissolved two generations of boys into jelly, "I'm no good. My dad said it. I'm no good."

And yet the boy in *Super 8* is right. Bad things do happen. *Super 8*, for instance. ♦

PARAMOUNT PICTURES

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Not A Parody

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