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the weekly

Standard

SEPTEMBER 5, 2011

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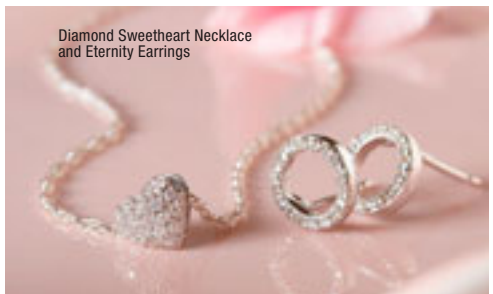
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Disastrous Free Trade Policies Are Destroying Our Manufacturing, Jobs and Standard of Living

Free trade allows products to be shipped into America unrestricted and tariff free. These products are now flooding America from China, Mexico and Korea, produced at wage rates of \$1-\$3 per hour.

Our factories, by the thousands are shutting down, selling out, or moving overseas and taking all our jobs with them because they can't compete with these wage rates. This is happening so fast that our total manufacturing base is on the verge of collapsing and shutting down all of our former wealth producing companies.

What is the matter with us? It would be absolutely insane to continue like this!

Free trade agreements like NAFTA and other free trade agreements, supervised by the World Trade Organization, have been responsible for this unmanageable condition and have been responsible for the demise of our entire economy and has caused our economy to weaken and our country to slip out of our control.

Let's take our country back! Visit or call your congressperson, and ask them to rescind these agreements that are destroying all manufacturing and destroying millions of jobs in America.

If an enemy infiltrated our government to destroy us they would do everything to keep these old agreements alive. **Our only solution: We must immediately resign from the WTO, rescind NAFTA and all free trade agreements, including the pending Korean-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, and start managing our own affairs without outside influences from the WTO, and take our country back.**

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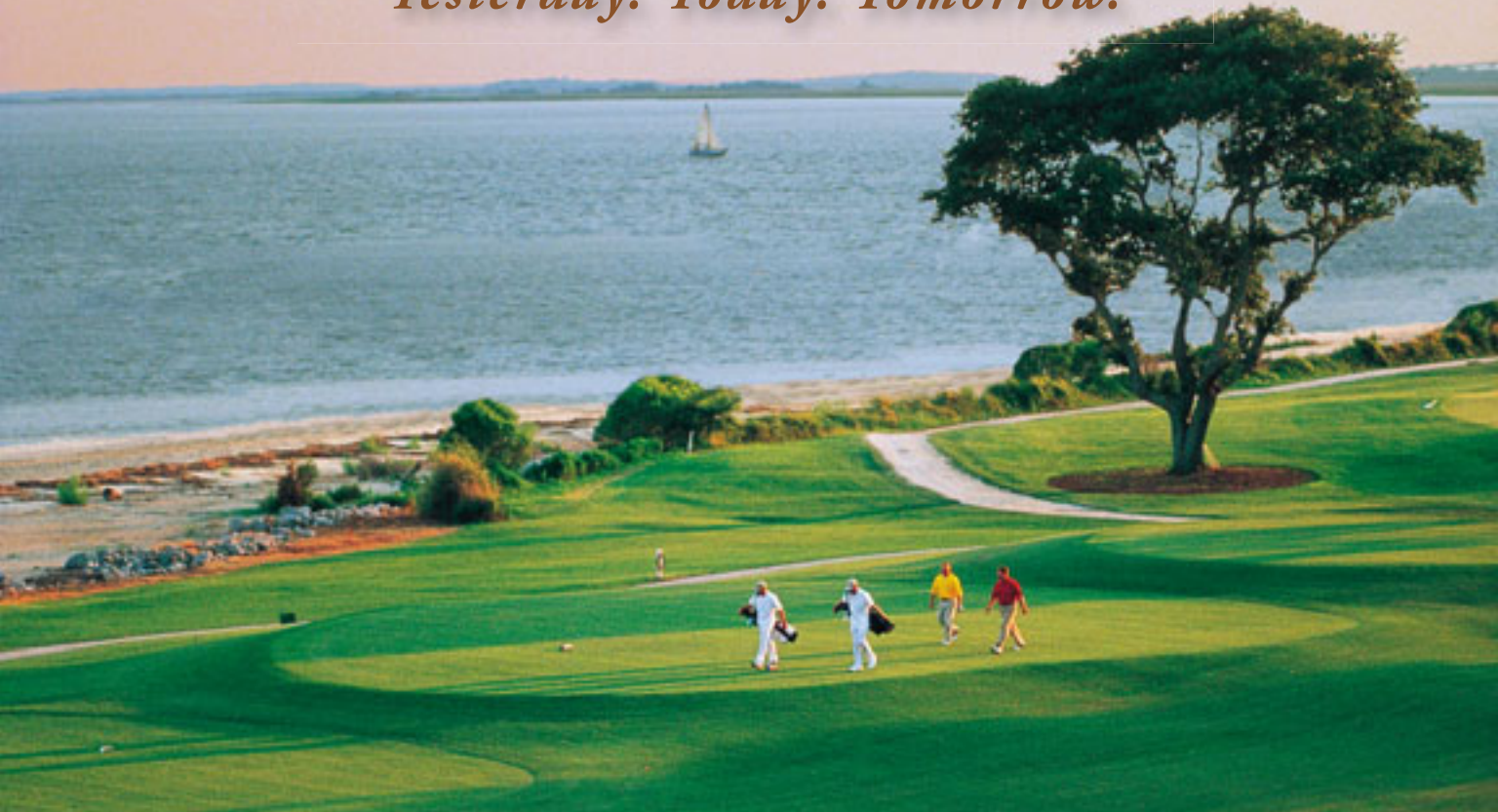
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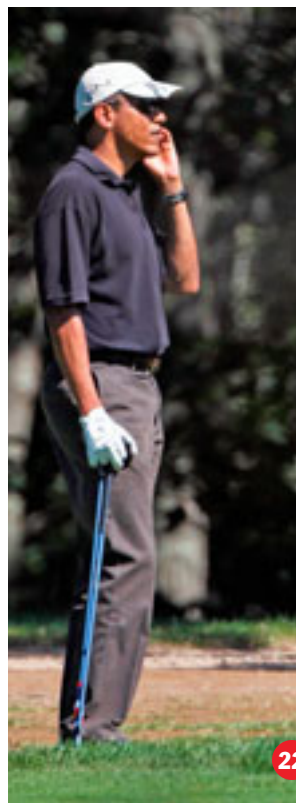
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COVER: AP / SERGEY PONOMAREV

Rice in the Driver's Seat

Among the many fascinating nuggets in Vice President Dick Cheney's forthcoming memoir, *In My Time*, is a lengthy discussion of the Bush administration's second-term foreign policy. It comes in a chapter he calls "Setback," in which he discusses the lengths to which Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice went to engage and accommodate Iran, Syria, and North Korea. The sum total of those efforts, he argues, was a setback for the Bush Doctrine established in the first term.

One anecdote that might be particularly amusing for readers of this magazine is Cheney's retelling of Rice's determination to convince a recalcitrant North Korea to accept the many preemptive concessions the United States had been offering. In the second term, State Department officials had downplayed North Korea's nuclear tests, had worked to block public release of information on North Korea's involvement in developing a nuclear reactor in Syria, had pushed to accept an incomplete declaration of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons activities, and, at one point, had even held

a fun-filled, boozy evening with their North Korean counterparts to convince them that the United States really meant well.

Kim Jong Il being Kim Jong Il, and having learned from more than a decade of American capitulation, wanted more. Rice was happy to oblige. In late May 2008, at a small meeting of top national security officials in the office of national security adviser Steve Hadley, Rice announced that she wanted to go to Pyongyang.

Cheney objected. "The North Koreans still hadn't provided a full and complete declaration of their nuclear activities, I pointed out, and now, suddenly we would be sending the secretary of state to Pyongyang? It was a bad idea." Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, seconded Cheney's argument. "I think a number of us were getting tired of refighting the same battles in meeting after meeting where it seemed we had to argue against yet another misguided approach from the State Department."

Cheney continues:

Steve brought the meeting to a close and said he and Condi would report the group's views back to the president. A short while later, I was sitting in my office when one of the president's senior advisors came through the door, holding a copy of that week's WEEKLY STANDARD. The cover story was titled "In the Driver's Seat: Condoleezza Rice and the Jettisoning of the Bush Doctrine." Pointing to the cover, the senior advisor said, "Yet another reason why Condi should not go to North Korea."

As the headline of that June 2, 2008, article by Stephen F. Hayes suggested, Rice had already done damage to the Bush Doctrine by the time she proposed her trip to North Korea—a visit that would have given Kim even more undeserved legitimacy.

THE SCRAPBOOK is tickled that even if this magazine couldn't fully persuade George W. Bush to stick to the doctrine that bears his name, at least we may have played a small role in killing a trip that, like Madeleine Albright's ill-fated photo-op in 2000, would have proved to be a national embarrassment. ♦

Rice in the Dictator's Photo Album

"I'm not a religious man," said Winston Churchill to Franklin Roosevelt when they met off the coast of Newfoundland in August 1941, "but I thank God that such a man as you is the head of your government at a time like this." Roosevelt, for his part, was slightly more guarded in his expressions of affection for Churchill—he was slightly more guarded in his expressions of affections for everyone—but he did once append this note in a letter to 10 Downing Street: "It is fun to be in the same decade with you!"

All of which reminds THE SCRAPBOOK that, realpolitik notwithstanding,

genuine friendships sometimes do spring up between statesmen. Charles de Gaulle of France and Konrad Adenauer of West Germany, despite initial (and obvious) mutual suspicions, seem to have developed a warm personal rapprochement in the early 1960s. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, despite the occasional policy dispute, seemed genuinely fond of one another.

None of this, however, had quite prepared THE SCRAPBOOK for the incontrovertible evidence of Col. Muammar Qaddafi's infatuation—there is no other word for it—with Condoleezza Rice. We had known, as the whole world had known, that the colonel liked the then-secretary of state: "Leezza, Leezza, Leezza," he purred

to Al Jazeera in 2007, "I love her very much." But such ardent expressions of affection were put down at the time to (a) the colonel's famous eccentricity, and (b) his notion of himself as an African as much as an Arab. Qaddafi had been cultivating the African states on Libya's southern border—Sudan and, especially, Chad (the latter he invaded)—and he pointedly summed up Secretary Rice to Al Jazeera as a "darling black African woman."

Yet even allowing for the grandiloquent quality of the Arabic language, and Qaddafi's tendency to discuss subjects not traditionally associated with military dictators, his devotion to Rice was unmistakable. And so it was creepy, but not especially surprising, when Libyan rebels, ran-

sacking the colonel's private quarters in Tripoli last week, stumbled upon a scrapbook full of images of Rice, lovingly pasted on dozens of pages, like a schoolgirl's Clark Gable album from the 1930s.

The pictures are mostly press photographs, including one where the Libyan dictator stands beside the secretary of state on her visit to Tripoli in 2008, the host encased in a flowing white robe with purple sash and his guest, slightly more businesslike, in a gray pinstriped suit with pearls.

THE SCRAPBOOK understands that all this must be somewhat embarrassing to Condoleezza Rice, who, as a distinguished scholar-diplomat who happens also to be an attractive woman, must occasionally put up with such nonsense. Needless to say, so far as we are aware, no female leader ever entertained such public or private thoughts about Warren Christopher or Colin Powell. But to give the colonel his due, at least his sentiments were ostensibly complimentary. The same can hardly be said for his repellent colleague in Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, who never missed a chance to make disparaging sexual comments about Rice, or dismiss the Stanford provost/secretary of state as a "true illiterate."

Still, you never know. Perhaps, when and if Bashar al-Assad of Syria is driven from power, and the rebels unlock his desk, a secret presidential diary will reveal that the tyrant and ophthalmologist longed to give Secretary of State Hillary Clinton an eye exam. ♦

MLK, Made in China

This week saw the unofficial unveiling of the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial on the National Mall. In an era where Al Sharpton hosts a nightly news show on MSNBC, THE SCRAPBOOK is happy in theory with the idea of MLK etched in stone as a permanent reminder of what a true civil rights leader looks like.

Unfortunately, just about everything about how King's visage actu-

ally came to be placed on the Mall is troubling. The sculptor behind the memorial, Lei Yixin, happens to be a Chinese national, which raises some interesting questions, notes *Washington Post* columnist Courtland Milloy:

The fact remains that Lei hails from a country that oppresses ethnic minorities, exploits its workers, and jails human-rights activists and the attorneys who try to defend them. In their day, King and civil rights lawyer Thurgood Marshall would likely have been taken by the Red Guard and never heard from again. . . . I also recall the words of a Chinese artisan who worked on the memorial with Lei. Asked why he was so delighted with being chosen for the job, the man told the *Washington Post* that he

was in it for "national honor" and wanted to "bring glory to the Chinese people." It just would have been kinda nice to hear an African American sculptor say something like that about this country.

THE SCRAPBOOK rarely finds itself in agreement with Milloy, but here we have to commend him for hitting the chisel on the head.

And one final regrettable thing must be said about the King memorial. We know the King family has endured much these many decades, but the family's insistence on getting paid \$800,000 from the nonprofit foundation responsible for building the memorial to use MLK Jr.'s words and likeness is appalling.

"I don't think the Jefferson fam-



ily, the Lincoln family [or] any other group of family ancestors has been paid a licensing fee for a memorial in Washington,” Cambridge University historian David Garrow, author of a Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of King, told the *New York Post*. “[King would’ve been] absolutely scandalized.” ♦

The Guitar Police

There are few inventions that America has bequeathed to the world that have changed it more than the electric guitar. Rock music has played a significant role in cultural revolutions against oppressive governments, from the Czech Republic under communism to the burgeoning heavy metal scene in Tehran today. When governments start going after electric guitars, it’s never a good sign.

So if you were looking for a metaphor to suggest that the Obama administration hates freedom, it would be hard to top the Department of Justice’s raid on Gibson’s guitar plants in Nashville and Memphis last week. The company had to cease manufacturing while the government seized much of the wood the company uses to make its instruments.

Perhaps no electric guitar is more iconic than the Gibson Les Paul. Designed by musician and inventor Les Paul, Gibson’s guitar, along with the Fender Stratocaster, popularized the solid-body electric guitar. Since then it’s been made famous by everyone from Lynyrd Skynyrd to Guns N’ Roses. Gibson also makes other legendary guitars, such as the 335 hollow body played by B.B. King, and the acoustic-electric played by John Lennon.

The making of electric guitars frequently involves the use of various exotic hardwoods. This raises some environmental concerns. In 2009, the DOJ, armed with automatic weapons, raided Gibson and seized significant quantities of the company’s wood. Nearly two years later, no charges have yet been filed related to the initial raid.

However, environmental concerns are only a tangential matter for the guitar police. Gibson is being investigated for violations of the Lacey Act, which was originally authored over a century ago to prevent trading of illegal animals and plants that have been illegally sold. Whether or not they’ve been “illegally” sold is determined by the laws of the country of origin for the plants and animals, and the Lacey Act is applicable only when a foreign law has been violated.

For its part, Gibson insists that the confiscated wood used by the company comes “from a Forest Stewardship Council certified supplier and is FSC Controlled, meaning that the wood complies with the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council, which is an industry-recognized and independent, not-for-profit organization established to promote responsible management of the world’s forests.”

Further, the company observes that the Lacey Act “reads that you are guilty if you did not observe a law even though you had no knowledge of that law in a foreign country.” Ignorance of the law may be no defense, but ignorance of the laws governing the harvesting of rosewood in a remote province of Eastern India (which may require that finishing be done by Indian rather than American workers) hardly seems like an excuse for a federal raid.

Gibson, like the proud American company it is, refuses to back down in the face of federal overreach.

The press release the company issued following the raid is both compelling and absolutely blistering. One week after the Obama administration announced it was launching a case-by-case review of 300,000 cases in already backlogged immigration courts, Gibson headlined their press release: “Gov’t says wood is illegal if U.S. workers produce it.” Ouch.

And when Gibson’s case gets more publicity, we trust the company will have more than enough defenders to force the Obama administration to back down. ♦

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Scared Shirtless

My Western friends got a good laugh out of the shattered nerves in Washington—and all along the eastern seaboard, as far as I can tell—after last week's earthquake. Just as my New England/Midwestern friends are amused by Washington's paralysis when it snows, the Californians of my acquaintance were quick to remind me that temblors are a routine occurrence where they reside, and that 5.8 on the Richter scale is not exactly the stuff of nightmares.

Having lived in Los Angeles once upon a time, I take their point. Earthquakes of various shapes and sizes are not just recurrent affairs out there but the stuff of everyday life. Californians are perpetually aware of, and commendably vigilant about, the possibility/probability that the Big One will strike one day. Back then my alluring wife worked at *Architectural Digest*, which was located in a very tall building across Wilshire Boulevard from the La Brea Tar Pits. I used to comfort her with the notion that, when the Big One struck, she and her colleagues would be hurled out the windows into the goo—to be discovered, analyzed, perhaps even publicly displayed centuries hence by paleontologists.

In defense of Washington, however, I should point out that, having lived through a handful of earthquakes in my time, I deem last Tuesday's seismic event not trivial. I happened to be eating lunch in a restaurant with a friend, and the violent shaking of the building, accompanied by the usual implosive sounds, was not easily ignored. We were located, moreover, roughly six blocks from the White House. My immediate diagnosis, based on experience, was an earthquake. But the vast majority of Washingtonians (I would guess) have no such experience, and in the midst of the war on terror, a

loud booming sound, accompanied by unprecedented rocking and rolling, is a legitimate cause for fear.

Which, along with confusion, is the standard human reaction to earthquakes. I was impressed a year ago when the Washington area experienced a very minor temblor—a precursor to this latest event?—an hour or two before dawn. Where I live (Fairfax County, Virginia), it manifested itself as a mild vibration, which woke me up. But I am so jaded by



the symptoms—so Californian, in a sense—that my initial thought was “minor earthquake,” and I drifted back to sleep.

Not fear but embarrassment, I confess, was my dominant sensation the first time I experienced an earthquake. And the setting was similarly unlikely: the Villanova University campus, on the Main Line outside Philadelphia, at 3 A.M. EST on February 28, 1973.

Before going to bed I had realized, with some regret, that I had no clean clothes to wear—a familiar predicament for many college seniors—and, being paradoxically fastidious about such things, decided that I would have to do something that I never did and still dislike: go to sleep without any clothes on. There was time, after all, for a quick visit to the laundry the

next morning before classes.

Suddenly it was the middle of the night, and I was rudely awakened by the sound of a rushing train. This was not especially unusual—two lines crossed the Villanova campus—but commuter trains didn't usually pass through at three in the morning, and the locomotive sound was considerably louder than usual. Indeed, it sounded as if the Philadelphia & Western were about to crash through my (ground floor) window.

Just as my semicomatose brain had processed these impressions, the building began to shake—and I guessed that the danger was not from a runaway train but from the boiler in the basement. The old radiator under my window used to make all the standard creaking and popping sounds familiar to consumers of steam heat; but they were nothing like this. For a moment I perceived that the boiler, in the iron-cold Pennsylvania winter, had finally reached the limit of its aged endurance, and my quaint Victorian Gothic dormitory was about to blow up.

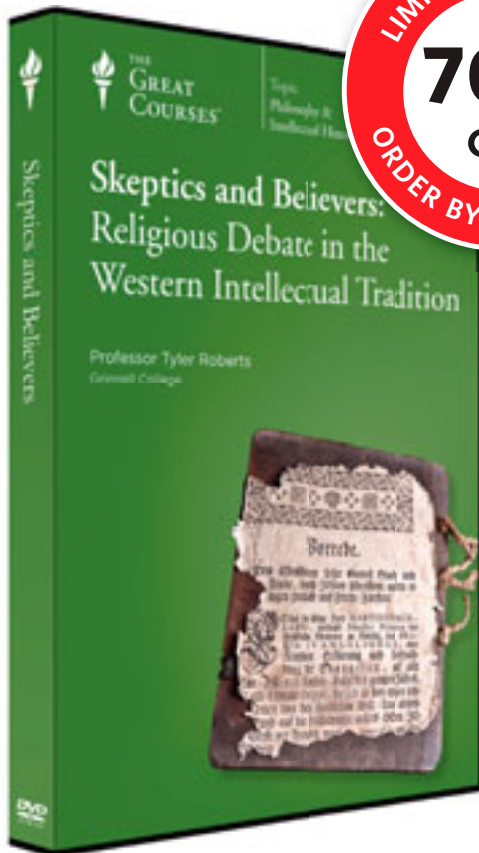
But of course, coupled with this frightening prospect was the equally disconcerting realization that I would have to spring from my bed, dash down the corridor, and fly out the door completely naked. My mind, now operating at a slightly faster speed, entertained a series of urgent questions: Was my life worth the momentary delay to pull on (dirty) clothes and avoid embarrassment? How cold was it outside? And most poignant of all: Why, in God's name, had I chosen this, of all nights, to sleep in the nude?

To which, I must report, I never arrived at a satisfactory answer, since at that moment the shaking subsided, the noise diminished, and along with everybody else from Trenton to Baltimore, I thankfully concluded that I had just survived the Great Philadelphia Earthquake of 1973.

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To the Shores of Tripoli

With Muammar Qaddafi still at large, continued fighting in parts of Libya, and an uncertain future ahead for that country's long-oppressed people, one hesitates to make too many categorical judgments about the remarkable turn of events there. A few things can be said, however.

The toppling of Qaddafi's 42-year dictatorship is a huge victory for the ongoing pan-Arab revolution known as the Arab Spring. The political map of the Middle East has been torn up after four decades of stultifying, soul-draining dictatorship (or, as one prominent American statesman once put it, "forty years of stability"). A region known for its interminable dynasties and would-be dynasties—Ben Ali in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt, Saddam in Iraq, the Assads in Syria, the Husseins in Jordan, the Saudi royal family—is witnessing the fall of one after another of those anachronistic icons. Of the remaining hold outs, perhaps some of those wise and nimble enough to respond to the surge of popular demands will survive. The kings may turn themselves into constitutional monarchs, transferring much of their power to elected parliaments. But those who resist the tide will ultimately fall, and probably by force of arms—as in Libya.

In this respect, then, Libya was no sideshow. It was a critical part of the unfolding evolution of the region. Had Qaddafi been allowed to win his battle against the rebels, had his forces been allowed to enter the city of Benghazi,

crush the rebellion, and carry out his promise to kill every last opponent of the regime, the aftershocks would have reverberated throughout the Middle East. That he has instead fallen to popular forces will also resonate, especially, one hopes, in Syria. The fall of Qaddafi significantly increases the pressure on the Assad regime in Damascus. Now even some of the conservative Gulf Arab states, some of whom backed the rebels in Libya, are lending their weight to the anti-Assad push. If and when the Damascus regime falls, the unseating of Qaddafi will be a significant part of the story.

That is one reason why the fall of Qaddafi is also a triumph for the United States and its NATO allies. There is much to criticize in the way NATO handled the operations. The Libyan intervention was certainly not the death knell for the alliance, as some have suggested, but neither was it a sign of great strength and vitality.

What is unquestionable, however, is that NATO stepped forward at a critical moment and turned the tide. The simple fact is that without NATO's armed intervention, including nearly 8,000 strike sorties, the insertion of special forces, and the provision of military assistance to the rebels, Qaddafi would have succeeded in crushing the rebellion and massacring thousands if not tens of thousands of men, women, and children.

By intervening, with force, the NATO alliance not only saved the people of Libya and kept alive the momen-

tum of the Arab Spring. The alliance also demonstrated, at a time when such demonstration is sorely needed, that the world's great democracies are not enfeebled, ineffective, disunited, and in a state of terminal decline. They are, in fact, powerful, capable of acting in unison, and, most important, still committed to acting in the world on behalf of their interests and their ideals. That they succeeded in helping to topple Qaddafi, despite having tied at least one hand behind their own backs, shows that there is still life in those old bones. Just imagine if the democracies had come with their A game—that is, with the full power of the United States.

Still, the end of Qaddafi's rule is a great accomplishment for the Obama administration and for the president personally. It is a shame that some administration officials are trying to downplay the role of the United States in this whole affair, absurdly trying to turn the "leading from behind" gaffe into a kind of Obama doctrine. In fact, the United States was not "leading from behind." By far the most important decision taken by any world leader in this entire episode—the decision that made all the difference—was President Obama's decision that the United States and the world could not stand by and see the people of Benghazi massacred.

That American choice was the turning point. All praise to France's Nicolas Sarkozy and Britain's David Cameron for being ahead of the president in seeing the need for armed action—just as Margaret Thatcher was ahead of George H.W. Bush in seeing the need for action against Saddam Hussein in 1990. But here is the plain and critical truth of the matter: None of this could have been done without the United States leading the way.

Only the United States has the military capacity, the weaponry, the surveillance technology, and the skill to open a safe path for the air and ground war against Qaddafi's forces. France and Britain alone would not and probably could not have done the job without unacceptable risk to their forces, which were very thin to begin with. In the early days, especially, American A-10 and AC-130 ground attack aircraft were critical in pummeling Qaddafi's armored vehicles and forcing them to halt offensives against rebel positions. In the last days of the conflict, American high-tech surveillance allowed the rebels to pinpoint the positions of Qaddafi forces in and around Tripoli. Throughout months of fighting, prowling American Predator drones forced Qaddafi and his men to keep their heads down.

The president and his secretary of state also carried out an adept diplomacy that eventually garnered not only European but, remarkably, Arab support as well. This in turn forced both Russia and China—fearful of Arab

wrath—to acquiesce. There were costs, of course: a U.N. resolution inadequate to the task at hand and the usual problem of trying to keep many players on board during a mission. On balance, however, it was worth it. The administration was surely right that the intervention would be more effective if it did not appear to be exclusively an American operation and that the combination of European and Arab support for removing Qaddafi was enough of a prize to warrant some compromises.

But the larger point is that, again, only the United States could have pulled all these disparate political and regional forces together. No other nation, not France, not Great Britain, not even a united EU (which German opposition prevented) could have managed this global diplomatic task. In this allegedly "post-American" world, the United States remains both indispensable and irreplaceable.

Furthermore, the president deserves credit because his decision was unpopular and politically risky. The foreign policy establishment was almost unanimously opposed, and an assortment of wise men spent months

predicting certain failure. In Congress a significant number of Republicans joined with the likes of Dennis Kucinich in opposing the military operation, to the point of voting not to authorize funding in June—a shameful moment for a party that under three consecutive presidents had stood for a robust and active U.S. role in the world. Some Republican presidential candidates, either out of opportunism or conviction, joined in opposition.

Many of the criticisms of the administration's conduct were warranted. The Libyan intervention was certainly no beauty. The president was slow to take action. The arbitrary decision to stop flying the A-10s and AC-130s after only a few days of action was unwise and unnecessary, and may have prolonged the war by months. Nor is there any question that the president and his advisers were spooked by public opinion, worried about committing the United States to yet another intervention—in the Middle East, no less—and, in the midst of a crushing economic crisis, were looking to carry out the operation as cheaply as possible. Administration spinners who are now telling a gullible press corps what a brilliantly conceived operation this was from beginning to end know perfectly well that they are spouting nonsense.

But what's new? American interventions, large and small, are never pretty. American presidents are always slow to see the need for action, always worried about their political backsides, and almost always looking for the exits as soon as they decide to act. Republican critics, especially those who served during the Reagan years or in either Bush administration, should look in the mirror. The Reagan folks may want to recall the handling of the interven-

Only the United States has the military capacity and the skill to open a safe path for the war against Qaddafi.



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tion in Lebanon. The Bush I folks may want to remember their boss's inaction in the early days of the Balkan slaughter. Those from Bush II need only look at Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States almost never does these things well. But sometimes we succeed nevertheless. This is one of those times.

Or at least one hopes so. The game in Libya is far from over. In one sense, it is only just beginning. There is an awful lot that can go wrong in a country that has been governed by a mad despot for four decades. The Obama administration is now where the Bush administration was in November 2001 in Afghanistan and in April 2003 in Iraq—the dictator has fallen but a new order has yet to emerge. The dangers are the same: disorder and anarchy, a return to violence, the possibility of Libya becoming a failed state. The common wisdom stemming from the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan is that failure to manage the transition to a new government capable of holding the country together can rapidly turn success into disaster. Presumably the president and his advisers know this. Yet the temptation to run away from Libya as quickly as possible, after a “win” for the president, will be enormous. President Obama needs to resist it.

—Robert Kagan

The Motley Fool



So, the vice president goes to China—and if that sounds like the beginning of a bad comedy routine, it's because our current vice president has made it one. The man is a walking pratfall, a clown of the tongue-

and, stumbling kind, and only the media's determined effort to shield the Obama administration from laughter has kept Joe Biden's miscues, misunderstandings, and mispronouncements from becoming our long-running national joke.

He began the month of August, for example, by boasting to reporters that he had greeted congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords's return to Washington by mentioning his own pair of craniotomies: “I said, ‘Now we're both members of the Cracked Head Club.’” The cracked-head club. This, to a woman bravely making her first appearance in the U.S. Congress after a crazed assassin tried to kill her in January.

And then he tripped off to China, where he somehow felt compelled to tell his audience, “Your policy has been one which I fully understand—I'm not second-guessing—of one child per family. The result being that you're in a position where one wage earner will be taking care of four retired people. Not sustainable.”

Fully understanding, is Joe Biden, of the brutal regime of mandatory abortions and sterilization quotas by which China has imposed its “family planning policy” since 1978. Not second-guessing, is our vice president, of the means by which a Communist government has attempted to crush the rural peasants it has always viewed as a threat to Beijing's control.

In the days since Biden's August 21 comments at Sichuan University, the White House has tried to walk it all back. “The Obama administration strongly opposes all aspects of China's coercive birth limitation policies, including forced abortion and sterilization,” read a statement from Biden's spokeswoman Kendra Barkoff. “The vice president believes such practices are repugnant.”

Indeed, his supporters argue, Biden was actually criticizing the one child policy by saying it was “not sustainable” financially. As, for instance, one might have criticized the Politburo's 1930 decision to exterminate the middle-class kulaks as opponents of the Soviet regime by mentioning to Stalin that the policy seemed, well, a trifle counterproductive. Financially speaking.

Of course, if the vice president had actually wanted to talk about what he believes, he might have mentioned that the Catholic Church to which he belongs condemns, on what it claims are universal moral grounds, all deliberate destruction of the family—although that would have taken courage, at a moment when Chinese-Vatican relations are dangerously inflamed.

Or Biden might have observed that in his 2007 autobiography, *Promises to Keep*, he wrote, “I've stuck to my middle-of-the-road position on abortion for more than 30 years. I still vote against partial birth abortion and federal funding, . . . but I will also vote against a constitutional amendment that strips a woman of her right to make her own choice.” Unfortunately, even that attempt to finesse the abortion problem would have required enough cour-

IMAGINE CHINA / AP IMAGES

age to point out to his Chinese hosts that their policy of coerced abortion was not pro-choice but straightforwardly anti-choice.

For that matter, Biden might have said what his ostensible repugnance, so lately announced, seems to require—that President Bush was right in 2002 to withhold American money from the United Nations Population Fund, and President Obama was wrong in 2009 to restore funding to the U.N. agency that systematically supports China's abuse of human rights. But that would require something even more from Vice President Biden: the courage actually to believe something. The courage actually to stand for something. And that, of course, Joe Biden has always lacked.

Perhaps that's why the White House sent him to China in the first place—a sycophant who could be counted upon to fawn on the Chinese officials he met. An American who could be led off to an archery range to shoot arrows with a foolish grin on his face, determinedly not noticing as the reporters in his wake were shoved around by Chinese security and American college basketball players were attacked on court by a Chinese military team.

As it happens, one has difficulty naming who ought to have been sent to China in Biden's stead. The Chinese need to be convinced simultaneously of American

strength and American goodwill. The relatively pro-American side of internal Chinese political battles needs ammunition to use against the officials who think their best way to maintain control of the increasingly unruly population is to make an enemy of the United States and begin a second Cold War. The pro-business pieces of the Chinese mosaic want to be able to make large industrial purchases in the United States, exchanging for equity some of the enormous American debt they hold. The Communists want to use Pakistan to destabilize southern Asia and thereby make advances against India. The democracy activists—including the rising flood of Christian converts—want the United States to be a beacon of individual freedom and faith.

Even if the White House had a coherent foreign policy to deal with all this, who in the government has enough seriousness and weight to travel to China and convey such a policy? Under President Obama, we have an administration that appears to other nations to stand for little except incompetence—and to lack senior officials of any importance who might ease the international situation.

Still, there was something disturbingly weak and peculiar about giving the task to our gaffe-prone vice president. Did we have to send China our court jester? Did we have to send Joe Biden, dressed all in motley?

—Joseph Bottum

Entitlement, Tax Reform Key to Deficit Reduction and Growth

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction—the so-called super committee—needs to act expeditiously to rein in spending, reduce the deficit, and ultimately lower America's level of debt.

Enhancing economic and job growth is a prerequisite for achieving these goals, but growth alone will not be enough. The only way to tame the deficit and put us on a path to long-term growth and job creation is through reforming entitlements and restructuring the U.S. tax code.

The biggest chunk of government spending by far is entitlements—Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. We can't curb spending or reduce the deficit without reforming these programs. Anyone in favor of the status quo is in favor of consigning these programs to bankruptcy—and the nation along with them. The longer we wait to tackle entitlements, the tougher it's going to be.

Baby boomers will reach retirement age at a rate of 10,000 per day over the next 19 years. Bottom line: If we want to retain these programs for future generations, they must be reformed now.

The super committee should restructure the tax code to improve efficiency, transparency, and simplicity to drive economic growth and job creation. Comprehensive tax reform should lower overall marginal tax rates, encourage saving and investment, foster global competitiveness, increase capital accumulation, attract foreign investment, and drive job creation. Tax reform should also increase government revenue by closing loopholes, broadening the tax base, and reaping billions of dollars through activities like expanded American energy production, which could generate hundreds of billions of dollars in government revenue through leases, royalties, and stronger economic growth.

S&P's recent decision to downgrade America's credit rating is another powerful incentive for lawmakers to do the hard

work necessary to get our fiscal house in order. While the U.S. Chamber of Commerce supported the agreement to lift the debt ceiling as an important first step, let's not forget that the deal only slows the increase in the rate of spending. Even with successful implementation of the compromise plan, our public debt would continue to rise, reaching \$16 trillion at the end of 10 years. Instead of adding \$10 trillion in debt over the next decade, we will add \$7 trillion to \$8 trillion. That's not good enough.

We will never tackle debts and deficits, jump-start this recovery, reduce uncertainty, and create millions of jobs until we overhaul our tax code and reform runaway entitlement programs that threaten to push us into insolvency.

We can't kick the can down the road any longer. The time to act is now.



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An image of Qaddafi on a Benghazi wall

Free Libya Raises Its Head

With the anti-Qaddafi fighters.

BY JAMES KIRCHICK

Raise your head,” reads a graffito as you cross the Libyan border on the desert road coming from Tunisia. “You’re in Libya.” Most of the graffiti along the route leading to Tripoli that refer to the one-time “Brother Leader,” Muammar Qaddafi, aren’t as dignified. But having suffered for over four decades, Libyans can be excused if they’re a bit vulgar regarding the downfall of the Mad Dog, as Ronald Reagan once called him. And so I had to smile at the spray-painted declarations that “Qaddafi is a son of a bitch,” and the caricatures depicting the strongman with snot coming out of his nose, and the other crude denunciations that grace every imaginable surface in free Libya.

Six months after protests erupted

in the eastern city of Benghazi, rebel forces fighting under the auspices of the internationally recognized National Transitional Council (NTC) finally appear to have achieved their goal of toppling the Qaddafi regime. When initial reports emerged that rebels had entered Tripoli and made their assault on the dictator’s massive compound, Bab Al Azizia, the momentum of the past half-year made the downfall of Qaddafi all but inevitable.

Reporters have grown used to taking rebel assertions with a grain of salt. Claims that the rebels had liberated whole cities, seized strategic sites, or captured key regime figures (like Qaddafi’s favorite son, the London School of Economics Ph.D. Saif al-Islam) would often be followed by reports to the contrary. But with the free Libyan forces controlling almost all of Tripoli (as evidenced by the slew of checkpoints at practically

every other intersection), and with cars driving through streets with the pre-Qaddafi Libyan flag proudly on display, it seems only a matter of time before the last regime loyalists across the country are killed, captured, or simply give up.

That the civil war took so long, and that scattered fighting is still going on in Tripoli and in Qaddafi’s hometown of Sirte, shows just how far the Libyan dictator has been willing to go in defiance of his own people and the world. No Libyan doubted that once protests broke out on February 17, Qaddafi was willing to murder as many of his own people as necessary to remain in power. One would think that a “rational” dictator faced with an armed popular uprising and NATO bombardment, and concerned about self-preservation, would at some point give in to reality and accept an escape clause. But to presume that Qaddafi is rational is to misunderstand the nature of his dictatorship. His mad, grumbling orders last week to “purify” Tripoli of “rats, crusaders, and unbelievers,” the latest in a stream of eliminationist rhetoric, are the words of a man obviously willing to commit wholesale mass murder. It is to the credit of NATO that it decided to demonstrate that the alliance would not tolerate the perpetration of such atrocities.

A spirit of camaraderie is evident in the faces of the Libyan rebel fighters; they are rightly proud of what they have accomplished. Making my way into Libya last week via Dehiba, Tunisia, the only open land border crossing between the two countries, I stopped for a few hours in the western city of Zintan, which has been in rebel hands since April, and then proceeded to Zawiya, a suburb of Tripoli. The only working guesthouse was full of journalists, but the rebels provided me with accommodation in a grungy apartment resembling a crack den.

Later in the evening, I sat with some young rebel fighters, including Mabrouk Zagrouba, one of Zawiya’s local heroes. He is a short man, decked out in a white gown and a “FREE LIBYA” baseball cap. A former military officer, he appeared earlier this year in a widely

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circulated YouTube video that showed him donning fatigues while lambasting Qaddafi. He was arrested on March 17 and tortured for four days before rebels managed to free him.

The young men admire Zagrouba. The minute he crosses the gate they surround him with cheers, and he responds in kind by showering them with kisses on their cheeks. In one sentence he captures the worst indignity of dictatorship: how it turns ordinary men into monsters. “I never in my dreams imagined that Libyans like us—people from the internal security, military police—can do this to Libyans like me,” he told me.

Zagrouba has a novel idea of revolutionary justice: He wants to see Qaddafi captured, tried, and then every year on February 17 made to sit in a cage in a public square to face the ridicule of the people whom he humiliated and oppressed for 42 years.

The determination of Qaddafi’s hardened loyalists to keep the regime afloat is evidenced in the carnage that they have wrought across the country, particularly in Tripoli, which for a week was transformed into a jungle of urban warfare. It remains a ghost town. Driving in from Zawiya, about an hour west of Tripoli, there was almost no one on the streets, dotted with the hulks of tanks. A massive, metal statue of *The Green Book*, the vain compilation of Qaddafi’s insane, Islamo-Marxist rants, has fallen from its formerly privileged place overlooking a crossroads.

“Without Qaddafi, everything is going to be okay,” Mohammed al-Bosefi, a 24-year-old medical student, tells me. That simple sentiment encapsulates what practically everyone in Libya thinks—with the exception of those men, many of them mercenaries, still fighting for Qaddafi. “He’s a criminal,” says Isa Abudiyeh, a 70-year-old Libyan whom I met on the Tunisia-Libya border. “He supported crimes against the world, so the [world] helped us because they wanted to stop it. And they stopped it.”

Libya has been brought so low by the degradations of the Qaddafi mafia that the only place to go is up. It is not reassuring to see boys who look no

older than 15 walking around hotel lobbies with Kalashnikovs. Integrating them into a functioning, democratic, and stable state will not be easy. But there is a sense here of national unity, of pride in having accomplished something unthinkable, that one hopes will carry over into the rebuilding

effort. For too long, the peoples of the Arab world have lived in humiliation, with their heads perpetually bowed to tyrants, kings, and lunatics like Qaddafi. As victory in Tripoli draws near, at least one thing about Libya is sure—its people can indeed raise their heads high. ♦

Unfinished Business

Where’s the Lockerbie bomber?

BY TOD LINDBERG

Without doubt, the center ring under the big top in Libya is the act of deposing a brutal dictator, Muammar Qaddafi, whose long record of depredation includes the deaths of hundreds of Americans in acts of terrorism great and small. There is a side-show not to be missed, however. It concerns the fate of Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi, the convicted terrorist released to Libya from a Scottish prison two years ago supposedly on the “compassionate” grounds that his terminal prostate cancer left him with less than three months to live.

At this writing, Megrahi’s whereabouts are unknown. But he was last seen in public on Libyan state television at the end of July, at a rally in Tripoli in support of Qaddafi. That’s fitting. The Libyan government lobbied the U.K. government of Gordon Brown hard and heavy for his release. He received a hero’s welcome at the airport upon his return to Libya in August 2009. And Qaddafi himself purportedly bought him the two-story Tripoli villa in which he has been living since then.

When Pan Am Flight 103 took off from London’s Heathrow airport on December 21, 1988, there was a bomb on board. It detonated over Scotland, killing all 259 passengers and crew as well as 11 people on the ground in the village of Lockerbie. Of the dead, 189 were Americans. Physical evidence pointed to Megrahi, a Libyan intelligence officer and head of security for Libyan Arab Airlines. After much negotiation, Qaddafi agreed to hand him over for a trial before Scottish magistrates in the Netherlands. He was convicted (a second suspect was acquitted) and sentenced to life in prison in 2001. At the time, London had made a political commitment to the U.S. government that Megrahi would serve out his sentence in Scotland.

But that was then. Fast-forward to 2007-08 and the government of Prime Minister Gordon Brown, which was hot to go in pursuit of business deals with Qaddafi—including an especially big BP oil venture. Qaddafi had conditions, however. One of them was completion of a Prisoner Transfer Agreement between Libya and the U.K., whose main purpose was to secure Megrahi’s release. The Brown government and Secretary of State for Justice Jack Straw at first held out for a provision that would preclude

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letting Megrahi out. But that was a deal-breaker for Qaddafi (whose son Saif, now wanted by the International Criminal Court along with Dad for crimes against humanity, was leading the campaign from his mansion in London's rich Hampstead Garden).

The commercial interests were clear and overpowering. Straw eventually caved on the Megrahi transfer provision, clearing the way for Libya to sign off on the BP deal. Straw was also at great pains to make clear his view that under the 1998 home-rule Scotland Act, any decision to release Megrahi belonged entirely to the local authorities. Since the Scotland Act specifically reserves control over international relations for the government of the U.K., and Whitehall was well aware of the potential for international repercussions over the decision to release Megrahi either way, Straw's insistence that the real power behind the throne was the hitherto obscure cabinet secretary for justice in Scotland, Kenny MacAskill, offered a disconcerting view of the Brown government's grasp of its own foreign policy.

Meanwhile, however, a whole new vista on appeasing Qaddafi opened up with Megrahi's prostate cancer diagnosis in the summer of 2009. Qaddafi's minions—the details are in an excellent February 2011 report on a review of government papers on the Megrahi release conducted by cabinet secretary Sir Gus O'Donnell—immediately escalated their rhetoric, informing Her Majesty's Government that if Megrahi died in prison, Libya would consider it a "death sentence." Grave damage to U.K.-Libya relations would result, they warned.

So the internal debate shifted from the release of Megrahi under a Prisoner Transfer Agreement to release on "compassionate" grounds: Scottish law allows prisoners to go home if they have less than three months to live. Press reports at the time referred to Megrahi's "terminal" illness. But as to whether that meant anything more than that it was incurable, there were few details; prostate cancer can take a long time to do you in past the point at which it is incurable. And as to the

seriousness of the medical evaluation, let's just say the answer, less than three months to live, had a number of eager constituencies.

Qaddafi and Co. first of all. It's unclear why the colonel is so attached to Megrahi. Libya maintains his innocence, but a reasonable supposition is that a Megrahi back in Libya and under the control of the Qaddafi government would be less dangerous to the regime than a Megrahi in prison in Scotland who has reached the conclusion that Qaddafi doesn't care about him anymore. Who knows what stories he might tell?

The Brown government clearly saw Megrahi as an obstacle to the cultivation of further lucrative business deals with Qaddafi. As the O'Donnell report concludes:

It is evident from the paperwork, including in documentation already released, that the Libyans made explicit links between progress on U.K. commercial interests in Libya and removal of any clause in the PTA [Prisoner Transfer Agreement] whose effect would be to exclude Mr Megrahi from the PTA. It is also evident, including in documentation already released, that BP did lobby the former Government to make them aware that failure to agree to the PTA could have an impact on U.K. commercial interests, including Libyan ratification of the BP exploratory agreement (EPSA) signed in May 2007. As is already in the public domain, these commercial considerations played a part in the former U.K. Government's decision to reverse its position and agree to the removal of this exclusion clause.

Straw et al. also saw clear advantage in a Megrahi release with no fingerprints of theirs on it. An internal Whitehall memo released alongside the O'Donnell report notes,

The risks to the U.K.-Libya relationship are substantial, but we carry none of the tools to resolve the matter. The best strategy we have for insulating the relationship and mitigating those risks is reiterating that all decisions on Megrahi's possible compassionate release or transfer under the PTA are exclusively

for Scottish Ministers. . . . The U.S. position is still crystallising. . . . As with the Libya track, our best line is to stress that decisions on possible release or transfer are for the Scottish Executive. We should also reiterate that in the context of the ongoing [legal] appeal [of his conviction] that HMG's principal objective remains to uphold Megrahi's conviction and that if released or transferred that he would be so as a guilty man.

Thanks a lot.

Scotland's MacAskill, meanwhile, was well aware of the Brown government's press to improve U.K.-Libya relations and the billions of pounds at stake. He found himself in the enviable position of furthering those interests while striking a pose as a world-class humanitarian.

Of course two years later, Megrahi's survival, let alone his appearance at a Qaddafi rally, does pose a problem for the pretext for the whole sorry episode (in which the Obama administration, "crystallizing" its position rather than telling Her Majesty's Government that its foreign policy ought not to be devolved to provincial justice ministers, was hardly blameless).

But the conclusion that MacAskill got played, though true, entirely misses the point. All parties worked diligently to overcome the inconvenience to the march of commerce of a mass murderer serving out his sentence. The Brown government got exactly what it wanted.

Scottish authorities reported last week that they had lost contact with Megrahi in Libya, apparently a violation of his conditions of release. Tsk. Unfortunately, the successor Cameron government is of the view that whether Megrahi should be returned to Scotland, were that possible, remains a matter for Scottish authorities. But then, the Cameron government has found other ways to express itself on the Qaddafi regime *tout court*—as a leader of the international effort to topple him.

Maybe somebody will indeed grab Megrahi in Libya and ship him back to Scotland for violating his parole agreement. On the other hand, reports of his demise are greatly overdue. ♦

The Little Emirate That Could

Qatar versus Qaddafi.

BY LEE SMITH



The Qaddafi compound in Tripoli: A rebel stands between the flags of Qatar and Libya.

With Muammar Qaddafi perhaps on his last legs, Libyan rebel leaders are looking for \$5 billion to rebuild a country wracked by nearly half a year of civil war. It's hardly surprising that the first international aid conference is scheduled for Qatar, since no Arab leader has provided more assistance to the rebels than that country's 59-year-old emir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

As one of the first countries to recognize the National Transitional Council, Qatar supplied the rebels with arms, uniforms, and \$400 million in aid, while also helping the rebels sell their oil. Not least, Qatar provided invaluable moral support with its exhaustive coverage of the rebels on the Al Jazeera TV network, the emir's powerful public diplomacy wing.

In exchange for its help, Doha, the

world's premier exporter of liquefied natural gas, will likely seek a role in developing Libya's natural gas resources. But even if Qaddafi beats the odds and somehow manages to hunker down for a time, the Qataris have already won what they sought in backing the rebels: prestige and influence. While the Arab Spring has overturned the Middle East status quo and the new order has yet to be born, money, diplomacy, and cunning have already helped establish Qatar as a rising regional power. The question is, what does Doha want?

No one has enjoyed the fruits of the Arab Spring more than Qatar. The competing outside powers—the United States and its Iranian adversary—both sport mixed records over the last half a year: Washington lost two allies, Tunisia and most significantly Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, while on the other side of the ledger Iran's client Syria may well

succumb to an opposition movement that shows no sign of tiring. But Doha, balancing relationships with both Washington and Tehran, has gone from strength to strength.

First there was Egypt, a longtime target of Al Jazeera, which prides itself on the role it played in bringing down Mubarak. And yet, when the Shia-majority opposition took to the streets in Bahrain, Al Jazeera remained silent. With Qatar keeping to the Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council consensus, Bahrain has weathered the storm and put down its opposition.

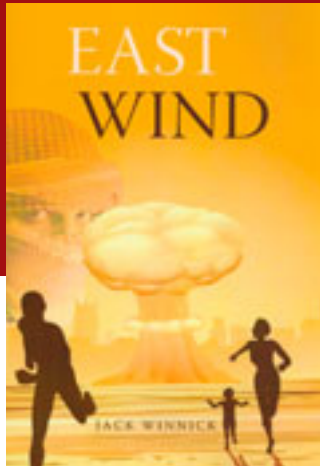
Syrian president Bashar al-Assad is having a much harder time of it, partly because Al Jazeera is shining its spotlights on him and inviting opposition figures to air their grievances with his bloody regime. While some regional observers speculated that the emir turned against his friend and ally Assad after the Syrians blasted Al Jazeera's famous tele-preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi for coming out in favor of the uprising, other Qatar-watchers think it's unlikely Qaradawi led the way. "Probably Qaradawi's position was an indication of where Qatar already was," says Robert Malley, head of the International Crisis Group's Middle East and North Africa section. "Qatar's stance on Syria was reflective of a mood already pervasive around the region."

Malley notes that Qatari policy was different before the Arab Spring. "Previously Doha tried to exercise influence by mediating conflicts. In Lebanon, they had relations with Hezbollah as well as their March 14 opponents. They tried to mediate between Hamas and Israel as well as Fatah. But they found, not surprisingly, that it's very difficult to maintain good relations with parties at loggerheads. With the Arab Spring, the Qataris decided they would take sides."

This new posture has already won Doha some enmity around the region. Qaddafi reportedly dispatched a team to Tunis to bomb the Qatari embassy there, and Doha's embassy in Damascus was attacked by Assad loyalists, after which Qatar closed its compound and withdrew its ambassador. And now it seems that Qatar's unlikeliest

Lee Smith is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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bilateral relationship is about to be suspended. Doha hosted an Israeli interests office until 2009, when, in the wake of Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, Arab and Muslim pressure compelled the Qataris to send home the head of the delegation. But even then Doha was keen on maintaining relations with Israel—even with Qatar's continued funding of Hamas, and Al Jazeera's relentless anti-Israel incitement. A report last week in the Israeli press explained that an incensed Jerusalem is breaking off all relations with Doha and will no longer give permits to Al Jazeera journalists.

The fact is that outside the Libyan rebels, elements of the Syrian opposition, and the Islamist component of the Egyptian revolution, Qatar has few real friends. It's true that there was little daylight between the United States and Europe on Libya, which seems to be the case so far regarding Syria policy as well, but the State Department is said to be deeply suspicious of Qatar, since it is usually trying to undermine Saudi Arabia and by extension the United States. And yet as Elliott Abrams, senior fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, notes, "the rise of Qatari influence coincides with Saudi decline."

The same might be said about the rest of the region, for as the Arab Spring has made evident, the Arab political system is moribund. Even before Egypt unraveled in the wake of Mubarak's downfall, the regime was static and loath to exercise the sort of positive influence that might have put it in conflict with radical actors like Iran and Syria. The Saudis are comatose, a ruling order whose chief concern is succession, and the king, crown prince, and his likely successor are all ailing. Riyadh has expressed its displeasure with the Obama administration, but as botched Saudi strategy in Iraq and Lebanon shows, the notion that the Saudi establishment is capable of crafting a coherent foreign policy is a fantasy.

For several years now, as Abrams notes, "it is the non-Arab powers [of the region] that seem to have been calling the shots, the Persians, the Turks,

and the Jews." However, the Libyan and Syrian conflicts have shown the limits of Turkish influence in the Arabic-speaking Middle East, while Israel has wisely stayed out of the conversation. Iran is a different matter.

Last week the emir of Qatar traveled to Iran to meet with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Presumably the main topic of conversation was Syria. Assad's survival is a vital strategic interest for the Iranians, who need the Syrian border with Lebanon to supply Hezbollah with arms. If the Qataris are feeling their oats after helping to corner Qaddafi, the large gas field that Qatar shares with Iran still probably gives Tehran enough leverage to neutralize Doha and keep it from playing the same role in Syria that it did in Libya by arming and funding anti-Qaddafi rebels.

Qatar filled a vacuum in Libya. Unlike Syria, a life-and-death matter for Iran, Libya was no one's core interest, seemingly mattering most to the Europeans with whom the Qataris aligned themselves. In a manner of speaking, Qatar is a vacuum power, a tiny country of 1.5 million that is running circles around the rest of the Arabs simply because there is someone in Doha who answers the phone. And that's all Qatar wants—to stay on everyone's speed dial.

Nimble and decisive, Qatar isn't the first to play the role of regional spoiler, but few have pulled it off so successfully, and none before Doha has enjoyed the open field that the Arab Spring made available. Still, Qatar has no grand vision for the region, no politics or ideology to speak of, neither democracy nor radicalism, both of which might work against the ruling Al-Thani family's favor.

It's no coincidence that Qatar fought so hard to host the 2022 World Cup, since spectacle is what Doha is all about. They've managed to pick all the Arab Spring's winners, which is to say that, if you want to understand where the Middle East is heading, it is important to watch what the Qataris are doing. For better and for worse, the new regional order is taking shape around them. ♦

Obama's Enablers

Meet the mainstream media.

BY FRED BARNES



As a rule, the press is the scourge of presidents. They're expected to endure unending scrutiny, mistrust, and badgering—plus hostility if they're Republicans—by a hectoring herd of reporters and commentators in the mainstream media. But there's an exception to the rule: President Obama.

It's counterintuitive, but Obama has been hurt by the media's leniency. Both his presidency and reelection prospects have suffered. He's grown lazy and complacent. The media have encouraged him to believe his speeches are irresistible political catnip, though they aren't. His overreliance on words hasn't helped.

The kind of media pressure that can

cause a president to sharpen his game, act with urgency, or take bolder steps—that has never been applied to Obama. If it had, I suspect he'd be a more effective, disciplined, energetic, and popular president today. Ronald Reagan is a good role model in this regard. When the media attacked him over gaffes in the 1980 campaign, "Reagan responded like all competitive men by working to improve himself," says Reagan historian Craig Shirley. "Experience taught him to be better and try harder." He took this lesson into the White House.

I don't want to exaggerate the media's baneful influence on Obama. It's hardly the main reason for his decline. It's a secondary reason, and it continues to have an impact.

Absent pushing and prodding by the press, the Obama presidency has atrophied. His speeches are defensive and

repetitive and filled with excuses. He passes the buck. With persistently high unemployment and a weak economy, Obama recently declared, in effect, "I have a plan. See you after my vacation." The press doesn't goad him to lead.

On the contrary, the media have condoned Obama's avoidance of leadership. It started when he let Nancy Pelosi draft the \$800 billion stimulus and continued when congressional Democrats put together the health care, cap and trade, and financial industry reform bills. Few media eyebrows were raised. True, the press attacked his 2012 budget as inadequate. But when he replaced it with a partisan speech, the media's criticism of this bizarre and unprecedented behavior was mild.

The White House disputes suggestions Obama isn't leading. Following a nationally televised speech by the president in July, Ed Henry of Fox News asked about the nonexistence of an "Obama plan" for solving the spending and debt problem. "Republican talking point," press secretary Jay Carney said dismissively.

A few days later, Carney acted surprised at a *Wall Street Journal* reporter's failure to understand how extending unemployment benefits once more would create jobs. "I would expect a reporter from the *Wall Street Journal* would know this as part of the entrance exam," he said.

In Washington, the plight of the jobless has been underplayed, and not only by the media. The White House has promised for two years to "pivot" to an agenda stressing job creation, but still hasn't made the turn. On his three-day bus tour in the Midwest, Obama seemed oblivious to the depth of the unemployment trauma.

"Private sector job growth is good," he said in Alpha, Illinois. In reality, it's bad and getting worse. "The economy is now growing again," he said. Barely. Obama said trade deals and patent reform would promote hiring, if only Congress would approve them. But it's the president who has delayed the trade treaties, and both houses of Congress have passed patent reform measures.

The media routinely give Obama a

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GARY LOCKE

pass on such stuff. On the tour, Obama insisted, as he has many times before, that he saved the nation from a “Great Depression.” So far as I know, the press has never challenged this dubious claim. But it is belied by the fact the recession came to an official end in June 2009, months before Obama’s policies could have played more than a minimal role.

Ask yourself this: If unemployment were treated by the media today as the top national issue, as it was in 1982 and 1983 when Reagan was president, would Obama be dawdling? Not likely. The jobless rate then was only slightly higher than it is now. But in those days, the press focused relentlessly on the jobless.

“If Washington policymakers were reminded night after night of the real unemployment heartache in America now, they would forge a bipartisan jobs plan immediately,” says Washington consultant David Smick. “Here we have a real crisis and nobody’s talking about it.” At least not enough.

A saying of a friend of mine touches on why the media disserve Obama by tolerating his habit of offering excuses for every failure or shortcoming of his presidency. The saying goes, winners accept responsibility, losers make excuses.

When the negotiations over a \$4-billion “grand bargain” on spending cuts and deficit reduction broke down in July, the White House blamed House speaker John Boehner for walking out rather than acceding to a hefty tax hike. Who did the media blame? Boehner, naturally.

But is the public mollified by excuses? I don’t think so. Had Obama summoned Boehner back to the White House, eased his demand for higher taxes, and wrapped up a deal, the public would have been impressed. Obama would have gotten credit, just as he did last December when a bipartisan compromise was reached on spending and taxes. This time, the notion that Obama, as president, might have a responsibility to forge an agreement was lost on the media.

Interviewed by Anthony Mason of CBS News last week, Obama offered

a fresh excuse for failing to get his way with Congress. People “want me to be able to wrangle Congress and get them moving,” he said. “And you know, we’ve got this thing, separation of powers. . . . It means that there are times where Congress is gonna do things” he opposes. Separation of

powers? He might as well have blamed Hamilton and Madison.

His interviewer didn’t follow up on that unique alibi. He asked Obama, were he a middle-class voter, if he would vote for him for a second term. “Well,” Obama said, “I actually would.” ♦

Lifestyles of the Rich and Political

Shouldn’t our candidates’ consumption be less conspicuous? BY NOEMIE EMERY

DEAR MITT ROMNEY: Please don’t knock down your \$12 million beach house in California and replace it with a new one almost four times its size. At least not while you’re running for president and your campaign has yet to catch fire. We know it gets cramped, but a lot of other people are cramped also, what with either being unemployed and having to move in with their relatives, or putting up college grad children who cannot find jobs, or having to downsize from the house they once lived in, but now can’t afford. Doing this now could seem like a poke in the eye to these people, whose trust funds weren’t quite the size of yours, and who saw their retirement funds dwindle through no fault of their own. For the next few years, your guests can find a motel, double up, or crash on the floor in a sleeping bag. If you have to go big, you can do it in the third year of your first term, when thanks to you, the economy is once again booming. Or you can do it after you’ve lost (either the primaries or the presidential election), when you will be your own man again and quite free to do and to spend as you please.

DEAR BARACK OBAMA: Do go ahead

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and have a lovely vacation, enjoying life with your wife and adorable children, but not at a 28-acre estate on Martha’s Vineyard that rents for \$50,000 a week. Not when you’re running for reelection, and your approval ratings are down around 40 percent, when long-term unemployment has become a huge problem, and the country’s credit rating has been downgraded for the first time in history. If you need room to relax, you have three fairly large houses, two of them owned and maintained by the public, one of them in a nice rural setting, and with many amenities. (There is also a big empty house in Chicago that you haven’t seen for quite a long time.) For many people, \$50,000 would be a big down payment for a house in which they would live on a permanent basis. For some, it would buy a house in its entirety. For most (though perhaps not for your friends), it would amount to their entire income for a year. That’s what you might call quite an income disparity.

People have noted that your summers (and especially Augusts) tend to be difficult, perhaps because they are the times that you are at the Vineyard, where the gap between what you preach and the way that you live is especially evident. Perhaps, like Mitt, you might be well advised to defer large expenses until such time as you are back in the

private sector, which, in both of your cases, may be sooner than either of you had planned. Perhaps in 2013, you will be free to live on the Vineyard on a year-round basis. And, if he wants another beach house, this on the Atlantic, Mitt could build one near you.

DEAR NEWT: Close out all accounts outstanding at Tiffany's, and do not open them ever again. If you must visit the place, take a tip from the film, and bring in a ring from a Cracker Jack box for engraving. Otherwise, never allow the idea of jewelry to cross your mind. In your case, it is less the money spent than what was bought with it: A house, however extravagant, is a necessity, and has a large, solid, aspect. A jewel is the essence of extravagance, also of uselessness, and is thus nothing more than a frill. Buying jewels by the quart or the carton is associated with sports stars and rock stars, playboys and showgirls, malefactors of great wealth (who have a bad name already), or with Ari Onassis trying to impress Jackie Kennedy, or Richard Burton when he tried to please Liz. It is not associated with great politicians, statesmen, or philosopher kings. Your chances of being rated among them have taken on water. Diamonds may be a girl's best friend on different occasions. They are not, and will never be, yours.

Dear JOHN [MR. TERESA HEINZ] KERRY: Are you having some down time on the *Isabel*, the yacht you bought for about \$7 million just as the recession closed in? We hope you enjoy the varnished teak table, the wine storage, the wet bar, and the customized suites for the help. (And did you get around to paying the \$500,000 in taxes that you tried to evade by docking the yacht out of state?) How nice to know you have someplace to go when your five mansions on land will not satisfy. Do you remember that right after your loss in 2004 to George Bush, a reporter (on *Washington Week in Review*, as we seem to recall) praised you for having been "true to your lifestyle," for not playing the hick as Bush did, but exercising your right to revel in money, to ski in Sun Valley, take your jets everywhere, and go windsurfing off the coast of Nantucket wearing

those cute flowered shorts? Did you ever think that this might have been one of the reasons you lost?

Or was it because you and your running mate had assembled more wealth between you—not to mention more square feet of real estate, most of it in very good neighborhoods—than any ticket before or since? And you, John Edwards, with your 28,000-square-foot compound, to which to repair when you tired yourself from your antipov-erty speeches! Too bad you never got much use out of "John's Lounge." Perhaps when the verdict comes in from your trial for misappropriation of campaign funds—such as shaking down the 100-year-old Mellon heiress for the cash to sequester the girlfriend who was having your baby—you may live for a few years in federal housing and get to find out how the Other America lives. A signal event in your campaign was the day in which the two of you and your wives went to a diner to commune with the plain folk, poked away in dismay at one or two of the dishes, and then decamped to a posh yacht club to do your real eating. Perhaps the folks had you both figured out.

DEAR RICK PERRY (or whoever else gets the GOP nomination, or anyone in either party who may contemplate a run for president ever): Please heed the words of columnist Mark Steyn and promise to restore a sense of thrift and proportion to the conduct of public affairs.

One by one, the five examples cited above may not seem that damning, but they are becoming more and more common, and together suggest a large and bipartisan governing stratum that is completely insulated and immune from the strains that beset normal people, not to mention addicted to luxury, privilege, and grandeur to a toxic extent. Add private wealth (augmented by book and TV fees) to the perks and the freebies provided by government, and you have a class to whom money—its own, or that of the people—means little to nothing at all. Obama uses Air Force One more or less as a taxi, taking it to New York for date night (and tying up the whole

city with his security retinue), taking it, as Steyn tells us, "from Washington to a Democratic party retreat in Williamsburg, Va., 150 miles away." He toured the Midwest in a million-dollar-plus bus that looked like a hearse out of *Star Wars*, trailed through the hinterland by a 40-car motorcade containing more people than some towns. (Air Force One is built to hold 500 people, and costs \$200,000 an hour to run.)

Nancy Pelosi, herself a millionaire many times over, commandeered an Army jet during her tenure as speaker to go back and forth from California to Washington. As Steyn says, this reeks more of Latin America than of our early republic, and makes one realize why there was a big run on tumbrels in late 18th-century France.

The excuses made for these acute spendaholics make little or no sense at all. Families such as the Roosevelts, Bushes, and Kennedys have been well-to-do, but they never indulged in such orgies of spending. They lived like exceedingly comfortable upper-middle-class people, not the spoiled darlings of professional sports or Hollywood. Their houses could fit in one wing of the John Edwards homestead. They were land-poor compared with today's mega-mansion grandees.

Many conservatives say it's their money, which they can spend as they like, which is true. But the rest of us are free to watch them doing their spending, and then make our own judgments as to whether overindulgence in the goods of the world may in fact speak to a character weakness, like overindulgence in women and drink. One of the things that injured John Kerry was the sense he conveyed that the wealth he enjoyed (which was about five degrees of separation from the people who had earned it) was his just deserts, bestowed on him as a wonderful person by a wise and beneficent Providence. The first JFK, who had a sense of proportion (and gave much of his earnings to various charities), would never have made that mistake.

Because of the crushing burdens of our national debt, today's political leaders will have to oversee a vast scaling-back of programs and

spending, for which they will need a super-sized quotient of moral authority. How can they ask people who do not have much money to accept reductions in benefits when they are supersizing their third house and first seaside mansion, gorging themselves on yachts and diamonds, and

taking vacations at \$50,000 per week?

So if you're contemplating a run for the White House these days, you might want to join Steyn in his call for "restoring the lifestyle of the president to something Calvin Coolidge might recognize." It might even be a winning strategy. ♦

Childs at Play

The FBI's Cold War triumph.

BY HARVEY KLEHR, JOHN EARL HAYNES & RONALD RADOSH

For more than 30 years the broad outlines of one of the FBI's most successful counterintelligence operations have been widely known. Exposed by historian David Garrow in his 1981 book *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.* and elaborated by journalist John Barron in his 1996 book, *Operation Solo: The FBI's Man in the Kremlin*, "Operation Solo" involved two brothers, Morris and Jack Childs, who reported to the FBI while serving as the Communist Party of the United States' (CPUSA) main couriers to the Soviet Union. Recruited in the early 1950s, the Childs brothers had become disillusioned with communism; over the years they gave American intelligence an insider's view of Communist plans, thinking, and priorities.

Morris Childs was by far the more significant figure. A member of the CPUSA since 1921, onetime head of the Chicago party and editor of the *Daily Worker*, Morris had drifted away from the organization after losing a power struggle in the late 1940s and because of serious heart problems he developed soon after. Persuaded by the bureau to reestablish his ties to a party reeling from defections, government prosecutions, and severe financial shortfalls,

he managed to persuade Eugene Dennis, leader of the CPUSA, to allow him to establish connections with Moscow to ask for money. By June 1957 he was head of the CPUSA's Foreign Affairs Committee, the party's "ambassador" to the Soviet Union, China, Eastern Europe, and later Cuba. Gus Hall, who became the party's general secretary in the 1960s, referred to Morris Childs as his "secretary of state."

The Childs brothers became the conduits through which Moscow financed American communism, receiving large sums of cash from Canadian Communist couriers and KGB officers serving in the United States. Morris happened to be in the Kremlin when it got word that Lee Harvey Oswald, who had defected to the Soviet Union from 1959-62, had assassinated President Kennedy; he was able to assure his FBI handlers that the Soviets were stunned and had no hand in the operation. Their contributions were so important that Ronald Reagan awarded both brothers the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which Jack Childs received posthumously.

At the time of Garrow's exposé, Operation Solo was still active, although Jack's death in 1980 and Morris's age and ill health had largely curtailed its reach. The FBI put Morris and his wife into a protective custody program and maintained an official silence. The CPUSA reacted with horror, officially pooh-poohing

the revelations, but some members used the case to castigate their aging leader, Gus Hall, whom they wanted to replace. Last month the FBI finally released the first portion of its file on the case. It amounts to more than 3,000 pages, tracing the operation from January 1958, when Morris made his first trip to Moscow, to 1960.

Although there are no stunning revelations, there is plenty of fascinating detail in the file about a remarkable American intelligence coup and the difficulties and challenges it presented. The material exposes a few secret party members. On one trip to Moscow, Morris's fellow-delegate, the black Communist James Jackson, asked that Coleman Young, a future mayor of Detroit and a secret CPUSA member, be invited to Russia to study Marxism-Leninism; the Soviets vetoed him as too old.

One group of secret Communists in the States was led by Arthur Kinoy, a radical lawyer who ended his long career as a distinguished professor at Rutgers Law School, and included Dr. Jeremiah Stamler, a pioneering cardiologist at Northwestern Medical School, whose lawsuit marked one of the first successful challenges to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). And, contrary to Garrow's earlier judgment that Stanley Levison, a key aide and supporter of Martin Luther King Jr., had terminated his role as a financial source for the CPUSA, Eugene Dennis told Morris in 1958 that the Levison "group," active in the NAACP and the American Jewish Congress, still provided money from party businesses it controlled to a New York functionary and activist, the African-American Communist leader Benjamin J. Davis.

During this period Morris and Jack made seven trips to Russia, China, Eastern Europe, and Cuba. They met with high-ranking party leaders, ranging from Otto Kuusinen, Mikhail Suslov, and Boris Ponomarev to Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, bringing back official documents and reports of their hosts' views on issues from Berlin to Taiwan to the Sino-Soviet split, information that was extremely valuable to American

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policymakers in assessing Soviet and Communist Chinese motives and policies. J. Edgar Hoover regularly sent summaries to Vice President Richard Nixon, aides to President Dwight Eisenhower, Secretary of State Christian Herter, and CIA chief Allen Dulles, along with a warning about how sensitive the source was.

The Chicago FBI office, which handled the day-to-day details of Operation Solo, occasionally locked horns with FBI headquarters, worrying that the dissemination might endanger the brothers. The Chicago agents developed a warm relationship with Morris, fretted constantly about his health—at one point they obtained Washington's approval to send him to the Mayo Clinic for a checkup—and periodically asked Hoover to write him letters of appreciation. One report praised Morris for his patriotism. It brought tears to his eyes when he read it, since it vindicated his decision to turn against communism and work for the bureau. Headquarters chastised Chicago for being too lax with Morris, reminding them that the FBI, not Morris, was in charge of the operation.

There were myriad difficult decisions and thorny problems to solve. The bureau helped Morris procure a false passport to use on his first trip. When Jack had to apply for a passport, the bureau was nervous because he had been named in a HUAC report for using a false passport in 1932 when he had attended the Lenin School. Since both brothers regularly violated U.S. laws on money transfers, the FBI tried to keep careful records of the flow of Soviet money. Some of the stickiest problems came when Jack and Morris obtained information that dealt with other FBI informers in the CPUSA.

In March 1959 a Soviet security officer asked Morris why the Americans had done so little to root out FBI agents in the CPUSA. The bureau dithered about whether Morris should mention this concern to Gene Dennis, worried that it might lead to a campaign that would uncover some of their many informants. If he kept silent, however, the Russians might get suspicious or upset. In 1960 the Soviets named

Clarence Hathaway, a long-time Communist and newly appointed head of the New York District, as an FBI agent (there is no evidence that he was one). When Morris told Gus Hall and Dennis, they were too stunned and afraid to do anything. After the Russians were unable to come up with any evidence, Hathaway was left alone.

Soviet money flowed freely and copiously into the CPUSA's coffers. Until the spring of 1959 most was ferried to New York by Elizabeth Mascolo, the common-law wife of Canadian party leader Tim Buck. Soviet couriers made regular trips to Canada with the money. In April 1959 Vladimir Barkovsky, a KGB officer, handed Jack Childs \$50,000 in cash at Jack's office in the Flatiron Building in Manhattan. The following January he returned with \$72,885 in bills of \$50 or less, "the dirtiest and oldest money" Jack had ever seen. The Childs brothers secreted the money in safe deposit boxes and doled it out to Dennis and, later, to Gus Hall. One shipment went to publish the *Worker*, support ailing party districts, and buttress union organizing and work among black Americans. Morris assured Boris Ponomarev that the CPUSA kept two sets of books. Soviet money was entered as donations from individuals. From December 1959 to April 1960 alone it amounted to \$410,000.

Not even this substantial subsidy was enough to stave off political disaster for the CPUSA. It continued to be plagued by factionalism and a tone-deafness to American life that occasionally startled even the Russians. At a Moscow meeting with a group of Russian writers, James Jackson denounced William Faulkner as "a plantation owner," while the bemused Russians praised his writing.

Another key concern was what the Communists called "the Negro question." In the 1930s, following Stalin's lead, the CPUSA had declared that American Negroes in the Southern "black belt" were a nation and could decide to secede from the United States. Self-determination for the black belt remained official Communist

policy into the 1950s, even though it had long been discreetly ignored. That did not stop Suslov from telling James Jackson in 1958 that the CPUSA could not "base its theories and policies on resolutions adopted by the Communist International more than thirty years ago." The aging Russian lectured the black American Communist about the "great changes" in the status of American Negroes and warned Jackson that if the CPUSA did not ditch the "Negro liberation" theory, it would make "terrible, catastrophic or abrupt mistakes." He instructed Jackson to eliminate the policy originally imposed on the CPUSA by Moscow—which the party soon did.

The Childs brothers' reports made it clear that the American Communist party was at all times beholden entirely to the Soviets, both in its politics and finances. In one 1958 report, top Soviet Communist leaders told Morris Childs that the American CP had to consider itself "a revolutionary party" and that it had to "get rid of anyone who says anything to the contrary." Moreover, Childs was told to instruct the comrades that the CPUSA "has to have as its final aim the overthrow of the bourgeois(ie) and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat." They added that party members had to "accept this principle even though it may be disguised when it is incorporated in the party program." These instructions came at a time of ferment in the American party's ranks, as the Soviet invasion of Hungary had produced a group of dissidents and a new group of "revisionists" led by John Gates who sought to reform the CP and make it into a democratic socialist vehicle, ditching Leninist doctrine in the process.

In the fall of 1960, KGB agent Vladimir Barkovsky complained to Morris Childs that someone reading the *Worker* might think they were reading *Pravda*. The CPUSA press reflected the positions of Moscow so well that a Soviet reader could not detect any difference in it from his own country's propaganda organs. Morris Childs, hearing Barkovsky's words, no doubt smiled to himself. ♦

Being Obama

It's all about him

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

Once upon a time we had a president who sulked that his relatively uneventful tenure denied him the chance to thrust his way into greatness. In the days after 9/11, the *New York Times* carried a quotation from a “close friend” about Bill Clinton’s misfortune: “He has said there has to be a defining moment in a presidency that really makes a great presidency. He didn’t have one.” Clinton, the *Times* reported, was “described by friends as a frustrated spectator, unable to guide the nation through a crisis that is far bigger than anything he confronted in his eight-year tenure.”

This tracked with earlier accounts from two of Clinton’s advisers. George Stephanopoulos wrote that Clinton “envied Lincoln his enemies, knowing that it takes a moral challenge to create a memorable presidency.” In his book about his White House years, Dick Morris related a conversation he had with Clinton about his place in history. “You can’t be first tier,” Morris explained gently to his boss, “unless unanticipated historical forces put you there.” “Like a war,” Clinton agreed glumly, before asking, a little more hopefully, “Okay, second tier?”

At the time, this sort of wistfulness seemed the height of vanity. Today, it’s almost charmingly quaint.

Earlier this year on March 11, a Friday, Japan was struck by a 9.0-magnitude earthquake. An hour later a 30-foot tidal wave swamped the northeast portion of the country, killing thousands and leaving devastation in its wake. Four hours after that, Japan declared itself in a state of nuclear emergency. Within days, at least three of the country’s nuclear reactors were in states of partial meltdown. While the crisis in Japan was accelerating, oil prices continued to hover around \$100 per barrel, America’s domestic economic recovery continued to disintegrate, a revolution in Libya continued to blossom

into a full-fledged civil conflict, and American troops continued to fight in Afghanistan.

On Saturday, March 12, President Obama played golf. On Monday, March 14, President Obama visited a middle school in Northern Virginia to kick off a week’s worth of activities centered around “Winning the Future” of education. Because it was a big day, he also kicked off a “Sunshine Week” celebration to trumpet reforms to the Freedom of Information Act. On Tuesday, March 15, President Obama sat down with ESPN to tape a segment about his NCAA March Madness picks.

As he surveyed the globe you could practically hear Obama thinking to himself, Chance the Gardener-style, *I like to watch . . .*



We’ve seen this President Obama all too often. It started with the stimulus. Instead of crafting his own bill, one which put government money into projects with both economic impact and practical benefit—like, say, defense procurement—he handed the job to Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid. The result was \$787 billion for Democratic clients and “shovel-ready projects” that, Obama now says laughingly, were never really shovel-ready. He took the same approach with his health care reform act, arguing and arm-twisting from the sidelines without getting involved in the specifics of the legislation. After having a budget rejected by the Senate (97-0) last March, he declined to put forward another plan. Oh, he talked a lot

about what his plans *might* be. His collected mutterings on the subject prompted Congressional Budget Office director Douglas Elmendorf to quip, “We don’t estimate speeches.”

But it’s not just his executive approach to policy. When BP’s Deepwater Horizon rig blew up last summer, Obama spent a lot of time on peripheral activities. As the rig was leaking in May, he sat for an interview about basketball with Marv Albert, toured the country promoting the stimulus, and met with Duke’s basketball team. During a memorial service for the workers killed on the oil rig, he was on his

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AP / STEVEN SENNE

way to a fundraiser in California. When he did finally get down to Louisiana, the very first thing Obama did after he walked off the plane—literally—was put his arm around Gov. Bobby Jindal and take him aside. He did not want to talk about the spill in the Gulf. Jindal explains what followed in his book, *Leadership and Crisis*:

I was expecting words of concern about the oil spill, worry about the pending ecological disaster, and words of confidence about how the federal government was here to help. Or perhaps he was going to vent about BP's slow response. But no, the president was upset about something else. And he wanted to talk about, well, food stamps. Actually, he wanted to talk about a letter that my administration had sent to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack a day earlier.

The letter was rudimentary, bureaucratic, and ordinary. . . . We were simply asking the federal government to authorize food stamps for those who were now unemployed because of the oil spill. Governors regularly make these sorts of requests to the federal government when facing disaster.

But somehow, for some reason, President Obama had personalized this. And he was upset.

There was not a word about the oil spill. He was concerned about looking bad because of the letter. "Careful," he said to me, "this is going to get bad for everyone."

This summer it wasn't a single oil rig that exploded but the entire nation's economy, which is now rushing toward a double-dip recession. In the last month America's long-term sovereign debt rating was downgraded, the Dow Jones shed nearly 10 percent of its value, unemployment stayed firmly over 9 percent, and the Fiserv/Case-Shiller Indexes pushed their projections for a housing recovery even further back, to the second quarter of 2012. All of which prompted President Obama to travel around the Midwest on a bus for three days. On the fourth day, he flew to Martha's Vineyard for a well-deserved rest.

What makes President Obama's executive passivity so interesting is that it seems to be a symptom not of policy uncertainty, but of personal narcissism. The president is free to delegate the tasks of the president because he's already done the important job of simply showing up. It's the same impulse that leads him to make all sorts of claims about the singularity of his tenure. For instance, at an August 15 town hall event in Minnesota, he boasted that after his administration took control of General Motors and Chrysler, the two companies posted profits for the "first time in decades," even though both companies were profitable as recently as 2004. Similarly, he recently lectured reporters that,

What I have done—and this is unprecedented, by the way; no administration has done this before—is I've said to each agency, "Don't just look at current regulations or don't just look at future regulations, regulations that we're proposing. Let's go backwards and look at regulations that are already on the books and if they don't make sense, let's get rid of them."

The Government Accounting Office sheepishly noted that "every president since President Carter has directed agencies to evaluate or reconsider existing regulations." These little delusions give a window into Obama's view of the relationship between his office and his self. Policy and initiative aren't the point of his presidency. He is.

President Obama never tires of inserting himself into measurement of the world around him. Bestowing the Medal of Honor on Staff Sgt. Sal Giunta at the White House last November, President Obama felt it important to add his personal endorsement of the man: "Now, I'm going to go off-script here for a second and just say I really like this guy." In a statement about the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, Obama began by noting, "One year ago, I was humbled to receive the Nobel Peace Prize—an award that speaks to our highest aspirations, and that has been claimed by giants of history and courageous advocates who have sacrificed for freedom and justice." On the Sunday after the 2010 midterm elections, Obama appeared on *60 Minutes* to talk about his view of America going forward. "I think that I've learned that America is incredibly resilient," he said, before continuing, "I think I've learned about myself that I'm pretty resilient too." That's right, America: You can knock Barack Obama down, but he's going to get right back up and govern you, like it or not.

When people don't appreciate how important the job of being Barack Obama is, our president can get a little testy. "As time passes, you start taking it for granted that a guy named Barack Hussein Obama is president of the United States," he told a group of donors in March. "But we should never take it for granted. . . . I hope that all of you still feel that sense of excitement and that sense of possibility." Last November he met with Afghanistan's president, Hamid Karzai, who began his remarks by thanking the president for setting the "tone right" for their talks. Obama huffed, "That was my goal. Every once in a while, I do things right."

In his postelection press conference that month, Obama complained that one of the problems his party has is that Americans don't get to see him doing the hard work of being president. For instance, he mentioned that he reads letters from ordinary Americans all the time:

Those letters that I read every night, some of them just break my heart. Some of them provide me encouragement and inspiration. But nobody is filming me reading those letters. And so it's hard, I think, for people to get a sense of, well, how is he taking in all this information?

It was good of the president to let voters off the hook for not understanding how hard he works on their behalf.

And he didn't have to do that. Especially since, back in August 2009, the White House *did* film him sitting up late at night reading letters from Ordinary Americans. They even posted the video on the White House website and YouTube.

Maybe that's why the president sometimes seems exasperated with the country he's allowed to follow him. Just two days before the earthquake hit Japan, the *New York Times* carried an amazing little nugget: "Mr. Obama has told people that it would be so much easier to be the president of China," the *Times* reported. "As one official put it, 'No one is scrutinizing Hu Jintao's words in [Cairo's] Tahrir Square.'"

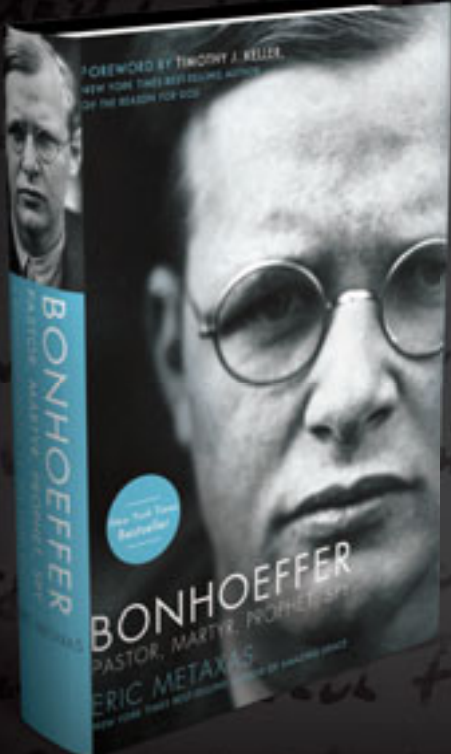
He's right—Hu has a pretty sweet deal. Yet it's not clear that Obama really would be happy as president of China. After all, China's a big country with a lot of problems, too. And even Hu Jintao is expected to show some initiative. Tibetan monks don't suppress themselves. But at least Hu probably has some awesome electronic gadgets at his disposal. Holograms, videophones, maybe even a Death Ray. Last spring Obama complained during a fundraiser, "The Oval Office, I always thought I was going to have really cool phones and stuff. . . . I'm like, c'mon guys, I'm the president of the United States. Where's the fancy buttons and stuff and the big screen comes up? It doesn't happen."

But we should forgive Obama his mutterings. Petulance

is merely a sister of narcissism—and it's not as if we didn't know what we were getting into with this president. In 2004 Ryan Lizza penned a profile of Obama for the *Atlantic Monthly*. Obama was running for Senate at the time, largely unopposed. Lizza sat with Obama one day while the candidate was making fundraising phone calls. As he talked to the donors, he started drawing a little sketch on the newspaper lying in front of him. Lizza reported:

I couldn't help noticing, when we sat down to talk in the dilapidated storefront that houses his Springfield campaign headquarters, that the blue-pen drawing he'd doodled on his newspaper during fundraising calls was a portrait of himself.

Bill Clinton's vanity was that he wished he could have been at the center of a world historical event. Barack Obama's vanity is that he believes he *is* a world historical event. And the greatness of his being dwarfs any necessity to establish greatness through action. That's why, despite his passivity as president, we're likely to see a much more vigorous Obama in the coming months as he switches from governing to campaigning. However ambivalent he may be about leading the country, arguing for the indispensability of Barack Obama is the one project that has always commanded his full attention. ♦



**"NOT TO ACT,
IS TO ACT."**
DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

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The End of the New Deal Order

It won't win the future

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

The reporter went to the City of Light in the summer of 1925. He found himself in the capital of a nation at the height of its military, economic, and cultural power. The continental empires that had been threats to France—Germany, the Hapsburgs, Russia—were smoldering wrecks. France's economy seemed to have recovered from the destruction of the First World War. Modern culture flourished in the city. A visit to the Left Bank brought encounters with writers, artists, and philosophers; with the giants of the French *avant-garde*; with bankers, newspapermen, and politicians fluent in literary debate.

The reporter was struck by the equanimity of his surroundings. "The country was prosperous," he wrote, "the people relaxed, the Continent at last at peace." What the young William L. Shirer did not understand at the time, though, was that the apparent wealth and order rested on weak foundations. Part of the problem was demographic: The French population was shrinking. Birthrates had been falling before the war and continued to plunge after it ended. More than a million Frenchmen were permanently disabled from injuries in battle. Average family size had withered. Mass immigration alone "enabled the country to function."

Inflation, meanwhile, was robbing the franc of its purchasing power. A franc in 1939 would be worth only one-seventieth of its value in 1913. The rising cost of living made it difficult for families and businesses to plan. Taxes were indirect, inefficient, and regressive. Government finances were a mess. Cronyism was rampant.

Politics was a font of instability. Since 1871 France had been a democracy, the Third Republic. Defenders of the liberal regime were besieged by ultranationalists on the right and Popular Front socialists on the left. "Governments rose and fell with dizzy rapidity," wrote Shirer, "some lasting but a few months, the most durable of them but two or three years." The turbulence and polarization led to widespread

cynicism. The attitude of the day was *Je m'en foutisme*—not giving a damn.

Reality finds ways to dispel illusions. By the time Shirer left Paris in the fall of 1938, the Third Republic was in disarray, "its strength gradually sapped by dissension and division, by an incomprehensible blindness in foreign, domestic, and military policy, by the ineptness of its leaders, the corruption of its press, and by a feeling of growing confusion, hopelessness, and cynicism." The global economy was in depression. Another war was just around the bend.

The Third Republic proved incapable of dealing with the crises of its time. Its elites were too self-absorbed, its society too fractured, its culture too decadent to oppose the threats arrayed against France. The nation's military defenses quickly fell apart when the Nazis invaded in May 1940. "Public discipline and order disappeared," Soviet ambassador to London Ivan Maisky recalled in his memoirs. "A great country, with so many centuries of glorious history behind it, was seized with political, military, and psychological paralysis."

The *Wehrmacht* entered Paris on June 14, 1940. William Shirer returned to the city several days later. The glorious metropolis, now occupied by foreign soldiers, seemed to him cold, lifeless, abandoned. Millions of refugees were fleeing southward and westward. The French Army was defeated. The secretary of war, Charles de Gaulle, had fled to England.

On July 10 the National Assembly voted to establish the Nazi puppet state of Vichy, ruled by Marshal Pétain and Pierre Laval. The Third Republic was gone.

By the standards of modern France, the American government has been remarkably stable. Since the Declaration of Independence in 1776, by which the American people assumed our "separate and equal station" among the powers of the world, we have lived under just two constitutions: the short-lived Articles of Confederation from 1781 to 1789, and the U.S. Constitution ever since. No enumerated "republics" for us. No lurching from democracy to anarchy to tyranny and back. No foreign invasion and usurpation. Only one (incredibly bloody) civil war has

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been fought—to uphold the Constitution and vindicate the principles of the Declaration. Nothing like the fall of the Third Republic has happened here.

Or at least not overtly. What has changed is the American people's conception of the ends of government—and the powers we bestow on government to pursue those ends. Historians have characterized these shifts in attitudes toward and expectations of government in various ways. In his 2007 book *America's Three Regimes*, for example, historian Morton Keller argued that our country actually has lived under three distinct types of polity: from the colonial era to the 1820s; from Old Hickory to the New Deal; and from FDR to today. The transition from one stage to the next has nowhere been as sudden as the fall of the French Third Republic. But deep



The County Election, by George Caleb Bingham, 1852

transformations occurred nonetheless. And there is no reason to believe the process of change has come to an end.

In the first era, the Pilgrims and Cavaliers brought from England to the New World attitudes toward authority and power that were courteous and obedient. Religion was fundamental. Civic order depended on a robust morality. It was from this culture that a uniquely American form of republican politics came into being. The Founders believed man was born free and equal, with certain inalienable rights given to him by God. Men formed governments based on contract and consent to preserve the rights that they possessed as individuals in the state of nature. Having violated the contract, King George gave the colonists no choice but to resort to their natural right of revolution.

The function of republican politics in an independent America was to thwart ambition, caprice, and passion and allow the “cool and deliberate sense of the community” to

prevail. But this was easier said than done. Once George Washington exited the scene, the Founders wasted no time dividing into the factions that developed into America's two political parties. Then, as the franchise was extended to the small planters and settlers in the west, as an innovative market economy took shape, as the young nation expanded, the American view of government shifted.

During this second period, parties—eventually the Democratic and Republican parties—flourished as national political institutions. Poor whites, blacks, and women eventually secured their rights under the law. The U.S. military was small, except during the Civil War, and was deployed mainly in North America.

From the time of Jackson to the time of FDR, Americans tended to look at the distant central government with wary eyes. Federal authorities had little sway over the economy. Civil administration was minuscule. “The American state,” Keller writes, “was one not of bureaucrats and armies but of parties and courts.”

The U.S. population swelled. The Union stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific and beyond. Plentiful natural resources, strict enforcement of property rights, and sound money contributed to the rise of American industry. Political clout was transferred from the country farmer to the city machine. The trusts commanded huge sums of capital and influence.

But it was not to last. The nineteenth-century conception of American government survived the challenges posed by the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the agrarian and Populist revolts. In the early decades of the twentieth century, traditionalists constrained the Progressive impulse and limited regulation to corporations, interstate commerce, and basic workplace and consumer safety.

Then the Great Depression, and the centralization that came with World War II and the Cold War, ushered in a new order—the one under which we live today. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal was the decisive break. FDR believed that changing conditions required the government to assume new means to achieve a rapidly multiplying set of ends. And this required nothing less than a redefinition of the American social contract. The earlier understanding was that government power should be limited to securing those rights we possessed, by nature, prior to the establishment of the state. What Roosevelt did was rearrange the terms: Where once individuals formed governments to protect their natural rights, now individuals bargained with governments over rights and benefits that evolve over time.

The modern welfare state was born. In our era, Keller writes, political debate isn't over how to constrain government. It's over how to use government “to enforce and enhance the rights of individuals and groups.” And by

the time FDR delivered his Second Bill of Rights address in January 1944, the number of rights had mushroomed. Life, liberty, property, and conscience were just for starters. Equally pressing were “the right of every family to a decent home” and “the right to a good education” and the right to economic “security.”

Parties are no longer central to political life. Print and electronic media, grievance groups, social scientists, and activists define the terms of debate. Government relies on the judiciary and an alphabet soup of government agencies—FDR created 65 of them in his first two years alone—to determine, assign, and protect the steady stream of benefits coming from government. Nor was it only the domestic ambitions of Americans that increased: Global threats, first from the Axis, then from the Soviet Union, and most recently from Islamic terrorists required America to intervene throughout the world.

Only later would we come to understand that the house FDR built sits on a wobbly base. Steady economic growth is necessary to pay for all of the government’s promises. The bureaucracy functions only if experts have the confidence of the people. And government and citizenry must agree on a limiting principle that prevents national bankruptcy, a bloated state, and an irresponsible public.

Otherwise, the nation backs into a situation where government has promised far more than it can afford; where the dollars coming into the Treasury are spent entirely on satisfying creditors; where public institutions and leaders are denigrated; where the future is frightening; where snark is the dominant mode of public discourse; where menace grows overseas without check; and where voters lurch from one party to another, desperate for a way out.

The nation, in other words, would back into precisely the situation where we find ourselves today.

Imagine a foreign journalist arriving in Washington, D.C., on New Year’s Day 1998. He, like Shirer in 1925, would have been visiting the capital of a global power in the midst of a golden age. Having won the Cold War, America was at peace. It was the “indispensable nation.” With the takeoff of the Internet, the economy was booming. The approaching millennium brought technological progress and optimism about the future. American culture, for better or worse, permeated a unipolar world.

Within weeks of his arrival, though, our journalist began to observe an incredible train of events. Over the next 12 years he would watch as America experienced its first presidential impeachment since 1868, the most controversial presidential election since 1876, the deadliest terrorist attack in our nation’s history and worst attack on American soil since 1941, and the largest financial crisis and deepest recession since the 1930s.

He watched as the American military toppled regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq in a matter of weeks, only to spend years of conflict in those bloody lands. He watched as the federal budget relapsed from surplus to jaw-dropping deficit, as debts piled up and threatened to suffocate the economy, as American bonds lost their AAA rating for the first time ever.

He watched the promise of his first days in this country evaporate. A series of bubbles burst before his very eyes: the tech bubble, the mortgage bubble, the sovereign debt bubble. The churn and froth corroded Americans’ faith in institutional authority. The presidency seemed to hold few answers. Bill Clinton was a political adept but a moral lout. George W. Bush was a decent man, but he mismanaged the wars on which he staked his reputation. Barack Obama was debonair but clueless.

The political consequences were dramatic. The foreign journalist’s jaw would drop whenever he analyzed congressional election results. He couldn’t believe how American voters continually redrew the electoral map in such unpredictable ways. The 1998 midterm elections were the first since 1822 in which the nonpresidential party failed to gain seats in the sixth year of a president’s term. The 2002 midterms, on the other hand, were the first since 1934 in which the president’s party gained seats in the second year of his term.

The 2006 midterms saw the best performance for House Democrats since 1974, the lowest number of House Republican freshmen since 1911, and unified Democratic control of Congress for the first time in 12 years. But the Republicans came storming back in 2010, gaining more House seats than in any election since 1938, their largest share of the House popular vote since 1946, and more seats in state legislatures than in any election since 1928. There was a growing sense that yet another wave election would crash into the nation’s capital in 2012. The results were so bipolar that what the American public needed most, the journalist thought, was a dose of lithium.

By the time 2011 rolled around it was clear that America was experiencing fiscal, institutional, and spiritual crisis. No one could doubt any longer that the federal budget was unsustainable. Both Republicans and Democrats saw the projections from the Congressional Budget Office: Left alone, entitlement spending would drive the national debt to multiples of GDP under which no economy can function.

Both Republicans and Democrats read the headlines from Europe, where governments in Greece and Ireland were experiencing something like debt slavery, with depressed economies incapable of paying off creditors. Members of both parties understood that the European

Union faced a choice between tighter fiscal and political integration and disintegration. They watched as neighborhoods of London and other English cities were convulsed in rioting. The impassioned and embittered fight over raising the debt ceiling left even President Obama aware that his presidency would be judged partly on whether he could tame government spending. Through all the kicking and screaming, it was increasingly apparent to anyone with eyes to see that the looming threat was national insolvency and the end of the dollar as the world's reserve currency.

Even so, the debt was only one aspect of a larger problem that threatened to undermine the very premises of the welfare state: a collapse of confidence in the institutional structures of American life. FDR's vision required capable managers to administer the rights and benefits government "accorded" to individuals. But such competence was being exposed as mythical. The Federal Reserve seemed impotent. The judiciary was aloof and ideologically riven. The U.N., NATO, the EU, and other multilateral organizations appeared to be anachronisms.

The regulatory arms of the federal government were dysfunctional. From the asleep-on-the-job FAA to the let's-put-jobs-to-sleep NLRB, the bureaucracies worked at a remove from, and often at cross-purposes to, the everyday concerns of Americans. The country's transportation and energy grids were in desperate need of maintenance. Congress was far more unpopular than the president.

Just as the examples of institutional failure were multiplying, however, the government gathered more power to itself. The dramatic consolidation of state power that began with Washington's response to the financial crisis in late 2008 did not stop until the 2010 elections. And the elections only halted the expansion. They didn't roll it back. The Supreme Court directed the EPA to regulate carbon emissions throughout the country. The Dodd-Frank financial bill gave regulators vast discretion over markets.

Obamacare handed the Department of Health and Human Services—and a bewildering array of new boards and commissions—one-sixth of the economy. The government used its financial stake in the auto industry to reshape the innards of your Chevy. AIG and Fannie and Freddie were kept on life support, apparently in perpetuity. Health care, finance, autos, housing, even diet—nothing seemed beyond Leviathan's reach.

The furor over the health care overhaul's individual insurance mandate underscored that this was, above all, a crisis over limits. If there was nothing to stop the government from compelling you to buy health insurance, what was to stop it from compelling you to wake up early for Obamarobics? The recognition that fundamental issues of governance were at stake only raised more questions. Was it possible for a new Congress—for any Congress—to claw

back "mandatory" federal spending and debt? What exactly stood to prevent the EPA from riding roughshod over the economy? Just how much government was enough?

As Americans struggled for answers, many discerned a spiritual component to the crisis. Runaway spending and institutional decay could be seen as the symptoms of a national delusion that it is possible to get something for nothing. The government's generous promises of pensions and health care—none of them truly paid for—bred a sense of entitlement among the citizenry. The idea that the good life could be had for free, that the government "owed" people certain material goods, became widespread.

Personal restraint and responsibility matter little when someone else is paying the bill. The eruption of public profligacy coincided with a gusher of consumer debt. And a government that shirked any notion of prudence, solvency, or humility was only fitting for a civil society plagued by irresponsibility, obesity, and exhibitionism.

The foreign journalist was fascinated when this turmoil brought new political coalitions to the fore. The liberals, led by President Obama, doubled down on the FDR model. They saw nothing fundamentally wrong with an increasingly large and active federal government that sought to reduce inequalities and smooth out the rough edges of the business cycle. Only with such a government, they said, can America "win the future" and "compete" in the twenty-first century against the Asian powers. And besides, they went on, the current arrangements worked pretty well: Never had humanity been in a better material condition than the present.

For the liberals, nothing intrinsic to the system had brought America to the edge of disaster. What was responsible for the morass was the irrational or malign behavior of political actors. What the journalist often heard from elites was a series of excuses. The American people don't understand the good we're trying to do, they said; these issues are difficult to comprehend. The journalist heard Obama lament the sad state of partisanship in Washington. He heard liberal pundits blame the situation on the "terrorist" ideologues behind the Tea Party. "The problem with American politics right now is Republican extremism," wrote Paul Krugman in a recent column, "and if you're not willing to say that, you're helping make that problem worse."

According to liberals, debt wasn't necessarily a bad thing. "Every family knows that a little credit card debt is manageable," President Obama said in his July 25, 2011, address to the nation. The fiscal crisis wasn't the consequence of overspending. It had no moral component. It was simply the result of inadequate revenue to the Treasury. Increase taxes so that "millionaires and billionaires"

are “paying their fair share,” Democratic leaders said, and you can get back to the business of spending public money to achieve social justice. A Washington, D.C., without petty bickering would coordinate effectively the diverse concerns of 300 million Americans. The United States would “catch up” to the European social democracies. Tom Friedman wouldn’t be embarrassed by his country.

On the other side were the populists who tried desperately to impose limits on the government. For the Tea Party, the New Deal order had run its course. There wasn’t any money left to pay the bills. The bureaucracies were dysfunctional. The judges had run amok. The debt threatened America’s future. Dependence on government was sapping the American soul.

For the populists, the intent of the Constitution was to restrict the range of government action. So the Tea Party sought a return to what it saw as the Founders’ understanding of politics. That meant coming to grips with the national debt and the annual deficits that fed it. But it also meant imposing constitutional barriers to profligacy, so America wouldn’t ever find herself at this place again.

The populists believed that constitutional remedies—a balanced budget amendment, term limits for Congress, a repeal of the Seventeenth Amendment to reassert state power in the Senate—would restore solvency to the country. That’s why they also liked the idea of a return to the gold standard: A fixed currency would prevent the Federal Reserve from financing deficit spending with digitized dollars.

The populists’ analysis seemed correct. But their impassioned radicalism also limited their appeal. The Tea Party too often let the perfect be the enemy of the good. They forgot that you cannot inculcate reverence for the Constitution with a snap of your fingers. Politicians of both parties, under Republican and Democratic presidents, had failed to balance the budget for decades; the surpluses of 1998-2000 had been a blip.

The debt ceiling fight illustrated these concerns. The public was deeply worried about the economy, the debt, and the direction of the country. But threatening default, or even a government shutdown, made the public if anything more anxious. The welfare state might be headed for a crash, but that was no reason to help tear it down.

What was needed was a course correction. The public must be weaned away from the entitlement mentality. But even as an earlier, more limited understanding of government’s purpose was recovered, it was also necessary to recognize a role for prudential and reasonable government—as well as a role for a responsible citizenry. Paul Ryan’s House Republican budget moved in this direction. Yet partisan Democrats, the defenders of the old order, predictably

responded with the lie that Ryan would have “ended Medicare,” while many in the Tea Party opposed Ryan for not going far enough.

As a blueprint for the near term, though, the Ryan plan deserved to be taken seriously. Here was a realistic, gradual, detailed, defensible, and clear-eyed approach to reorienting government.

The next step was to wed the abstractions of actuarial tables to a moral critique of American politics and society, so that voters grasped the connection between reckless government and familial and institutional decay. Such a move might even provoke a search for—and rediscovery of—those first principles that informed the American Founding: that government exists not to give you stuff, but to



Roosevelt signs the Social Security Act, 1935

protect the rights you possess by virtue of being alive.

When our imaginary foreign journalist left Washington last week, in between the earthquake and the hurricane, he brooded on the current impasse. America had taken more than a decade of blows to the belly. There was no end in sight. Left, right, and center were voicing doubt and criticism of President Obama. None of the contenders for the Republican presidential nomination seemed quite appropriate for the job. The country was on the verge of another recession, the debt continued to metastasize, Iran was arming. There was a widespread feeling that the old order was passing away.

That led him to reflect on the prospects of the American welfare state. He asked how it could possibly keep the promises it had made. He pondered how long a political system could function without the public trust. He meditated on the strengths and weaknesses of the New Deal order. And he wondered: What comes next? ♦



Basketball diplomacy, Beijing, August 18, 2001

Friendly Rivals?

The Chinese challenge to American power. BY GARY SCHMITT

There have been two major books published this summer on relations between the United States and China: Henry Kissinger's *On China* and this one. And while Kissinger himself has had an immense impact on how those relations have unfolded over the past four decades, Aaron L. Friedberg's volume will likely be far more important in laying out the path forward.

Gary Schmitt is director of the American Enterprise Institute's Program on Advanced Strategic Studies.

A Contest for Supremacy
China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia
 by Aaron L. Friedberg
 Norton, 360 pp., \$27.95

The irony is that Kissinger, the grand realist of American statecraft, presents a picture of China that romanticizes the country's past, overstates its leadership's sophistication, and offers up little more than hope that, going forward, relations between the two powers will go smoothly. In contrast, Friedberg, the Ivy League professor, takes more seriously the internal and external implications of China's continued rule by one party, its ambitions to reclaim its once-dominant position in Asia, and, if need be, to do so at the expense of the United

States. And it is Friedberg, not Kissinger, who lays out a hardheaded but sensible road map for meeting the challenge presented by China's rise.

Undoubtedly, *A Contest for Supremacy* will be read by most China hands as needlessly alarmist and as fueling fears that conflict with China is inevitable. But the book's goal is the opposite: While Friedberg sees a competition for preeminence between the United States and the People's Republic as highly likely now and in the foreseeable future, he is at pains to argue that a properly balanced approach to Beijing by Washington can keep that competition within bounds. The key will be whether the United States has the

CHINA DAILY / RTR / NEWS.COM

will and the resources to (as Friedberg says) “stay in the game” over the long term until China itself changes and/or its own internal dysfunctions stall out its rise to great power status.

But, Friedberg argues, to find the right balance requires recognizing, first of all, that there is indeed a real competition taking place between the two countries. Today’s problem is that too many policymakers, academics, and members of the business elite share a kind of “blinkered optimism” about relations. Accordingly, existing problems are depicted as peripheral or temporary, a product of misperceptions, which can be fixed by even more engagement with China.

If only. In one of the book’s most important chapters, Friedberg analyzes the persistent factors driving the rivalry, along with those factors that, arguably, might mitigate it. Of the latter, he looks at economic interdependence, possible political reforms, China’s integration into a web of international institutions, threats and problems we hold in common, and the fact that both the United States and China possess strategic nuclear arsenals. On the other side of the ledger is the insecurity and instability brought about by the narrowing power gap between the once-clearly-dominant United States and China, compounded by the “yawning ideological chasm that separates the two nations.” The change in relative economic, military, and diplomatic power would be difficult enough to deal with all by itself, but the difference in political systems and governing principles can’t help but be both “an obstacle to measures that might reduce uncertainty and dampen competition, and a source of mutual hostility and mistrust.”

The core problem is that the factors that might substantially dampen the competition are, upon inspection, either ambiguous in that regard—for

example, economic ties between the two countries are themselves becoming strained—or too weak to move relations in a fundamentally different direction. As both the Bush and Obama administrations have learned, while Beijing in recent years might have expressed greater concern about the problem of nuclear proliferation in North Korea, this has not meant that it gives Pyongyang’s nukes the same priority as Washington, or that this

been if they did not reflect, in some general fashion, the leadership’s own views. Moreover, Friedberg has the added advantage that those intentions are increasingly reflected in Chinese behavior—be they in Beijing’s willingness to throw its weight around by claiming sovereignty virtually over the whole of the South China Sea, aiming a vast arsenal of new missiles at Asian allies of the United States, or creating an “anti-access” military capability aimed directly at

American power projection in the region.

Whether Americans want to admit it or not, the Chinese are obsessed with power, theirs and ours. They spend an immense amount of analytic time and effort producing what they have dubbed “comprehensive national power” assessments. And on that front, as Friedberg notes, given the American difficulties in Iraq, Afghanistan, and now in our economy, the Chinese believe

they have every reason to be optimistic about the shifting balance of power in the region.

A Contest for Supremacy does not ignore the various problems—demographics, domestic unrest, and so on—that China confronts as it attempts to keep growing in strength and influence. Nor does it simply pass by the underlying strengths that remain in America’s corner, such as a preponderance of stable and wealthy allies in the region. Yet, as Friedberg notes, the general drift of policies and events is not good, “for the fact is that if current trends continue, we are on track to lose our geopolitical contest with China.”

As serious a defeat as that might be to American interests and global stability, Friedberg’s prescription for reversing course, at first glance, seems oddly moderate. The last three administrations have pursued a policy of engaging with China (principally diplomatically



Vice President Joseph Biden, Vice President Xi Jinping (seated, right)

concern takes precedence over other policies, such as keeping a secure buffer state between itself and an American ally, South Korea.

One reviewer has already complained that Friedberg leans too heavily on discerning China’s geopolitical intentions for hegemony through analysis of the writings of Chinese think-tankers, academics, and the few military officers permitted to write about such matters. But Friedberg is the first to admit that when you are talking about China’s intentions, you are really talking about the intentions of a select few within the top echelon of the leadership of the People’s Republic. And given the secrecy with which they surround themselves, knowing precisely what they think is virtually impossible. But that said, it seems inconceivable—especially in a one-party state as controlling as China can be—that such writings would be tolerated over the period they have

and in trade) while hedging against China's growing military power by adjusting American military force levels in the region and paying greater attention to allies and potential partners (such as India) who are also worried about China's rise. *A Contest for Supremacy* does not argue for tossing the policy of "conengagement" aside. To the contrary:

The resilience of conengagement is due to both the essential soundness of its strategic logic and the sturdiness of its domestic political foundations. Given all the uncertainties, it has made eminently good sense for the United States to continue to engage economically and diplomatically with China while seeking simultaneously to balance against its rising power. In any event, there is no alternative approach that is clearly superior on its merits.

No, what Friedberg wants is a better balance between the two, with the United States being (among other things) more candid about the nature of the competition, less Pollyannaish about the Chinese political system, more willing to commit the necessary resources to address the growing problems in the military balance, more willing to control exports of high technology to China, and more creative in working with our democratic allies to deter Chinese misbehavior and even generate an Asian community of like-minded regimes.

Of course, once laid out, what initially seems like a modest policy proposal—adjusting the balance within conengagement—shows itself to be more significant and far more of a challenge to execute. The most obvious problem is that America is entering a period of greatly constrained resources: How the American military will come up with the money to meet the challenge of China's own military buildup is, at this point, anybody's guess. But the larger problem with "engaging but hedging"—a problem that has existed from day one—is that government officials are under constant pressure to keep engagement with China on a steady course because there are numerous,

important issues to be talked about, and a massive amount of private business to be conducted.

What results is a general reticence by policymakers to do anything that might disrupt that process, and a propensity to overlook longer-run trends that potentially are more significant. What this means, in practice, is that it provides Beijing with leverage to threaten to withdraw from that engagement process if it deems any hedging measures (such as selling modern weapons to Taiwan) as going too far. In short, while you can shove two words together to coin the

term "conengagement," they remain two distinct policies that rest uneasily with each other. As Friedberg himself admits, "squaring this circle" will not be easy.

A Contest for Supremacy is a rigorous and comprehensive account of the state of U.S.-China strategic relations, and by far, the most thoughtful and serious book to date on the topic. Predictably, many (if not most) Sinologists will pick at various points and object to its conclusions. But as Friedberg notes, "The truth is that China is too important to be left to the China hands." ♦

BCA

Dance Marathon

This was the summer of the Cubans, the Russians, and the Danes. BY PIA CATTON

New York

Some New Yorkers will remember the summer of 2011 for Derek Jeter's 3,000th hit. Others will remember it for Rihanna on the radio 3,000 times a day. But for dance aficionados, this summer was an absolute bonanza of ballet.

The home teams—American Ballet Theatre and New York City Ballet—both had memorable seasons. But the city was visited by three of the world's most historically important companies: the National Ballet of Cuba, the Royal Danish Ballet, and the Mariinsky Ballet (formerly the Kirov). It all resulted in night-after-night of performances—followed by mornings spent reading, tweeting, and kvetching about how completely wrong so-and-so is about such-and-such. All of which is to say: If ballet is dying, it is dying a vibrant death. The differences among the touring companies were distinct enough to serve as a

reminder that even though global travel has exposed dancers to different techniques—which can have a homogenizing effect—nationalism reigns.

The Mariinsky, presented at the Metropolitan Opera House as part of Lincoln Center Festival, brought a mix of cosmopolitan polish and zesty confidence: long extensions, pliable backs, streamlined purity. Of all the performances, the highlight was "The Little Humpbacked Horse," a comic 19th-century ballet based on a Russian fairy tale and rechoreographed by Alexei Ratmansky.

The plot involves a young man who winds up with a humpbacked horse after a trade; with the aid of the horse, the boy outwits a silly czar and gets the girl. "Horse" has moments of virtuoso technique, but its lure is in its high spirits, contemporary mime, and a postmodern awareness of the audience. At one point, the utterly charming Vladimir Shklyarov, who played the leading man, finished a long sequence of jumps to thunderous applause. He responded with a wave

Pia Catton writes the arts column, Culture City, for the Wall Street Journal's Greater New York section.

to the audience that said, “Oh, go on. That was nothing!” When he first encountered his partner, Yevgenia Obraztsova, he tapped her on the shoulder. She played with her braid, while standing flat-footed, trying to ignore him—as any young girl might when a boy is pestering her.

“The Little Humpbacked Horse” is a combination of ballet idiom and modern comedy. It’s rare to see an audience smiling and laughing so spontaneously at antics on the ballet stage—except that, in this bonanza of a season, it came within weeks of American Ballet Theatre dancing Ratmansky’s equally comic, equally marvelous “The Bright Stream,” which is like an episode of *Three’s Company* set on a Soviet collective farm. If you can imagine. The Russians also danced George Balanchine’s glorious “Symphony in C,” a glittering neoclassical ballet set to Bizet and requiring four ballerinas of dramatically different qualities in four distinct sections. The roster illustrated the depth of the company. There was a girl for all seasons: crisp lines for the first movement, lush glamour in the second, followed by unbridled good cheer and sweet simplicity.

The style of the Royal Danish Ballet, which performed at the David H. Koch Theater, is inherently its own. The Danes’ technique is still firmly rooted in the principles established by August Bournonville: ease, harmony, a calm upper body with fast feet jumping and zipping through intricate steps. Since 2008, the company has been under the artistic direction of the former New York City Ballet principal dancer Nikolaj Hübbe. Since the Danes had not toured the United States in more than 20 years, it’s hard to know the depth of Hübbe’s impact. What we do see is that the company can pull off a versatile repertory that ranges from the abstract, incoherent movement of choreographer Jorma Elo’s “Lost on Slow” (which I refer to as “Lost on Me”) to the still-effective charm of classic Bournonville, as seen in the signature works “La Sylphide” and “Napoli.”

In New York, the company danced only Act III of “Napoli,” which is



‘The Little Humpbacked Horse’

a long stretch of bouncy, delightful dances in a public square. But what was most valuable was seeing the leads dancing a tarantella within the setting of the full-length ballet. Balanchine created a distilled version in 1964 with costumes and ribbons, but without sets. It’s a high-voltage, virtuoso *pas de deux* that City Ballet dances beautifully and often, but it’s always without context. Here, we saw what Balanchine was paying homage to.

In contrast to the Danes and Russians, the National Ballet of Cuba is devoted to a style of classicism that is in some ways preserved under glass, like an antique, but is part of the fascination that drew everyone who’s anyone in dance to the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The Cubans danced a greatest-hits mixed bill: scenes from the most important classical ballets, including “Giselle” (which is among its specialties) and “Don Quixote.”

The company is still heavily influ-

enced by the artistic sensibility of its founder Alicia Alonso, who is 90 years old. Though some of its dancers bring an international style—broader movement, greater flexibility—the company has its signature take on classicism. Arms are often heavy and low. Heads are slightly bowed forward. Poses are delicately placed, with a tilt of the head and elongation of the back. And though the jumps can be vivacious, the style emphasizes stillness—whereas the Danes seem endlessly mobile, always pop, pop, popping. And when the Russians pause, it is in anticipation of the next phrase.

You have to consider the Cubans’ performances with a measure of respect for the company’s unusual situation. Isolated, yet resourceful; devoted, yet continually drained of dancers seeking other stages in other countries. Like Cuba’s politics, such as they are, this company’s future can only be full of change. ♦

Diamond Mythology

No, baseball was not invented by Abner Doubleday in Cooperstown. BY EDWARD ACHORN



The Independent Base Ball Club, Mansfield, Ohio, 1867

We human beings seem to crave creation myths. The tale of Adam and Eve moved people for millennia, and still seems thrilling and sad, even though we know all about natural selection. And we still talk, however jokingly, about Abner Doubleday as

the inventor of baseball. The Doubleday myth sprang from baseball's official Mills Commission, which more than a century ago accepted a far-fetched story by a man named Abner Graves, who recalled that Doubleday

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.

had introduced baseball on a field in Cooperstown, New York, in 1839. In 1908, at the height of screeching-eagle American jingoism, the commission ruled that the National Pastime was not some weedy outgrowth of the British game of rounders but, rather, an all-American product from the brain of an all-American

hero, a Civil War general who aimed the Union's first shot of the war from Fort Sumter.

Almost immediately, skeptics debunked the legend with the ease of a Christy Mathewson striking out a third-rate bush leaguer. The bookish, narrow-chested Doubleday was studying at West Point at the time, and was not very likely to have gone AWOL to teach a game of his invention to scruffy kids in Cooperstown—especially since

he never mentioned that detail in all of his copious writings during the rest of his life, long after baseball emerged as an American institution. Fortunately, that failed to stop enterprising locals from capitalizing on the idea and opening the National Baseball Hall of Fame in that bucolic village on the centennial of Doubleday's supposed introduction of the sport to a spellbound world. Still, even the Hall of Fame had its standards, and declined to admit Doubleday to the ranks of the immortals.

More "scientific" baseball students shifted their attentions to Alexander Cartwright, a member of the amateur New York Knickerbockers club, who is supposed to have been the first man to diagram a field while helping to shape its rules. Cartwright did get a plaque at the Hall, and was exalted as the "real" Doubleday in a 1973 biography, *The Man Who Invented Baseball*. Unfortunately, the author quoted family sources of dubious connection to the facts—and Alexander has gone the way of Abner in recent years. It seems that Cartwright himself never knew or spoke of his role as baseball's inventor, while virtually every fact of importance on his Hall of Fame plaque is wrong. Even the Knickerbockers' sacred rules may have been cribbed from those of earlier clubs.

Now, amidst an explosion of research into baseball's early days, John Thorn, Major League Baseball's newly appointed official historian (and a talking head on Ken Burns's *Baseball* series), weighs in with his own candidates for creation immortality. In *Baseball in the Garden of Eden* he stresses that no one "invented" the game, while advancing the contributions of such obscure figures from the 19th-century New York baseball scene as Daniel Lucius Adams, William Rufus Wheaton, and others who helped take one of many variations of a bat-and-ball sport and shape it into something like the game that today's fanatics adore. Once their New York-based game took hold, Thorn writes, exciting versions of "baseball" played in New England and Philadelphia "disappeared in an instant, more mysteriously than the dinosaurs."

Loaded with footnotes, this book may be as authoritative an analysis of baseball's origins as we are likely to get for some time—unless the armies of 19th-century scholars from the ranks of the Society for American Baseball Research turn up yet more material that has been overlooked for the last century and a half. And indeed, Thorn is heading a new commission for the major leagues designed to supplant the less stringent work of the Mills Commission.

Baseball in the Garden of Eden is roughly divided into three parts: looking at baseball's origins, offering a crash course in the 19th-century major league game, and exploring the links among baseball magnate and sporting goods mogul Albert G. Spalding, the Mills Commission, Doubleday, and the Theosophical Society, of which both Spalding and Doubleday were prominent members. Thorn's obsession with the society seems both belabored and excessive, to my taste, and none of this is told in a gripping narrative fashion. Still, much here will be interesting to those who want to learn how baseball grew into what we know.

Thorn offers a sound analysis of the three factors that helped baseball explode from a local game into a national pastime: gambling, statistics, and publicity. Indeed, gambling is often overlooked as a factor, but well worth exploring. From the start, risk-taking Americans loved to bet on baseball, a passion that fueled the game's popularity in all sorts of ways. Betting made a game more interesting, more worth attending; it encouraged the development of statistics and game coverage, since bettors wanted to evaluate players and teams. It stimulated the codification of rules and standards of play, since gamblers needed a certain degree of consistency to make sensible bets. All of that spurred the game's professional development, since highly skilled teams were more fun to bet on, and drew crowds that paid the salaries.

Of course, gambling was a double-edged sword: It also introduced the constant threat of corruption. For example, when underworld characters looking for a sure thing managed to coax key members of the 1877 Louisville Grays

to throw the National League pennant, they did serious harm to the professional game, confirming the public's long-held suspicions that it wasn't on the level.

Thorn is at his best, however, as a tireless kind of baseball archaeologist, breaking through our hardened historic assumptions into substrata of contemporary sources. He demonstrates, for instance, that baseball in its amateur era was hardly the exclusive province of decent and honorable men gathered into "gentlemen's clubs," as we have long been told. There were shadier,

nastier teams of ruffians and boozers left out of the history books, such as the Magnolia Club of New York, infested with such types as its secretary, Andrew Lester, a 27-year-old "billiard-room proprietor and Tammany Democrat, linked with . . . the pugilistic arm of the party [and known for] enforcing discipline on the rank and file and striking fear into undecided voters."

Which is to say, the reality of baseball's origins, however compelling the myths, is a little more complex than we have been led to believe. ♦

BCA

What Price Interns?

Punching the tickets of the meritocracy.

BY ANTHONY PALETTA

In the current age of print saturation it's always a shock to encounter a book billing itself as a "first expose" on a topic. Yet that's exactly what *Intern Nation* is. When between one and two million American students hold internships each year, and the nearest thing to an objective examination an Amazon "intern" search reveals is a Dominique Swain

film, it's time for a more serious look. Ross Perlin has accomplished the task, and very credibly.

Perlin describes his subject as the "internship explosion," which is an apt description both for the recent meteoric growth in the numbers of interns and the rupturing of any coherent sense of what the term entails. From its origin as a term for early medical-student hospital residencies, "internship" has come to describe, in the narrowest definition, virtually any sort of work or learning in

virtually any field. Like so many film McGuffins, while no one has a clear idea of what an internship is, countless parties seem agreed that one or more are desirable or essential. I don't know a single collegiate contemporary who

would have disagreed with Perlin's assessment that "the subtle, relentless pressure to do an internship is now simply part of being young." There

are droves of guides to getting an internship; this is the first look at what the phenomenon means.

Internships are seen as a valuable leg-up in the postcollegiate career search, excellent proof of initiative and real-world experience. Perlin notes a Michigan State study which revealed that "50 percent of new college graduate hires came out of internship programs at the same firm . . . while an *additional* 40 percent had interned at other firms." Internships are a "dream solution for employers, allowing them to 'test-drive' young workers for little or no cost."

It's no surprise that students might find a system that increasingly

Intern Nation
How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy
by Ross Perlin
Verso, 228 pp., \$22.95

Anthony Paletta is a former senior editor at the Manhattan Institute's Center for the American University.

encourages unpaid work during college as less than ideal, even if they're unaware of Perlin's most dramatic assertion: that countless internships violate federal labor law. Internships squat in a legal space established by the 1947 Supreme Court case *Walling v. Portland Terminal Co.*, which established an exemption from pay requirements for "trainees." That case established several standards, all of which must be met, including that the training must resemble that given in a vocational school, that trainees do not displace regular employees, and, most damningly, that "the employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the trainees and on occasion the employer's operations may actually be impeded." Numerous internships fail all of these criteria; massive numbers run afoul of the last. I've never seen an internship program which wasn't explicitly concerned with gaining some immediate advantage from interns, as only makes sense; but in that case, interns legally deserve the minimum wage, which fewer than half receive.

How does this go on? On the foundation of a misunderstanding encouraged by the sector most responsible for the internship explosion—higher education—that the provision of academic credit for internships is sufficient for exemption from pay. In writing about the topic in the past I had blithely assumed this to be fact, and I was hardly alone. But Perlin points out that credit may stand as evidence that an intern is, in fact, a trainee, "yet many employers still buy into the myth that academic credit provides a blanket legal and ethical sanction for their all-work, no-pay internships, while the real test remains centered on the six overlooked Supreme Court criteria." For all of higher education's dedication to meritocracy and fairness, do they provide any reminder to students of this fact? No. In fact, in indiscriminately awarding academic credit, colleges and universities are the principal malefactors in this scenario and have funneled countless numbers of students into situations

that often offer neither real pay nor real academic content.

Ironically, for a system that Perlin mainly faults businesses for exploiting, he traces the roots of the modern internship culture to the 1950s growth of government internships and to "a new impetus . . . for the growth of public-spirited internships, this time from schools and students caught up in the social and political ferment of the time." From these roots in social work, criminal justice, and journalism, internships ballooned to their current dimensions, routinely featuring no substantive evaluation for academic content.

In a survey of 713 colleges, 95 percent reported that they allow unpaid internships to be posted on college campuses and websites, though a few added that they exclude unpaid positions at for-profit companies. In the same survey, only 27.6 percent of the colleges required classroom experience in granting academic credit for an internship.

Parents and students have become convinced that internships are a desirable and necessary career aspiration, and colleges have been happy to oblige. In

this unthinking acquiescence, however, colleges have both ignored questions about what their academic credits actually represent and actively encouraged a system that directly contravenes the notions of meritocracy that they so vigorously trumpet. This builds to Perlin's most trenchant critique of the internship culture: If career advantages accrue to those who can take internships, and if these internships often pay little or nothing, those who benefit will invariably be the affluent. Anecdotes aren't really necessary to prove the point that most students simply cannot afford to work for little or nothing; internships, Perlin argues, provide "the already privileged with a significant head start."

Of course, the affluent would enjoy an advantage in most employment scenarios; but universities exacerbate inequality when they encourage a credential that is inaccessible to many. It was not business lobbyists, Perlin points out, but "a group of thirteen university presidents who recently wrote to the Department of Labor, complaining that protecting interns might get in the way of their brisk trade in academic credit and cozy employer relationships." ♦



Jobs Creation

A new Apple headquarters lands in Cupertino.

BY JAMES GARDNER

There was something almost princely in the way Steve Jobs went about selecting the shape and location of the proposed new Apple headquarters, announced in June to the city council of Cupertino, California, in Silicon Valley. Usually a large project like this—even a small project—develops gradually amidst endless consultations with a hundred stakeholders who bicker about the

James Gardner recently translated Vida's Christiad (I Tatti Renaissance Library).

most pragmatic (and usually unimaginative) way to proceed. Far otherwise did the emperors Augustus and Hadrian plan their massive mausoleums, which can still be seen along the banks of the Tiber. They wanted something round, and they pointed to where they wanted it to rise. And so it did.

And so it was when Jobs announced, to a stunned and dazzled city council, that he had decided to build a similarly round structure (let us hope it is not a mausoleum) on the other side of Interstate 280, across from where

the present Apple headquarters now stands. Granted, he had to go before the city council; but the way he phrased it (“We’ve got a plan that lets us stay in Cupertino!”) made quite clear that, if he did not get his way, he might just pack up and leave. (He has, of course, since resigned as CEO.)

As Mayor Gilbert Wong told reporters, “There’s no chance we’ll say no.”

Though the form of the proposed building is similar to those two monuments on the Tiber, its origins are very different. Whereas Augustus and Hadrian had been looking at the Hellenistic mausoleums of Asia Minor, Steve Jobs seems to have been watching the SyFy Channel. “It looks a little like a spaceship landed,” he told the council as he presented the renderings. Now, the canonic mothership, as we all know, is necessarily round in order more easily to navigate the intergalactic winds. Its saucer shape is the very one that Jobs has chosen, and if built, it promises to stand out against the dull corporate architecture of Silicon Valley, not least the present Apple headquarters.

As Jobs enthused to the council, “There is not a straight piece of glass in this building.”

It will serve as an indication of Steve Jobs’s pertinacity that he has been nurturing the idea of a corporate headquarters in the shape of a flying saucer for almost 30 years. Initially it was to be designed by I.M. Pei. But back then, Apple was hardly the powerhouse that it is today. At the time, in fact, Jobs was little more than a year away from being kicked out of the company—in 1985, returning only in 1997—but now, with the iPod, iPhone, and iPad under his belt, he gets whatever he asks for, and there is every likelihood that his newest architectural whim (this time designed by Sir Norman Foster) will become reality. And Sir Norman appears to be

the perfect choice since, as he has displayed in several noteworthy projects—London’s Swiss Re (or Gherkin) Building and the Great Court of the British Museum, as well as the refurbished Reichstag in Berlin—he is most conversant with curvature.

Some of the first reactions to the proposed building have been dismissive, questioning the necessity and practicality of a torus-shaped structure, and pointing out that there is something regressive, not to say infantile, in wanting to construct a building that resembles a spaceship. But this misses



the point. The history of architecture has long been dominated by such follies, from the Sepulchre of Mausolus in Halicarnassus and the Pantheon in Rome to the Taj Mahal and the Cathedral of Saint-Denis in Paris, all the way down to the Guggenheim museums in New York and Bilbao. Though architects and patrons have always talked about functionality as though this were the driving force behind their designs, in fact they are more apt to be driven by a formal whim for which, after the fact, they find some justification.

Whatever functional arguments Steve Jobs might care to make, it seems pretty clear that he just really liked the idea of a four-story structure that looks like a spaceship and could house up to 12,000 employees. The world of personal computing is, perhaps, unique in the history of human enterprise in that it

was almost entirely conceived and developed by Baby Boomers, the pot-headed hobbyists of the sixties and their sundry progeny in the succeeding micro-generations. They were unique in that the ethos of their activities seemed to be rooted in play, in leisure, rather than in the buttoned-down values of the previous generation.

The very names they give their enterprises are expressive of these ludic roots: Microsoft, Google, Yahoo!, LimeWire, Napster, and all the rest are a far cry from International Business Machines (IBM), or even Xerox, and

seem to invoke the gonzo spirit of the drug culture. This is evident as well in the very language of computing: spam, ping, Mozilla, Java. All of them suggest the same fundamentally unserious quality that is attested in John Markoff’s *What the Dormouse Said: How the ‘60s Counterculture Shaped the Personal Computer Industry*: “[B]ecause people [Jobs] knew well had not tried psychedelics, there were things about him they couldn’t understand. He also said that his coun-

tercultural roots often left him feeling like an outsider in the corporate world of which he was now a leader.”

Thus far, the people who brought us the personal computer have shown little interest in architecture, not excluding Jobs, for all his obsession with design. Just as the main movers and shakers of this revolution seem entirely indifferent to sartorial style, they have tended to seem equally indifferent to the buildings they inhabit—notwithstanding a few dazzling homes that are less about architecture than conspicuous consumption. Terminally square corporations like IBM and Johnson & Johnson might erect sleek architectural projections of their corporate ethos, but the careers of Paul Allen, Steve Wozniak, and Bill Gates began in their parents’ garages, and in an architectural sense, they never left. ♦

Yes, Masters

The future as a vision of vegetables and robots.

BY KATE HAVARD

Al Gore will never die. Or at least, he doesn't plan to.

No, the polar bears haven't voted to deify him: Gore has simply thrown his hat in with Ray Kurzweil, inventor, author, and subject of *Transcendent Man*, a film documentary which predicts that man will soon be merging with machine to become an *über*-race of hyperintelligent, immortal cyborgs. In a video introduction to the discussion, Gore speaks about how the advances described in the film—Nanobots, Reverse Aging, Artificial Intelligence—would help address global challenges such as poverty and, of course, climate change.

"We stand on the threshold of new human potential," says Gore.

The former vice president isn't alone in his praise for Kurzweil: Deepak Chopra, Suzanne Somers, and Quincy Jones all made appearances in a recent Washington screening called *Transcendent Man Live*, a panel discussion about the film broadcast to movie theaters across the country. And while Al Gore did not speak about his own transcendence, he did praise Kurzweil's endeavors. And indeed, Kurzweil has an impressive résumé: A onetime computer whiz kid, he helped invent the scanner.

After that, however, he seems to have taken a soaring and epic swan dive off the deep end.

Of course, this sort of argument is nothing new; Kurzweil's vision is the same as that of the 18th-century French mathematician and philosopher Nicolas de Condorcet, who asserted that advances in science and politics are inherently positive. Though a marquis, Condorcet was an active advocate of the

French revolutionaries, who thanked him by imprisoning and (probably) murdering him during the Terror. Kurzweil's argument is similarly uncomplicated. Technology will continue to move forward at an unstoppable rate. Computers will keep getting smaller, faster, and cheaper. Medicine will get better, people



will live longer and longer—eventually, they won't ever have to die. Then we will all hold hands and rejoice as robots enter our bloodstreams, supersede our brains, and take over the world.

Kurzweil, like Condorcet, sees a revolution coming, which he calls "the Singularity," a time when computers become so advanced that humans will be forced either to merge with their robot masters or be destroyed. (A helpful animation in *Transcendent Man* shows a monkey turning into a man, who gets sucked into a computer that

turns into C-3PO, of *Stars Wars* fame, and then morphs into a satellite.) While Deepak Chopra briefly expressed his concern that man's spiritual evolution would not be able to keep up with his biotechnological advancement, the panel was clear on one thing: We should not fear the robot takeover, but welcome it. While the audience was warned that "those who resist" the Singularity "will suffer," the panel promised that the Singularity would be both fun and pleasant for humans.

One of the panelists, physicist Michio Kaku, lamented that "Hollywood, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and the Pentagon" have taught Americans to fear an endless reign of robots, but that more enlightened residents of Earth, such as the Japanese, view the machines as "pets, companions, and friends." The robots won't be aggressive or violent, he said, if we design them to be friendly: If problems arise we can control their violent impulses by implanting a chip that inhibits aggression. (This observation was followed briefly by another from Suzanne Somers, who said that, at 64 years of age, she maintains her youthful glow by eating lots of vegetables.)

Moreover, Kurzweil and his colleagues were adamant that these advances are not only inevitable but imminent—although little evidence was offered aside from insistence, optimism, and lots of footage of rocket ships launching and humans talking on cell phones.

Ray Kurzweil is many things: inventor, author, relentless name-dropper—and, to some degree, the personification of what can happen when projections of our technological future go haywire. Robots are people, too, he insisted: "Artificial intelligence is intelligence. Virtual reality is real reality." (Dr. Kaku noted that, according to Shinto, inanimate objects have souls as well.) Technology will enable us to fall in love, added Kurzweil, eliminate the need for most physical activities, change the way we look, think, and feel—and ultimately, the way we die.

Which, after two hours of robots, Ray Kurzweil, the Singularity, Suzanne Somers, and Al Gore, did not seem like such a bad option. ♦

Kate Havard is a student at St. John's College.

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"I don't know whether you've had an opportunity to see a movie that has gotten worldwide circulation called 'The King's Speech.' Well, but for the royal blood and the money, that could have been me."

—Joe Biden, speech at Sichuan University, August 21, 2011

One man taught him to speak...and speak...and speak...

"5 STARS! No, wait, wait... **6 STARS!**

The best 4 hours and 27 minutes I've ever spent at the movies. My performance is riveting! Sure, we all knew I was a great foreign policy/train expert. But who knew I was such a great actor? Kumar was pretty good, too, but I think it was risky for the studio to make my teacher guy a foreigner. I mean, God bless foreigners.

They made this country great. They built my beloved railroads, after all. I love 'em. But I'm not sure everyone in middle America is gonna wanna watch some Indian guy tell a white guy like me how to speak English. Not that middle America discriminates. Heck, I'm from middle America: Scranton, Pennsylvania. And as I just said, I love foreigners. I think they're really great people, maybe even better than regular people. So, you know, uh, there's no hard and fast rule when you're talking about foreigners. Anyway, uh, back when my father was a coal miner in Wales, I mean, in Scranton..."

—Joe Biden

JOE BIDEN

THE VEEP'S SPEECH

THAT GUY THAT PLAYS **KUMAR**

SCREENPLAY BY JOE BIDEN, BASED ON THE BOOK BY NEIL KINNOCK

RATED

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FOR REALLY ***** LONG

the weekly **Standard**

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