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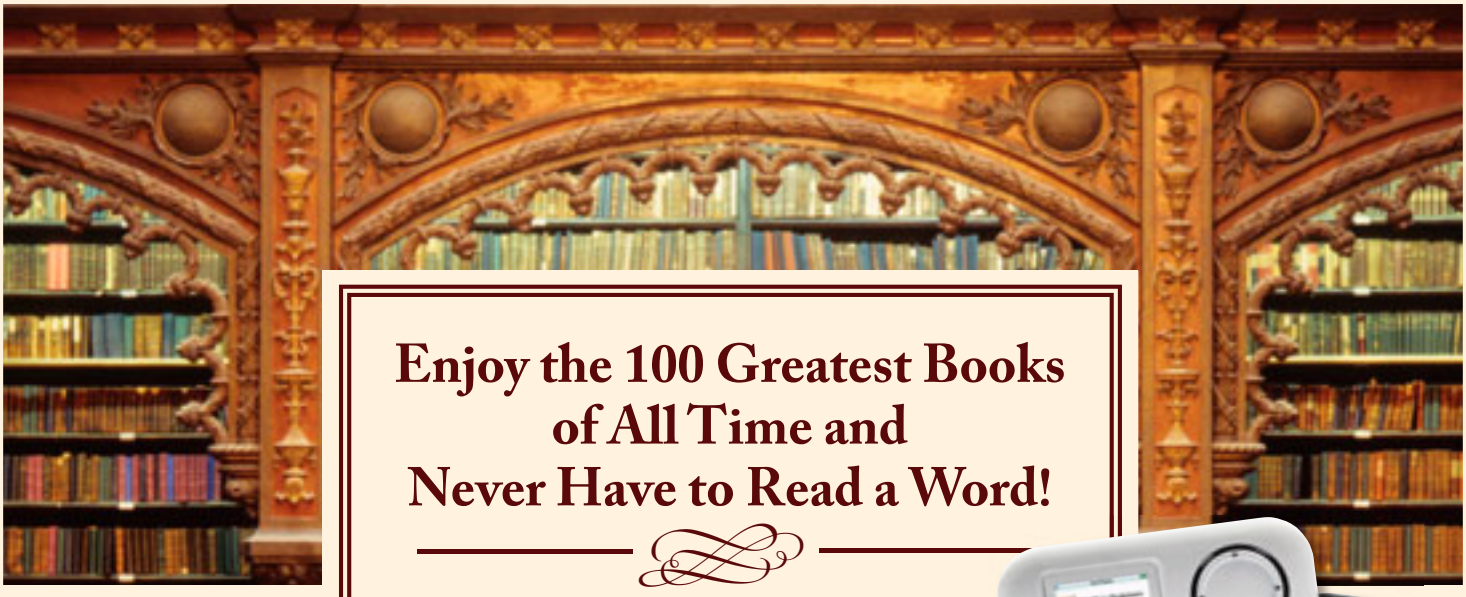

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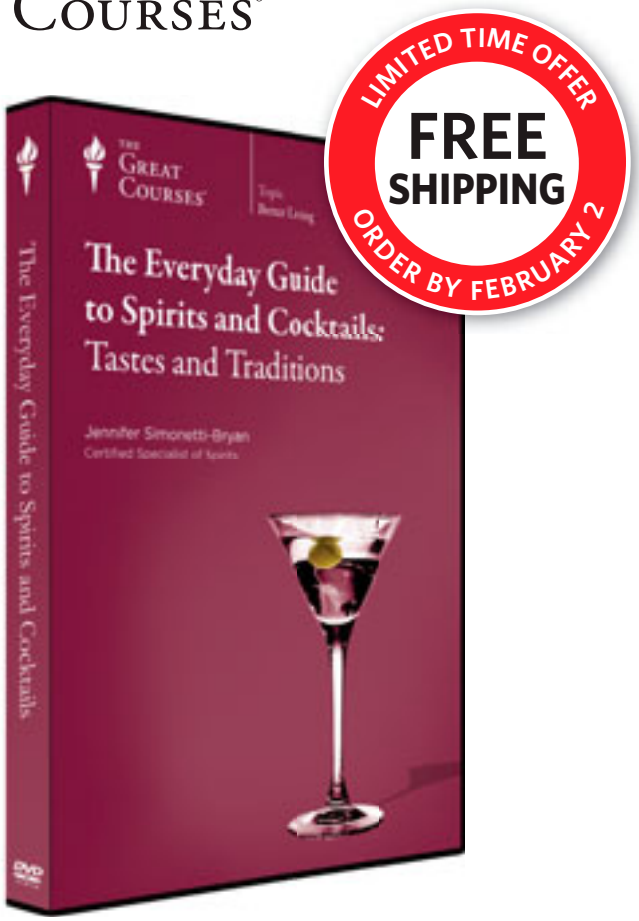

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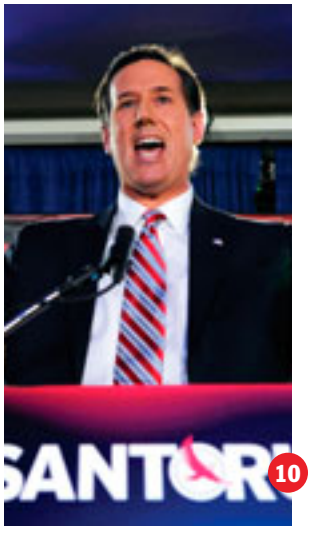

Features

Books & Arts

COVER: AP / U.S. NAVY, PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS KENNETH ABBATE

But Enough About Me

One of the most amazing moments following the Iowa caucuses went largely unremarked—our friend Wlady Pleszczynski at the *American Spectator* seems to have been the only other scribbler who was properly agog. It came when Rick Perry conceded his fifth-place finish in a speech to supporters. Such smoldering disasters usually call forth from experienced candidates a cheerful and tearful mixture of chagrin, gratitude, praise, personal modesty, and, depending on future prospects, either fatalistic resignation or steely resolve.

Not the governor of Texas. Rick Perry had just lost an electoral contest for the first time in his political career; this was his first concession speech. It's no surprise that he looked slightly lost as he inched his way through this unfamiliar terrain. But it's the manner in which he regained his footing that amazed us. He thanked all the fine folks who had traveled from 30 states to help the Perry cause, whatever that may be. Then he pulled out from his trimly tailored suit a letter he had just received from one of those fine folks, which he said he wanted to "share." (He meant he was going to read it aloud, not chop it up in a hundred pieces and hand them out to everybody.)

Perry read: "Words cannot express how thankful I am for being able to serve you this past week. My name is Colt Smith. . . . I'm 24 years old and . . . this has been the best experience of my life. Today I saw you for the first time in Perry, Iowa. I realized you were a good man, but I never realized"—here the governor's voice caught for a moment—"what a great man you were." The governor looked up from the letter and smiled his agreement. We didn't get to see the reaction of poor Colt Smith, who was probably slipping quietly out the fire door in the back of the room. As for The Scrapbook, we had a strong urge to dive under the couch.

The Perryites (if such there be) in the ballroom applauded politely. Surely at least a few of them were taken aback by Perry's insouciant display of undraped ego. They might have wondered, as we did: Is it possible that this November, Americans could elect to the White House a man with even greater self-regard than its current occupant?

It's a good thing we won't have a chance to find out. ♦

Isolation in Our Time

Richard Cohen, op-ed columnist of the *Washington Post*, surprised us last week. He usually begins his essays with a casually deft name-drop—"I happen to know Martha Stewart"—but this time ("Paul's amoral policy," January 3) he launched almost immediately into an attack on Rep. Ron Paul's isolationism. The surprise for The Scrapbook was not only the absence of Cohen's well-known friends—no dinner-party chat with, say, Eliot and Silda Spitzer—but the fact that The Scrapbook agreed, up to a point, with what Cohen had to say.

Pointing to Paul's opposition to foreign aid, "all international treaties and organizations," including NATO, and his desire to abolish the CIA, Cohen described this as "pretty much what used to be called isolationism, and it allowed Hitler to presume . . . that America would not interfere with his plans to conquer Europe." Which is certainly true, and one of many reasons to have reservations about the congressman from Texas. But then, inevitably, Cohen stepped over the line into op-ed hackery, an occupational hazard: "The isolationism of the 1930s and early '40s has come roaring back," he writes. "The old isolationism was deeply conservative, both socially and economically."

Except that it wasn't. Cohen spends the rest of his column telling the story of Americans (such as Charles Lindbergh) who sought to appease Nazi Germany, or at any rate keep the United States out of World War II, and does his best to attach conservatism to isolationism with Super Glue. Of course, since most *Post* readers have no memory of the late 1930s and early '40s, it is not difficult for him to pull this off. The problem is that Cohen's argument is not just disingenuous, but flat-out wrong.

It is true that the Republican party was dominated by its isolationists in the runup to World War II; but that was not the result of any affinity for Nazi Germany (as Cohen implies) but because of disenchantment with the consequences of U.S. participation in World War I. Moreover, there was a sizable and far-from-silent internationalist wing in the GOP as well. When President Franklin Roosevelt sought to "nationalize" his cabinet in 1940 by putting two prominent Republicans in charge of the War and Navy departments, he recruited Herbert Hoover's secretary of state (Henry Stimson) and Alf Landon's 1936 running mate (Frank Knox).

Better yet, any close examination of the isolationist movement reveals that it was, at the very least, a bipartisan affair. The America First Committee, whose most famous member was Lindbergh, featured among its leadership such prominent Democrats as Senators Burton Wheeler of Montana and David Walsh of Massachusetts. Even the perennial Socialist candidate for president, Norman Thomas, was an enthusiastic America Firster, and its student auxiliary fea-

tured such future left-wing icons as Gore Vidal (Phillips Exeter Academy) and Kurt Vonnegut Jr. (Cornell).

It might even be argued that, all things considered, the left has been the traditional isolationist haven in America, not the right. Especially after the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939, the American Communist party was fiercely opposed to U.S. participation in World War II, and the leading interventionist organization of the time—the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies—was a brainchild of the Republican journalist William Allen White.

Indeed, it would be difficult, even for Richard Cohen, to find many remnants of isolationism in the Republican party after the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952. That, among other things, is what makes Ron Paul so anomalous. But can the same be said for the party of George ("Come home, America") McGovern, Howard Dean, and Dennis Kucinich? ♦

Recess Games

Even though President Obama is on pace to make significantly fewer recess appointments than his immediate predecessors, he's courted far more controversy over this presidential prerogative than Bush or Clinton ever dreamed of. Last week, Obama made four new recess appointments—Richard Cordray to head the controversial new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, along with three more members of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

There's one significant problem, however. In order for a president to make recess appointments—which are an end run around Senate confirmation—Congress actually has to be in recess. The Senate GOP had been holding pro-forma sessions explicitly to keep the president from making recess appointments. The Obama administration simply declared such pro-forma sessions "gimmicks" and bulldozed ahead, Constitution be damned.

Even ardent supporters of the president raised eyebrows. "Liberals would be hitting the roof if George W. Bush did this," conceded the *Washington Post*'s Ezra Klein. Senate majority leader Harry Reid, on the other hand, applauded the move, showing more flexibility than a circus contortionist. Only three years ago, Reid declared on the floor of the Senate: "I had to keep the Senate in pro-forma session. . . . That necessarily meant no recess appointments could be made."

The GOP is rightly outraged by these appointments, which are likely to spur court challenges. While the controversy is litigated, it's worth remembering why Senate Republicans insisted on keeping the Senate in session, a demand that Reid agreed to during negotiations last year: Obama had previously used recess appointments to install candidates who were so radical as to be unacceptable not just to Republicans, but to his own party.

Let's revisit Craig Becker's recess appointment to the NLRB in March 2010. Becker had a lengthy history as a lawyer representing the AFL-CIO and SEIU, so there were serious concerns about his ability to pass judgment impartially on entities that once employed him. And then there was Becker's clearly enunciated desire to see America's unions employ radical and coercive tactics.

In February 2010, the Senate failed to get enough votes to invoke cloture on Becker's nomination. Two Democratic senators, Ben Nelson and Blanche Lincoln, broke ranks and voted against him, and a few other Democratic senators abstained.

However, America's big unions wanted an advocate, not an impartial judge. Given that unions had coughed up $400 million in campaign funds the year Obama was elected, their president was going to give them what they wanted. So how has Becker's tenure on the NLRB worked out? He's led a number of outright assaults on America's employers—including the

NLRB's unprecedented move to prevent Boeing from building a factory in South Carolina, a right-to-work state. The NLRB's overreach with Boeing was condemned by Republicans and Democrats alike. More broadly, nearly everyone in the business community has been alarmed by the board's radicalism during Becker's tenure.

Thankfully, recess appointments are only temporary, so Becker had to step down. But in his absence, the NLRB falls short of a quorum and is thus unable to act. Obama's patrons in the labor movement won't stand for that, so the president is ignoring the Constitution's advice and consent clause to keep the NLRB operating.

Complaints of Republican obstructionism by the Obama team are disingenuous. The Senate committee handling the NLRB nominations has yet to receive the required paperwork for two of the new NLRB recess appointments, Democrats Sharon Block and Richard Griffin. According to the Heritage Foundation, that means they're being appointed without the "background checks required of all nominees to the board, which are used to determine any past impropriety or conflicts of interest." Then again, impropriety and conflicts of interest weren't an obstacle with Craig Becker—more of a recommendation—so why would Obama care this time around?

Becker isn't an anomaly—Donald Berwick, outgoing administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, was recess appointed before nomination hearings commenced. His controversial statements in favor of rationing health care would likely have torpedoed his chances before the nomination process even began in earnest.

Those two appointments alone demonstrate that the GOP had more than enough reason to take an aggressive stance blocking Obama's nominees. Given that his own party has had trouble supporting Obama's past appointees, he has no one to blame but himself. Not that this slowed him down. Obama apparently stands with 19th-century New York solon Timothy Campbell, who asked: "What's the Constitution among friends?" ♦

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BPA WORLDWIDE

Unmugged by Reality

A friend told me at dinner over New Year's break that people had started walking at night in New York's Central Park again. In the year just ended, the *New York Times* reports, there was about one robbery in the park every three weeks. Back in the 1980s, when I started visiting, there were two a night. I can more easily imagine Wrigley Field in July without baseball than Central Park after dark without random violence.

In the wake of power outages in 1977, *Lord of the Flies*-style looting spread across the city. Longtime residents—the kind of people who could remember strolling at midnight with their sweethearts by the Central Park Reservoir shortly after arriving from the Midwest in 1946—asked what this world was coming to. But by the time I got to college, not so many years later, it was taken for granted that the place was a garrison city. New York became one of those places like, say, Beirut or Belfast, where you could die of crossing the wrong street. Central Park was even more dangerous than that.

The summer after my sophomore year, I sublet a one-bedroom apartment for $235 a month in the far East Village, about a block or so east of McSorley's alehouse. Auden used to live in the neighborhood, or maybe he just drank in it. At the time, the distinction between those two verbs—"to drink" and "to live"—had a way of eluding me. The area had always (and I use the word *always* in its American sense, to mean "for the past few years") been a neighborhood of East European Jews. There were enough of them left to support the superb Kiev delicatessen, the first place I ever had borscht, but not enough to hold the neighborhood against an influx of winos and heroin addicts. One particularly hopeless case lay every night on the front steps of my apartment building. Late-night walks home after dark were heart-pounding-in-your-ribcage affairs of darting across streets to avoid gangs of dangerous-looking kids. I spent very little time in that apartment because two friends had their own sublet above the Broome Street Bar on West Broadway, and I was welcome on their sofa. After a party that went till after midnight (and somehow, when you're 21, there is always a party that goes till after midnight), the six-block walk home seemed an unnecessary risk. But it would have been considered nothing compared with the foolishness of walking through Central Park.

DAVID GOTHARD

In the two weeks it took me to find that downtown apartment, I had lived in a vacated room in John Jay Hall at Columbia. I remember getting off the B train around midnight one night and walking the wrong way (that would be east) down 117th Street, sure that the campus must be just at the end of the next block. I walked past avenues I'd never heard of, although I'd heard of the civil-rights leaders they were named after, and the first moment I realized that I was severely lost came when I saw a sign for Fifth Avenue—I had crossed the whole of Harlem alone in the middle of the night. Maybe today this passes for a romantic stroll. Back then it passed for extremely stupid. The only thing stupider would have been to turn around and walk back the way I'd come, which I promptly did, too. When I mentioned it over drinks to my native-New Yorker friends the next night as a "funny thing" that had happened to me, nobody saw anything the slightest bit funny in it. It was as if I had mentioned a newfound enthusiasm for dogfighting or crystal meth or Russian roulette.

New York is no longer that kind of place. You can jog across Central Park after work, even if work ends at 8 o'clock at night. The sex trade has been chased so far from Times Square that there's even a Toys"R"Us there. The violence and filth that stood between New Yorkers and their city's cultural amenities—its vast publishing industry, its dozens of thriving little magazines, its cafés that were the only place in the country to get espresso—have been eradicated. But there's the catch. What happened to those cultural amenities? Today espresso is available in prettier cities with lower taxes. The governor of Alaska can get a copy of the *Divine Comedy* delivered to her Kindle more quickly than a New Yorker can walk downstairs and buy one at the Fifth Avenue Barnes & Noble. The question of how to live in New York has been replaced by the more troubling question of why.

Christopher Caldwell

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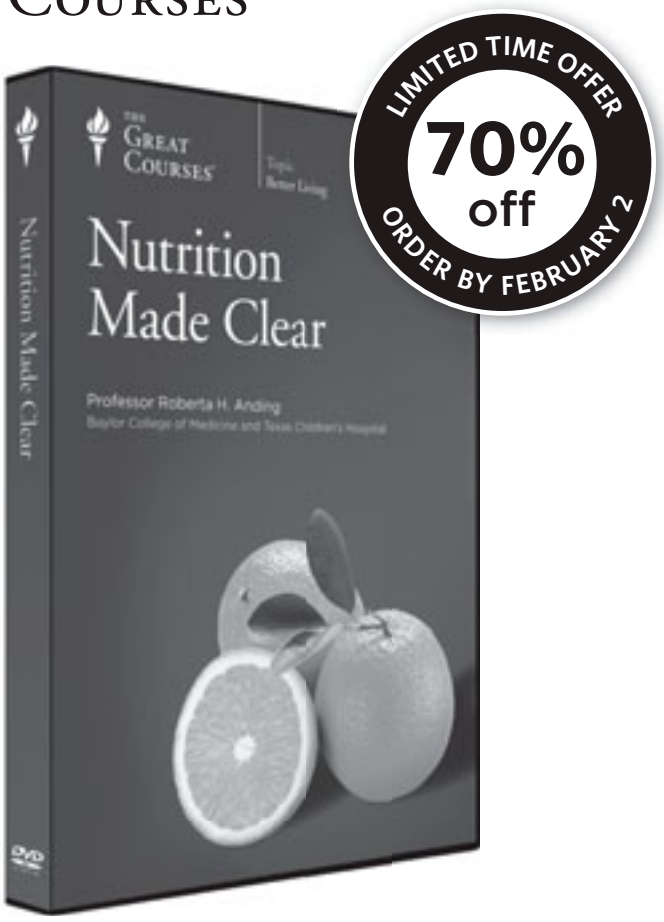

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AP IMAGES / CHARLIE RIEDEL

All We Are Saying . . .

The establishment usually wins. That, after all, is what it means to be an establishment. But not always. Three of the last six presidents—Jimmy Carter in 1976, Ronald Reagan in 1980, and Barack Obama in 2008—ran against their own party's powerbrokers, captured the nomination, and then took the Oval Office from an incumbent president (1976, 1980) or an incumbent party (2008).

True, establishment candidates have more often beaten back insurgents. But that hasn't always turned out so well for their party. Gerald Ford lost the general election in 1976, Jimmy Carter (who had held off challenger Ted Kennedy for the Democratic nomination) lost in 1980, Walter Mondale lost in 1984, Bob Dole lost in 1996, John Kerry lost in 2004, and John McCain (who'd gone from insurgent in 2000 to quasi-establishment candidate eight years later) lost in 2008. In 2000, the two establishment candidates won their nominations, and both arguably underperformed in the fall. Al Gore managed to lose as an incumbent vice president running in a time of peace and prosperity; George W. Bush frittered away a substantial lead by succumbing to establishmentarian complacency and following the counsel of advisers that the way to win was to don the mantle of inevitability. (He was saved by Ralph Nader voters in Florida.)

Mitt Romney, this year's iteration of the establishment candidate, is a decent, serious, and in some ways impressive man. But it's clear a lot of Republicans look at him, his campaign, and his advocates and see the ghosts of establishmentarians past. The question in this cycle has always been whether a viable challenger would emerge. We will now see, in the crucible of an intense campaign, whether Rick Santorum is up to the task of being that challenger. And we will also see whether the establishment will be able to put so heavy a thumb on the scales that voters will think the race is over before it has even really begun.

Thus Karl Rove in the *Wall Street Journal* last Thursday: If Romney, having beaten Santorum by all of eight votes in Iowa, wins in New Hampshire, where he has a summer home and has been campaigning for six years—well, then we should all just accept the inevitability of Romney. After all, then "Romney is 2-0." And if he's 2-0, by whatever margins and in states with 11 electoral votes—"he becomes the prohibitive favorite" for the nomination.

Really? Well, no. But the point is to convince Santorum supporters, and those of you who might consider becoming Santorum supporters, that he has no chance, so as to create a self-fulfilling prophecy of Romney inevitability. After all, "Mr. Santorum shouldn't kid himself; he faces huge obstacles. . . . He hasn't had to endure withering scrutiny but will shortly. His chief opponent has tremendous organizational and financial advantages and has been through the rigors of a presidential primary race." Rove does note with gracious condescension, "Mr. Santorum has a shot, and that's all he could have hoped for."

Actually, Santorum can hope to win. He has been running to win. And after what he pulled off in Iowa, it's foolish to suggest he doesn't have a chance to win. His Iowa performance, and his speech Tuesday night, were impressive enough to suggest to primary voters in subsequent states that they should make an effort to judge both his capacity to win and his capacity to govern.

Organizational and financial advantages often prevail. But isn't the story of America that they don't always determine the outcome? And, by the way, if the candidate with those advantages does prevail, won't he be better off for having faced a serious challenger?

The first and greatest Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, defeated more established candidates for the nomination in 1860. (He also knew how to co-opt parts of the establishment, a necessary skill for a successful politician—as Ronald Reagan also showed over a century later.) Speaking to the 166th Ohio Regiment in August 1864, President Lincoln thanked the soldiers for their service, and went on to say something perhaps worth keeping in mind today:

> I almost always feel inclined, when I happen to say anything to soldiers, to impress upon them in a few brief remarks the importance of success in this contest. It is not merely for to-day, but for all time to come that we should perpetuate for our children's children this great and free government, which we have enjoyed all our lives. I beg you to remember this, not merely for my sake, but for yours. I happen temporarily to occupy this big White House. I am a living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father's child has. It is in order that each of you may have through this free government which we have enjoyed, an open field and a fair chance for your industry, enterprise and intelligence; that you may all have equal privileges in the race of life, with all its desirable human aspirations. It is for this the struggle should be maintained, that we may not lose our birthright—not only for one, but for two or three years. The nation is worth fighting for, to secure such an inestimable jewel.

Santorum—and anyone else in the field, or anyone who may still enter—deserves "an open field and a fair chance" to compete for the "big White House" that Lincoln occupied. All American history is saying, and all we are saying, is . . . give Rick a chance.

—William Kristol

No Superpower Here

With the end of the Cold War in sight, then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell in the George H.W. Bush administration was asked how big the U.S. military should be. He replied, "We have to put a shingle outside our door saying, 'Superpower Lives Here.'"

Barack Obama has taken the shingle down.

The "strategic guidance" announced this week from the commander in chief to the Department of Defense is, make no mistake about it, an order to retreat. The retreat is particularly evident in the greater Middle East, but it will also be visible in Europe. And the administration's much ballyhooed "pivot" to East Asia is largely rhetorical, meant to distract from the broader global retreat and the fact that planned American defense budgets will lack the resources to make that pivot militarily possible.

The clearest measure of diminished American ambition is the overthrow of the traditional "two-war standard." What has made the United States a global superpower is the ability to conduct two large campaigns at once. This has been the agreed benchmark not just since the Clinton administration's 1993 "Bottom-Up Review," but since 1940, when Franklin Roosevelt signed the "Two-Ocean Navy Act." The Obama strategy is instead, as one senior administration official put it, to be able to "spoil" aggression in the event of a second simultaneous conflict.

This is a bright green light to our enemies and a flashing red one to our friends and allies. If the United States were to find itself engaged elsewhere, the risk-reward calculus for Iran or North Korea or China—anyone who dreams of chipping away at the international system that Americans have made and kept safe—will look very tempting. What would it mean to "spoil" a Chinese grab for Taiwan? An Iranian attempt to close the Strait of Hormuz? The next time North Korea sinks a South Korean vessel? To proclaim that we can only really deal with one threat at a time is an open invitation to the rogue states of the world to make mischief, a recipe for disorder, aggression, and danger.

The Obama retreat from the Middle East in particular is a reversal of decades of American policy and strategy. The withdrawal from Iraq, the likely abandonment of Afghanistan, and the reduction of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps to pre-9/11 levels of strength—all of this rolls back the U.S. military posture in the region to a pre-Desert Storm stance. The ebbing of American power in the region is already creating a dangerous vacuum that others will scramble to fill. Does the president really believe the wars of the past are simply that—past? And that we will no longer need robust American ground forces to deter and respond to enemies, and to ensure American and allied interests in the region?

The president's argument for this retreat is the need to "renew our economic strength at home," which includes putting "our fiscal house in order." But our economic problems have nothing to do with a defense budget that, as a percentage of the country's wealth, remains well below post-World War II norms. Nor will the savings from defense cuts amount to more than peanuts in comparison with the trillion-dollar annual deficits the administration seems only too happy to run. No, the real game afoot here

is making as much room as possible for the administration's domestic spending agenda—at the cost of putting the country's security, as even Defense Secretary Leon Panetta admits, more at risk.

Not that the administration will acknowledge this. Instead, this agenda has been papered over with a veneer of strategic sophistication admiringly summed up by the *New York Times*: "The country must be smarter and more restrained in its use of force," it editorialized. "[M]any of the challenges out there can be dealt with by air power, intelligence, special operations or innovative technologies like drones." No doubt this will become the mantra of the smart set. But this sounds like nothing so much as the pre-9/11 "transformational" Don Rumsfeld.

Rumsfeld could fairly say he didn't see what was coming, that he was blindsided by history and then adjusted. Obama is making a conscious choice. It's a choice for weakness, a choice that will invite war, a choice for American decline. It's a choice the next president must reverse.

—Gary Schmitt & Thomas Donnelly

Taking Iran Seriously

A funny thing happened last week in Iowa. Foreign policy—mostly the question of how to deal with the threat posed by a nuclear Iran—emerged front and center in the Republican presidential race.

On January 1, Rick Santorum told David Gregory on *Meet the Press* that he would support airstrikes to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. Then Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich both raised Iran in their post-caucus remarks, promising, if elected, to use all options at their disposal to prevent a nuclear Iran.

This focus on Iran was in part a reaction to its saber-rattling in the Strait of Hormuz and in part a reaction to Ron Paul's argument that Iran's desire for nuclear weapons is an understandable response to U.S. aggression and that sanctions against Iran are "an act of war."

The results of the caucuses suggest that Paul is losing the argument. Roughly 78 percent of caucusgoers rejected his views and voted for candidates who are more hawkish than President Obama on Iran, who are concerned about cuts to the defense budget, and who want us to win rather than give up in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So it's safe to say that voters in November will have a clear alternative to the president's dangerous drift on Iran. As they should have. For despite Obama's statement during the 2008 campaign that "we have no time to waste" to prevent a nuclear Iran, wasting time is exactly what his administration has done.

Continued Iranian aggression, including the killing of American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and even a plot to carry out a terrorist attack on American soil, has gone unanswered. Meanwhile, the Obama administration has vacated Iraq and is reluctant to intervene to oust Iran's closest ally, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad.

These failures, combined with the rift in Washington's relations with the government of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the administration's blatant stonewalling of sanctions passed by Congress, have ensured that Iran has little to worry about in its steady march toward a nuclear weapons capability. The most serious leverage, potential military action, has been dismissed and discounted by a succession of Obama administration officials.

The administration apparently believes, as former White House official Dennis Ross recently wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, that we "have the time and space needed to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability through nonmilitary means." This assumption is likely based on U.S. intelligence community assessments of Iran, assessments that have repeatedly turned out to underestimate Tehran's nuclear progress. But it is more fundamentally based on President Obama's obvious preference to avoid dealing with Iran as a serious threat during an election year.

The president should pause long enough in his reelection campaign to ponder the speech given by Netanyahu in early December at the gravesite of Israel's founder, David Ben-Gurion. Netanyahu discussed the difficult and controversial decision that Ben-Gurion had to make regarding Israel's declaration of statehood. The parallels to the choice confronting American and Israeli leaders today regarding Iran are striking:

> Both domestically and abroad, within the Jewish community in Israel and across the world, tremendous pressures were exerted on Ben-Gurion not to take this step. Everyone told him: This is not the time; not now. . . . Ben-Gurion did not ignore these warnings. He well understood that there would be a heavy cost to this decision, but he believed that the cost would be even heavier if he did not make the decision. We are all here today because Ben-Gurion made the right decision at the right time. He considered and debated for some time, but at the end of the day, he was ready to make difficult decisions for the future of our people.

The best hope for deterring Iran is not to equivocate but to be clear, not to run away from discussing the military option but to put it front and center. The serious Republican candidates for the presidency seem to understand this. It is dangerous that President Obama does not.

—Jamie M. Fly

A Winning Message?

The neglected substance of the Santorum campaign.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

Manchester, N.H.

Rick Santorum's campaign is more sophisticated than it looks. Superficially, it's a shoestring operation: Just a few days before the New Hampshire primary, he's perpetually booked into venues that are two sizes too small. He often speaks without a microphone or professional lighting. The advance work is minimal, usually just a couple of lawn signs tacked to the walls and two small posterboard placards that read "Faith, Family & Freedom" and sit on tripods at the front of the room. On good days, there are enough staffers to man a table near the entrance asking voters to sign up for his list, but this job usually exhausts the staff's available manpower. As in most successful insurgencies, the candidate is the campaign. And Santorum the candidate is quite impressive.

In Iowa, one could say Santorum got lucky catching a wave. But it wasn't just luck that translated attention into votes. Santorum was selling something different from the other candidates in the field, and once people noticed that, they responded.

For starters, Santorum embraced cultural issues. At a stop in Marshalltown, Iowa, for instance, he didn't just talk about abortion—a topic rarely engaged by any of the other candidates on the stump—he did so in the strongest possible terms. "I don't believe life begins at conception. I *know* life begins at conception," he said. Explaining why life should be protected by U.S. law, he said people should ask themselves the following: "Do you as an American believe, as an article of the American civic religion, that we hold these truths to be self evident: All men are created equal?" Because, he said, "We believe that everyone is endowed by God. And not any God, but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—that God."

But Santorum pressed more than just social conservatism in Iowa; he proposed a distinctly populist economic agenda. He takes traditional Republican economic goals as a starting point—cutting taxes and reducing the size of government. But his plans also have some interesting wrinkles. When it comes to taxes, for instance, Santorum wants to collapse the code to two rates (10 percent and 28 percent) and limit individuals to just five deductions. His list is telling: children, charity, mortgage interest, health care, and retirement savings. It's a scheme designed, first and foremost, to bolster middle-class families.

When it comes to corporate taxes, Santorum proposes slashing the general rate in half and eliminating taxes on manufacturing entirely. First, Santorum argues that service businesses, like restaurants, florists, or Walmart (to pick the three examples he often uses), can't move to China. Factories can, so they need special protection.

Furthermore, Santorum argues, manufacturing is special. "In the knowledge-based economy we're

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creating a lot of great products," he says, "but we're not making them in America. We're creating—and then by creating . . . but manufacturing them somewhere else, wealth is accumulated. But it's not distributed." This distribution of wealth concerns Santorum because he sees manufacturing jobs as the key to economic mobility—and hence family formation—in the lower-middle and middle-middle classes. And intact, middle-class families are the key to economic growth and liberty. "You can't have limited government without strong families," he's fond of saying. "You can't have a successful economy without strong families."

It's an interesting bridge, from economic to moral issues, that Santorum constructs. It's at once populist and values-based. Even when he's talking about the tax code or economic policy, he finds a way to talk about family life. In Brentwood, New Hampshire, for instance, a voter asked him how he would stop members of Congress from insider trading. Santorum responded that we shouldn't need a *law* to prevent legislators from profiting off of nonpublic information, because such behavior is obviously *unethical.* But because our representatives don't act ethically and morally, he said, we will have to pass a law constraining them. Then we'll have to hire people to enforce the law. As a result congressional offices will swell with these new hall monitors. The government will grow. And the entire operation will cost Americans money.

Then Santorum bridged: "People say, 'All we need to care about is cutting taxes and cutting government and everything will be fine.' But if people don't live good, decent, moral lives, government is going to get bigger. And that's why I say families and faith are important parts of the foundation of economic limited government."

It was an elegant formulation; and the audience loved it.

If the ideological sophistication of Santorum's campaign is underestimated, so is his personal appeal. On the stump, Santorum typically talks for 8 or 10 minutes and then takes questions for more than an hour. He is relaxed, friendly, and often funny. In Northfield, New Hampshire, for instance, he was asked about his upbringing in Pennsylvania's coal country. In response, he told the audience about his grandfather, an Italian immigrant who worked in the mines until he was 72 years old. "He was tough," Santorum said with a smile. "He had scoliosis in his back and was sort of hunched over and was just a big, strong man. Smoked everything, all day long. Pipes, cigars, cigarettes. Had his whiskey in the morning with his coffee—he was just a whole different breed of cat." For a politician who made his name in the Senate as a bulldog, Santorum has learned to play these moments with a nice combination of levity and accessibility.

Which isn't to say folksiness. Santorum spent much of the last few years working at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, one of Washington's most impressive think tanks. It shows. When he's asked questions about Social Security, for example, his answers often wind past the 15-minute mark and include actuarial talk about bend points. It's a testament to how nimble he is that audiences are willing to follow him on these colloquies.

And on top of everything else, Santorum is rhetorically shrewd. He treated his post-caucus remarks as a national introduction and delivered a strong speech. But as the *Washington Examiner*'s Tim Carney noted, tucked away in his remarks was a subtle contrast with Mitt Romney.

Where Romney likes to contrast his vision of a "merit society" with Barack Obama's "entitlement society," Santorum frames the issue differently. He says that Obama "wants to make [working-class men and women] dependent, rather than valuing their work." As Carney points out, Romney knocks welfare queens, while Santorum worries that government is hurting the working class: "In both accounts, government is the enemy, but the co-conspirators in Romney's account are the victims in Santorum's."

The machinery of the Santorum campaign is, at best, third-class. But the candidate has proven to be formidable. ♦

More Conservative Than You Think

The new Mitt Romney.

BY FRED BARNES

Salem, N.H.

Newt Gingrich says Mitt Romney is a "timid Massachusetts moderate." Gingrich is two for three on his rival for the Republican presidential nomination. Romney, or at least his campaign, is a bit timid. And he is from Massachusetts. But moderate, no. Romney is more conservative than most people think and Gingrich is willing to admit.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Gingrich could just as accurately have used a variety of words besides "timid" to characterize Romney's style and strategy. Among them: muted, cautious, understated, safe, restrained, risk-averse. But "timid" suggests cowardice and probably serves Gingrich's political purposes better.

One only has to think back to New Jersey governor Chris Christie's campaign in 2009 to understand what Romney may be up to. Christie acted like a mushy moderate but has governed like a hell-for-leather

conservative. He figured if he revealed his intention to cut spending and taxes and neutralize the teachers' union, he wouldn't get elected. I suspect Romney is doing something similar.

We won't know for certain unless Romney is elected president. But in recent weeks, he's begun to sound more conservative. Unlike most of his Republican opponents, Romney has declined to offer a specific plan for reforming the tax code. At a town hall gathering last week in Salem, however, he talked up the idea of simplifying the system, broadening the tax base, and slashing tax rates—alas, tax reform at the idea stage.

For now, he's sticking to his modest plan featuring tax cuts for the middle class. He would wipe out taxes on capital gains, dividends, and savings for those earning less than $200,000. He says those making more are doing fine and don't need fresh tax breaks. But his next step, as president, would be to extend a version of that tax cut to the well-to-do to spur investment, economic growth, and job creation.

On four of the biggest issues in 2012, Romney is anything but moderate—or timid. He gets no special credit for advocating repeal of Obamacare. That's Republican dogma. But he's been the most specific among the GOP presidential candidates in backing the Ryan budget in all its parts, including its remake of Medicare. It was House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan's plan that Gingrich zinged as "right wing social engineering" before reversing himself under duress.

When Romney announced in November his own proposal for cutting spending and reforming Medicare and Social Security, Ryan was thrilled. "Look at what he put out!" he told Jennifer Rubin of the *Washington Post*. "This is a great development." Ryan said Romney's package of spending cuts "tracks perfectly with the House budget," which Ryan had drafted.

Romney preceded Ryan in adding a twist to the overhaul of Medicare: Under a new "premium support" system in which seniors would choose among health insurance plans, one option would be the current Medicare program. In December, this was included in the bipartisan plan sponsored by Ryan and Democratic senator Ron Wyden of Oregon.

"On entitlements, I think Romney's plan is easily the best one offered by a Republican candidate," said Yuval Levin of the conservative Ethics and Public Policy Center. "It's a very smart, very well-thought-out, and very conservative approach."

When he raises "premium support" and Social Security reform in town hall appearances, Romney has a way of making bold changes sound like tweaks. But in Salem, he said, almost as an afterthought, his proposal would "save Medicare and Social Security . . . forever."

Like Ryan, Romney would not reduce defense spending. He wants to bolster the Army with 100,000 more troops and increase the Navy's shipbuilding rate from 9 to 15 per year. In a speech at the Citadel in October, Romney promised to "prioritize the full deployment of a multilayered national ballistic missile defense system." And in Iowa he said he would instruct the Pentagon to prepare "credible military options" to destroy Iran's facilities for building nuclear weapons.

On immigration, Romney has made it a point in the nationally televised debates to criticize Gingrich's idea of letting illegal immigrants stay in America if they've lived here for decades and Rick Perry's support for allowing college students here unlawfully to pay tuition at the reduced rate for state residents. That, too, puts Romney in the conservative camp.

To sum up, he's at least as conservative as his GOP rivals on jettisoning Obamacare and more conservative than some on entitlements, national security, and immigration. He's no match for Gingrich on taxes, but that's about it. Overall, he's to the right of Gingrich.

Romney wasn't always there. In 1994, he ran as a liberal Republican against Senator Ted Kennedy. By New England standards, he was a conservative governor of Massachusetts from 2003 to 2007, erasing a $3 billion deficit, cutting taxes, and aggressively opposing gay marriage. He's best remembered, though, for his misbegotten health care program, Romneycare.

Today he's talking like a full-fledged conservative. Yet there's a legitimate question about whether his conservatism is deeply rooted or merely a campaign conversion that began with his first presidential bid in 2008. For the time being, that's unknowable.

But I've been impressed by Romney's ability to win the endorsement of one of New Hampshire's toughest and least compromising conservatives, Jennifer Horn. A former talk radio host, she runs a grassroots organization, We the People.

Horn initially backed Tim Pawlenty and traveled to Ames, Iowa, to participate in the presidential straw vote in August. Pawlenty lost and dropped out the next day. Hours later, Horn got a call from Romney as she was going through the security line at the Des Moines airport to fly home. He wanted her support.

She held back. Her organization staged a series of events for individual candidates at which she and audience members asked questions. Romney came in December. "He hit every mark that day," she told me. "He had a heart for America and wrapped that around his lifelong fiscal conservatism. I was convinced he would lead from the right." She endorsed him a few days before Christmas, four months after his call to her.

Horn has no illusions about Romney. He's neither a movement conservative nor an ideological conservative. He's a pragmatist for whom conservatism makes the most sense. That it helps him politically no doubt makes sense, too. ♦

Ron Paul's Timidity

Welcome to big government libertarianism.

BY JOHN MCCORMACK

Ankeny, Iowa

On the night of the Iowa caucuses, Tim Ridge, a clean-cut young man wearing a blue button-down shirt and dark slacks, made the case for Ron Paul to 135 fellow caucusgoers gathered at Northview Middle School. He said that Paul is a pro-life obstetrician who voted to "go after Osama bin Laden after 9/11." But Paul's economic plan was at the heart of the pitch.

"His 'Plan to Restore America' will cut $1 trillion in spending in the first year of his presidency, eliminate five unconstitutional departments, and balance the budget in three years," Ridge said. "He'll do all this without cutting a penny from Social Security, from veterans' benefits, or from national defense."

"Or from Medicare or Medicaid," Ridge's wife interjected. "Just sayin'."

It might sound strange to hear Ron Paul, the great libertarian hope, cast as the defender of the New Deal and the Great Society. But Ridge, reading from prepared remarks, was perfectly on message. Paul makes the same case to voters during his stump speech: If we simply cut "overseas spending," there will be enough money to fund Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

"I want to take care of the people who become so dependent on government, even though there would have been a better way to take care of them," Paul said at a rally in Des Moines on December 28. "You take the elderly on Social Security—there was a contract. But we can't honor that contract if we keep spending this money overseas. So I'm for taking care of those people on Medicaid, Medicare, and the people at home on Social Security."

That might sound too good to be true, but it gets even better, according to Paul. "Just remember the military budget is different than the defense budget. The military budget is all the weapons the military-industrial complex wants," Paul said. If we have sound money and a "sensible foreign policy," he continued, "we don't have to give up anything. We don't have to give up our defense."

"The money we spend overseas should be the easiest money to cut," he said at a town hall-style meeting earlier in the day. "We're spending well over a trillion dollars a year—probably about $1.4 trillion to operate all our activities overseas."

Paul is known for his supposedly bold economic agenda, but when it comes to entitlements—the biggest fiscal challenge our country faces—Paul panders as badly as President Obama. The entire annual defense budget, including war spending, is less than $700 billion—not $1.4 trillion as Paul claims. And by 2025—just 13 years away—Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and interest on the debt will consume all federal revenues.

So what's Paul's plan to avert the coming fiscal crisis? He doesn't have one. According to his campaign manager, Paul simply wants to have an "adult conversation" about how to keep Medicare and Social Security working. An "adult conversation" is exactly what Barack Obama has proposed instead of an actual plan.

Although the Texas congressman believes that Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are "technically" unconstitutional and should be handled at the state level, he would like to fund the programs for decades to come. But he has no plan to keep them solvent during this extended transition.

"Ideally, we'd like to fund them for everyone over 25"—people beginning to retire four decades from now—"and will work hard to make that possible while having an adult conversation about other ways, outside of any sort of tax increase, to keep the system solvent," Paul campaign manager Jesse Benton wrote in an email. But, unlike every other GOP presidential candidate and almost every Republican senator and congressman, Paul has failed to endorse any specific ideas to keep Medicare solvent.

"Dr. Paul will dramatically cut other big government spending so that we can take care of people who have become dependent on Social Security and Medicare while we work our way through a transition back to constitutional solutions for medical care and retirement," Benton wrote. "One of his first elements of that transition would be to allow workers 25 and under to opt out, keep their own money, and take responsibility for themselves."

It's a testament to the political success of Medicare that no Republican on the national level has proposed changing it for people at or near retirement, and that even a former Libertarian party presidential candidate like Paul doesn't want to touch it. But Medicare's popularity is the very reason why political leaders need to begin making the case for reform now—to prepare the next generation for necessary changes.

Paul's message leaves his followers under the impression that

GARY LOCKE

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fundamental changes aren't necessary if we simply cut overseas spending. "I think it's viable, naturally," if "we bring enough [troops] home and safeguard our own borders," says Gregory Welsher, a Marine veteran and Ron Paul supporter, when asked about Paul's plan. "Half of our budget goes toward militaristic spending," says Sean Curtin, a young Iowa county co-chair for the Paul campaign, who wants the health and retirement programs block-granted to the states—something Paul has already proposed for Medicaid.

So why is Paul shrinking from a fight on entitlements? It's not entirely clear. There has been some speculation that Paul might run as a third-party candidate. Paul has repeatedly refused to rule out a third-party bid. He draws a large portion of his support in the polls from non-Republicans. And in Iowa, he praised the Occupy Wall Street movement. "I identify with both" the Occupy movement and the Tea Party, he said.

On the other hand, Paul's son, Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky, threw cold water on a potential third-party run last week. "I don't think it's a good idea," Rand Paul told a New Hampshire radio station. "If the Tea Party branches off, it will be a certain election for President Obama."

The pandering on entitlements is all the more befuddling when Ron Paul portrays himself as unconcerned with practical politics—a libertarian prophet crying in the wilderness. At the end of a 45-minute speech at a rally in Des Moines, Paul told the crowd that he views himself as part of a "political remnant"—a biblical concept from the book of Isaiah that was promoted by the libertarian theorist Albert Jay Nock during the New Deal.

"There's always a remnant in society, no matter how bad the society," Paul told the crowd. "Just think of what it was like under communism. They had the Solzhenitsyns. They were part of a remnant that held the truth together." But Ron Paul is no libertarian Isaiah. For whatever reason, he seems to have found the truth on entitlements too hard to tell. ♦

Safe + Moderate ≠ Electable

Low-beta isn't always better.

BY LAWRENCE B. LINDSEY

The conventional wisdom among the chattering class about the Republican field is that voters face a choice between "electability" and "ideology." But a careful look at elections since the end of World War II suggests that is not the case. What most pundits think of as "electable," a safe candidate attractive to moderate voters, has historically been highly unlikely to unseat an incumbent president. In the five elections since World War II in which the party out of power has picked a "safe" candidate to take on a sitting president, the result was defeat for the supposedly safe, electable challenger.

Thomas Dewey

To understand why this is not always the case, consider the math of an election as composed of two parts: the "normal" or "expected" result and the variability or chance part around that normal result. The term used in markets to denote this chance or variable part is "beta." A high-beta stock—or a high-beta candidate—might do a lot better or a lot worse than what would normally be expected, whereas a low-beta candidate (or stock) is pretty much going to do as expected, or, in the case of a stock, as the rest of the market does.

If there is an election a party would normally be expected to win, the smart thing to do is to nominate a low-beta candidate. If, on the other hand, a party is thought likely to lose, it might select a high-beta candidate. That would increase its chances of winning, though it would also increase its chances of losing big.

Statistically, the odds of winning depend a lot on whether there is an incumbent seeking reelection, as has happened in 10 of the 16 presidential races since World War II. Incumbency offers tremendous advantages, by some estimates adding at least 3 points to the "normal" result, turning a 50-50 election into one that is 53-47. Job performance matters, so a bad economy tends to subtract from this edge. With subpar growth, but no recession, President Obama might normally be expected to win narrowly, say by 1 percentage point.

If that model is right and the Republicans ran a "zero-beta" candidate, one with absolutely no variability around the "normal" result, he would perform quite respectably but lose. To be precise, he would lose by one point, 50.5 to 49.5. A very low-beta candidate, say one with a variability equivalent to half a point, would have an equal chance of producing a "tie" or losing 51-49. A high-beta candidate, with 10 times the variability of that very low-beta candidate, would have an equal chance of winning 54.5-45.5 or losing big, by 55-45. But if a party really wants to win—and doesn't care about how badly it

Lawrence B. Lindsey's most recent book is What a President Should Know . . . but Most Learn Too Late.

might lose—it should pick a high-beta candidate.

Stated simply, given the incumbent's built-in advantage, the opposition party must nominate someone who will "shake things up" in order to win. After all, if an election was simply going to be a rerun of the previous election, the incumbent would win again. Indeed, running the same opposing candidate as the last time is the ultimate "low beta" strategy—the candidate has been vetted, is therefore "safe," has good national name identification, and obviously has the support of the party machinery. But this recalls Einstein's famous definition of insanity—doing the exact same thing and expecting a different result. Actually both parties have tried this—Dewey ran in 1944 and 1948 and garnered just as many votes both times; Stevenson ran in 1952 and 1956 and got clobbered by roughly the same margin.

There were three other postwar incumbent elections in which the opposition party tried the next safest thing, picking a party stalwart who had experience running for national office. Bob Dole, Senate Republican leader in 1996 and a runner-up in the 1988 presidential contest, was one such example. So was Walter Mondale in 1984, who had been the vice presidential candidate in the two previous contests. John Kerry was also "safe" in 2004, a war hero running in a nation at war. Kerry, with the least experience, probably had the highest beta of these candidates and, by the way, came the closest to unseating the incumbent. And unlike his lower-beta colleagues, Kerry actually increased his party's popular vote over its previous performance. Still, low-beta choices have been zero-for-five at unseating incumbents.

By contrast, the five high-beta candidates who have taken on incumbents have shaken things up, sometimes in a positive way producing a rare victory over an incumbent, and sometimes in a negative way producing a disastrous landslide. Two obvious disasters were Goldwater in 1964 and McGovern in 1972, and these are the candidates most people think of when they think that high-beta candidates can't be elected. But Ronald Reagan was the high-beta choice in 1980—and incumbent President Jimmy Carter's preferred opponent. High-beta candidates can also be "unknowns" who simply capture the imagination or bring in a new class of voter. Carter was one such candidate in 1976, running against his party's establishment and as a Washington outsider. Bill Clinton in 1992 was one of the highest-beta candidates ever in purely statistical terms; he actually ran third in the polls in the summer of 1992. He was also the first Boomer in a country that had been governed by World War II-era G.I.s for the previous 32 years. And Clinton, like Carter, appealed to a part of the country long ostracized by the Democratic establishment—the South.


Walter Mondale


Bob Dole


John Kerry

MONDALE & KERRY: NEWSCOM

Each of these successful high-beta candidates brought in new votes. Clinton's 45 million was the highest total received by a Democrat until that time, even though he won with just 43 percent of the vote. And of course, Reagan reshaped the political landscape, creating the famous "Reagan Democrat."

This is not to say that it can't be different this time—Romney, the obvious low-beta candidate, could win. As they say in markets, "past performance is no guarantee of future results." But it is certainly not the case that, based on history, he is obviously the most "electable." Statistically, he may be the least electable. But he may well be the candidate most likely to put in a "respectable" showing. After all, a Santorum or Gingrich might be more like a Goldwater than a Reagan.

The real attractiveness of a low-beta candidate to a party establishment is not the chance that he will win the White House, it is that other incumbents, particularly in Congress, maximize their chances for reelection precisely because things are *not* shaken up. Incumbents like low-beta candidates above them on the ballot. That is why the Republican establishment in Washington is overwhelmingly supportive of Mitt Romney. He maximizes the chances that Republicans hold the House and take the Senate. And there is an added bonus—if the low-beta "establishment" candidate happens to win, he is beholden to the establishment.

In the interests of full disclosure, I have nothing to disclose. I am not affiliated with any campaign and haven't even contributed to any of the candidates. But we should realize that the electability argument is a phony one the way it is currently framed. What really should matter is which candidate will actually enact a very ambitious legislative agenda during the first six months of 2013—the historic window of opportunity for legislative accomplishment. For if we do not achieve entitlement reform, tax law changes, and regulatory improvements that lead to faster economic growth and a sharply falling deficit, by late 2013 markets will be treating us the way they are now treating Italy. And since the voters intuitively sense this, nominating the individual most likely to pull off an ambitious legislative agenda in 2013 will probably also mean nominating the most electable candidate in 2012. ♦

A Hezbollah Crack-up?

Lebanon's fratricidal extremists.

BY LEE SMITH

Beirut

Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah, wants out. Things have gotten so tense for Hezbollah, says Lokman Slim, an independent Lebanese Shiite activist, that according to well-sourced accounts of a meeting two weeks ago, Nasrallah "complained he no longer wanted the job."

It's hard to blame him. A figure once revered by Arabs for his (relative) success against Israel, Nasrallah is now tainted in the Sunni-majority Middle East by his association with a Syrian regime that has been slaughtering its Sunni opponents. More to the point, it is becoming increasingly unlikely that Hezbollah's patron in Damascus will survive the uprising. Some Lebanese observers are even wondering if the clerical regime in Iran, Hezbollah's main sponsor, will survive. With mounting pressure in the form of U.S. and EU sanctions, a devalued currency, a secret war waged, it seems, by the Americans, Israelis, and perhaps internal adversaries, the Iranians are reduced to making threats—like closing the Strait of Hormuz—that if acted upon could spell the regime's demise.

If Hezbollah's regional partners are in trouble, the domestic arena presents even more daunting challenges for the party of God. Hezbollah's control over Lebanon's Shiite community seems to be unraveling. There's crime and social unrest in Shiite areas that the party is incapable of curtailing. It has had to ask the Lebanese state for assistance in policing Hezbollah's own areas.

"After the 2006 war," says Slim, "the Iranians handed out cash and everyone became accustomed to a certain standard of living. The party kept telling the Shiites that they were the best and most virtuous of people. So even the car thieves and drug dealers were the most virtuous of people. Now they can't control it."

Perhaps the most telling sign of a fragmented resistance is the news that Hezbollah has been infiltrated by foreign intelligence services. The party can't get a fix on how to package the revelations. If they boast about uncovering CIA assets in their midst, they admit that the American clandestine service was able to penetrate an organization whose prestige rests on a reputation for tight security and lockstep discipline.

Like any totalitarian institution, Hezbollah is paranoid. Accordingly, the worse things get for Hezbollah, the more the party sees itself surrounded by enemies, real or imagined. Worst of all is when Hezbollah feels pressure on the most vulnerable part of its structure, its religious foundations. Which may be why the party is seeking the death penalty for one of its former top clerics.

Last October, a Lebanese military court, supervised by a judge close to Hezbollah, charged Sheikh Hassan Mchaymech with collaborating with Israel. "The message is not just for Hassan Mchaymech," says his eldest son, Reda. "It is for the other Shiite clerics working outside the radius of Hezbollah. The message is that anyone who is against Hezbollah is a collaborator."

Last week I met with Reda, a 27-year-old who as family spokesman has taken on more than he ever might have expected—not only working to secure his father's release but also facing down Hezbollah.

"When they came to show us my father's so-called confession," Reda says, "we hadn't seen him or heard from him in nine months." The elder members of the Mchaymech clan, a large family in the southern town of Kfar Seer, had gathered to meet with Hezbollah officials. "The Hezbollah people put on a CD of my father confessing," says Reda. "He wasn't the same man. He had lost 20 kilos, and was nodding like he was drugged or something. There were subtitles because his voice was inaudible. I said, there might be some people around this table willing to believe this, but not me."

Two decades ago, Hassan Mchaymech was a central figure in Hezbollah's power structure. As first assistant to the party's original secretary general, Sobhi Tufayli, Mchaymech was responsible for the organization's clerics. When Tufayli left the party in 1992, replaced first by Abbas Mussawi and then, after his assassination, Hassan Nasrallah, Mchaymech's time with Hezbollah was running out.

"My father said that Nasrallah came straight from Iran to run Hezbollah," says Reda. "Tufayli could take positions different from the Hezbollah security apparatus, but not Nasrallah. He can't make decisions independent of Iran."

In 1998, Nasrallah and the now freelance Tufayli butted heads, and Nasrallah was angry that Mchaymech seemed to side with his rival. "Nasrallah's deputy summoned my father," says Reda. The party was also concerned that Mchaymech no longer believed in Hezbollah's foundational concept, *wilayet al-faqih*, or guardianship of the jurist.

That idea, first formulated by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, stipulates that the religious leader also directs the political realm. For Hezbollah, it justifies sending Lebanese Shiites to die on behalf of Tehran's strategic interests—if the religious leader orders it, they have no choice.

"My father turned against *wilayet al-faqih* when he saw it had become an

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idea that had expanded to take control of everything and all decisions," says Reda. "My father was impressed by Western culture. In his travels in Switzerland, Germany, and France, he came to believe that our society was backward in our ideas and we needed to catch up."

Hassan Mchaymech explained his intellectual conversion in an article published in June 2010, a month before his arrest:

> My divorce from Hezbollah occurred in 1998 when I ceased believing in *wilayet al-faqih* and any authority that purports to enjoy a divine delegation or a divine source. I believe today that the legitimacy of any authority represents the fruit born of agreements made between reasonable adults within a society. Furthermore, I believe the way to achieve power is through free elections that appoint someone to serve for a specific period of time and fulfill specific duties and tasks. A mandate without a given term or well-defined duties is a recipe for corruption, even if the person selected to exercise authority enjoys sacred respect—unless he is a Prophet or an Imam.

Mchaymech's 1998 book, *Big Holes in Islamic Theories*, displeased the party. "They tried to kidnap him," says Reda. Mchaymech left for France but returned after securing Hezbollah's approval. In 2005 he met a Shiite convert visiting from Europe, Mahmoud al-Nimsawi ("the Austrian"), who professed to share Mchaymech's dream of opening a religious school in Europe. Nimsawi invited him to Germany to discuss the proposal with a man called Abu Ali who soon identified himself as a German counterterrorism officer.

"Abu Ali tried to get my father to speak about Hezbollah security issues," says Reda. The Germans wanted to know about figures like Imad Mughniyeh, Hezbollah's notorious terrorist mastermind, and Mustafa Badreddine, named by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon as one of the plotters in the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri. "My father told them his expertise was not in security matters. He knew Mughniyeh and Badreddine, but my father is not a tough guy. He's strong with the pen, but that's it."

Reda explains that the German security officer told his father that if he had no information on Hezbollah's security apparatus, he'd have to leave Germany immediately. Concerned about the effect these meetings might have should word of them get back to Hezbollah, on his return to Lebanon Mchaymech approached a friend and former colleague, Ali Damoush, head of Hezbollah's external relations, to debrief him on his itinerary, including an accurate account of his contacts with Nimsawi and Abu Ali.

The matter seemed to rest there until the summer of 2010 when Mchaymech was crossing into Syria on a pilgrimage to Mecca. At the border he was kidnapped by Syrian security. After two months of no contact, the family read in a pro-Syria and pro-Hezbollah Lebanese newspaper, *Al-Akhbar*, that he had been arrested for collaborating with Israeli intelligence.

Hassan Mchaymech

It was clear from the outset that Hezbollah, rather than Syria, was responsible for the arrest and accusation. "The Syrian investigation comes from the folder my father gave them after his return from Germany. It's obvious that Hezbollah gave that to the Syrians. They handed this issue off to the Syrians to keep their hands clean. But they kept telling us, this is Syria's opinion, we don't know."

Nonetheless, the family moved carefully. "My father was in Syria and anything could happen there. He could disappear for nothing. . . . We signaled to them that we're not going to shut up." Reda started to write in the press. "I wrote about Hezbollah's silence in this affair. When Nasrallah's deputy Nabil Qaouk came to show us the CD of my father's confession, he said to me, 'If you want to write about Hezbollah, go ahead, there are 100 articles about Hezbollah everyday, let there be 101. But if you want your father back, you have to stop writing.'"

Reda agreed to keep quiet on two conditions, that the family be allowed to visit him and that he be moved to Lebanon. "Anything could happen to him in Syria," says Reda. Within a few days, Mchaymech's wife and another son visited him where he was being held in Syria. "There were two Syrian security people there the whole time monitoring what he said," Reda explains. "My father said, 'The first three months they hit me, but now it's different.'"

Lokman Slim, who has worked with the Mchaymech family on their father's case, believes that the Lebanese military court due to reconvene for sentencing on January 26 will not give Mchaymech the death penalty. "It will be a stiff sentence, but the family is already getting accustomed to visiting and phone calls."

Hassan Mchaymech has also started writing letters to his eldest son. "In one letter, my father says, 'Nasrallah says all you need is honor. As long as we have honor, we don't need bridges or cars or streets.' My father writes, 'How can you have honor if you don't have streets and cars and bridges? They're trying to set us back 300 years.'"

That is to say, it's not just Hassan Mchaymech who is paying a price for resistance, but Lebanon's entire Shiite community. "We need to focus on developing our society, our economy rather than getting into internal and external battles and bloody conflicts. Finally," says Reda, "this is my father's message."

Hassan Mchaymech knew he was expendable from the moment he first challenged Hezbollah's theoretical foundations, back in 1998. Perhaps his June 2010 article reminded the party's leadership that it might still be useful to punish him and thereby send a message to the Shiite community, especially its clerical class: You are all expendable. ♦

Dire Straits

Iran's navy plays a dangerous game

By Michael Rubin

Tension between Iran and the United States flared on December 28, 2011, when Habibollah Sayyari, commander of Iran's navy, threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, the 34-mile-wide passage through which more than one-third of the world's oil tanker traffic travels. His televised statement that "closing the Strait of Hormuz is very easy for Iranian naval forces . . . easier than drinking a glass of water" came against the backdrop of naval war games, the third major Iranian naval demonstration in recent years. The Iranian military ended its exercise five days later with a barrage of missile tests signaling the peril facing warships and tankers alike.

War games may propel the Iranian Navy into the headlines, but the challenge the Islamic Republic poses to international shipping is broader and growing; indeed, it has been building for a quarter of a century. During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), Tehran and Baghdad each sought to target the other's business partners. Between 1984 and 1988, in the so-called Tanker War, Iran's navy and its parallel Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Navy (IRGC-N) developed a doctrine of maritime guerrilla warfare using speedboats, mines, antiship cruise missiles, and, on occasion, aircraft to target neutral or enemy shipping.

Practicing for 'maritime guerrilla warfare' in the Persian Gulf

Revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini learned quickly, however, that it was one thing to target Kuwaiti or Saudi ships, and quite another to attack American vessels. Four days after the guided missile frigate USS *Samuel B. Roberts* struck an Iranian mine in international waters on April 14, 1988, President Ronald Reagan launched Operation Praying Mantis. After warning the crews of two Iranian oil platforms to evacuate, Reagan ordered the Navy to attack them. The Iranian Navy scrambled and confronted U.S. forces head on. For Tehran, it was a fateful mistake. By the end of the day, Iran had lost a frigate, a gunboat, and three speedboats, on top of the two oil platforms, in what had become the largest U.S. surface engagement since World War II.

The lopsided U.S. victory convinced Iranian leaders of the need to avoid sustained conflict at sea. Rather than seek bigger and better ships, Iranian strategists prioritized surprise and ambush. Their goal became not victory, but the ability to create enough casualties to make victory unpalatable for both the Pentagon and the American public. In short, they sought the maritime equivalent of the low-grade insurgency they subsequently perfected on land in Afghanistan and Iraq.

As the Islamic Republic pursues this asymmetric naval strategy, geography works to its advantage. The Persian Gulf is both narrow and shallow—its average depth is only 160 feet—so American warships and submarines have reduced maneuverability. Not only can Iranian speedboats idle in Iranian waters just minutes from international shipping lanes, but both IRGC-N small boats and unmarked smuggling dhows—the traditional wooden boats that ply the Persian Gulf—can shelter in rocky coves along Iran's 1,000-mile coastline.

It is these Iranian speedboats, and perhaps Iranians

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undercover in civilian boats, that pose the gravest threat to U.S. ships, not the Iranian drones, which most recently made headlines when they claimed to have photographed the aircraft carrier USS *John C. Stennis* transiting the strait. In the last few months, the frequency and aggressiveness of Iranian speedboat probing of American ships has increased dramatically according to sailors in the Persian Gulf.

Iranian small boats' growing aggressiveness is in line with the Islamic Republic's new military doctrine. In September 2007, the new IRGC commander, Mohammad Ali Jafari, reorganized his land forces to focus inward. He argued, presciently as the June 2009 election protests demonstrated, that the Iranian people posed a greater threat to Iran's theocracy than did external armies.

Because the army was required to keep the lid on at home, the Islamic Republic would have to rely far more on its navy to meet external challenges. During a visit to a Bandar Abbas naval base in July, Supreme Leader Khamenei blessed the Iranian Navy and its IRGC counterpart as "symbols of the might of the Iranian nation" and promised their expansion.

Three months later, IRGC-N commander Ali Fadavi elaborated upon Iranian thinking. "The military power of the United States is maritime," he explained. "Naturally, the main battlefield is the sea, . . . and the Revolutionary Guards Navy will be the center of resisting and defending and safeguarding the Islamic Revolution."

President Barack Obama may have asked Iran to unclench its fist, but Fadavi dismissed the olive branch. "We are not in peacetime," he declared. He subsequently announced the expansion of operations into the Sea of Oman, once the domain of the more conventional ordinary navy, and the establishment of separate IRGC naval bases in Jask and Chahbahar, both outside the Strait of Hormuz. It was against this backdrop that the Islamic Republic sent two naval vessels through the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean Sea last February. More recently, Iran has announced deployments into the Gulf of Aden, and Sayyari has said Iran will send a ship into the Atlantic Ocean, perhaps bluster but nonetheless worth watching as Iran cultivates ties with Venezuela and littoral African states.

Iranian tactics should also be cause for concern. In recent years, the IRGC-N has drilled swarming larger ships with increasing numbers of speedboats, and has probed U.S. vessels with increasing frequency. In the last few months, Iranian boats have retreated only when U.S. vessels have fired warning shots. While the Pentagon does not publicize such incidents, sailors say there are now near daily occurrences. The proximity of the Iranian boats means that, should any be intent on a suicide plot, American sailors would likely lose their lives.

Smugglers add another layer of danger. Prior to entering or exiting the strait, ships—be they warships or tankers—line up and proceed in queue to avoid the risk of collision. Smugglers traversing the strait from the Iranian shore to the rocky outcrops on the Arabian side of the waterway regularly cut across the path of even America's largest carriers, sometimes disappearing into the 300-meter blind spot beneath the carrier's bow.

It would be a fatal mistake for the U.S. Navy to assume these smugglers are harmless. Even if they are not Revolutionary Guards, they depend on the IRGC for access to what Iranians call "invisible jetties," the network of IRGC-run smuggling ports. Certainly, the IRGC could also use a dhow for surveillance, if not to attack U.S. ships or helicopters, the maritime equivalent of Iranian-backed militiamen dressing in civilian clothes and taking up positions in mosques and schools.

Lately, Iranian boats have retreated only when U.S. vessels have fired warning shots. While the Pentagon does not publicize such incidents, sailors say they are almost a daily occurrence.

The Iranian leadership regularly seeks plausible deniability for its actions in order to diminish the likelihood of retaliation. The supreme leader may be a dictator, but he is not crafted in the mold of the late Saddam Hussein or Kim Jong Il. Rather, he operates by veto, eliminating policies of which he disapproves but allowing his subordinates to pursue any plan he does not explicitly reject. In practice, this means the U.S. intelligence community will never find a smoking gun—an intercept in which the supreme leader orders an attack on American forces— allowing dovish diplomats to dismiss most Iranian aggression as rogue activity.

When it comes to the IRGC-N, however, operational proximity to U.S. warships might lead to real rogue action. Robert Rook, a military historian at Towson University who regularly teaches on deploying carrier strike groups and marine expeditionary units, notes that the U.S. intelligence community has apparently never cross-referenced the passenger manifest of Iran Air Flight 655, mistakenly downed by the USS *Vincennes* on July 3, 1988, with currently serving IRGC-N officers. Should any speedboat pilot have had family members killed in the incident, his motive to go rogue might be high. Fadavi himself was reportedly a junior officer at the time of the *Vincennes* tragedy.

With tensions running so high, it would be a

no-brainer for officials in both Tehran and Washington to establish communication to mitigate the risk of conflict. That assumes, however, that the Iranian leadership wants to avoid a confrontation. Contrary to the statements of advocacy groups like the National Iranian American Council, which seeks both to exculpate the Islamic Republic and to fundraise over false claims of American aggressiveness, both the Bush and Obama administrations have sought consistently to establish communications to avoid any accidental conflict. In both cases, the Iranian government rejected such overtures. In September 2011, for example, Fadavi responded to a White House suggestion to establish a hotline with Tehran by declaring, "The only way to end American concerns is [for the United States] to leave the region."

Herein lies the danger of Obama's conciliatory approach: When in 1998 al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden called the United States a "paper tiger," the Clinton administration ignored him. This emboldened him to strike at America in East Africa, Yemen, and eventually in New York and Washington.

A favorite Iranian taunt

With regard to Iran, the same dynamic is in play. On almost every deployment over the last decade, American sailors have photographed Revolutionary Guardsmen on speedboats unfurling banners with slogans such as "America can't do a damned thing" (the same slogan with which the IRGC presented the captured American drone in early December) as they buzz American ships. One intelligence officer said that on her previous deployment, an Iranian boat had gotten so close that an Iranian crewman had used a cell phone to photograph her.

Rather than compel Iran to negotiate, Obama has convinced the Iranian leadership that the United States is on the ropes and that their defiance rather than compromise will win the day. Obama may see the withdrawal from Iraq as a campaign promise kept, but Iranian authorities label it a historic defeat for the United States.

Iranian authorities seek to transform the Persian Gulf into a Persian lake. It is in this context that Hossein Shariatmadari, who as editor of the Islamic Republic's flagship *Kayhan* newspaper serves as the supreme leader's voice, has referred to the island nation of Bahrain, home to the U.S. Fifth Fleet headquarters, as a renegade Iranian province. As the West learned when Saddam made similar references to Kuwait, sometimes dictators mean what they say.

As the Iranian naval challenge grows, what should Obama do? The United States will soon have three aircraft carriers in the Fifth Fleet area of operation, but absent the willingness to lay down red lines, a show of force will not be enough. Constant Iranian probing with minimal response has convinced the IRGC that American ships are vulnerable. Iranian authorities do not believe they must defeat the U.S. Navy head-on; causing casualties while crippling a ship might be enough to achieve their goals. After all, if the IRGC believe that they not only served America a catastrophic defeat in Iraq, but are on the verge of doing so again in Afghanistan, then they will conclude that the quickest way to force a U.S. withdrawal from the Persian Gulf is not to close the Strait of Hormuz, but rather to kill American sailors, directly or by proxy.

On board American vessels, there is general consensus that American restraint will end up costing lives. When an IRGC speedboat rams a U.S. vessel or smugglers on board a dhow down an American helicopter with a surface-to-air missile, Congress will hold hearings as in the aftermath of the 2000 USS *Cole* bombing, and the Pentagon will revise its rules of engagement in order to ensure that hostile vessels can no longer get within striking distance of American warships. The question is, why wait to act until American sailors come home in body bags?

Should Obama—or any successor—wish to protect American lives and preserve peace, the best policy may be to communicate a no-nonsense red line and then use deadly force to impose it. The U.S. Navy, for example, might declare a one-mile exclusion zone around every American vessel. Smugglers would learn the lesson quickly. After all, they seek worldly profit, not premature entry to paradise. As for the Revolutionary Guards, if they have forgotten the lesson of Operation Praying Mantis, a refresher course may be in order. ♦

The Real Oil Shock

An Iran with nuclear weapons is the true threat to the world economy

By Michael Makovsky & Lawrence Goldstein

In 1993, James Carville, President Bill Clinton's political strategist, said that "if there was reincarnation," he'd like to return as the bond market, because then he could "intimidate everybody." Today, with interest rates historically low, the fantasy of choice would no doubt be to come back as the oil market, which intimidates even the U.S. government.

Fear of the oil market and its impact on the fragile U.S. and global economy is seemingly a driving factor in the Obama administration's Iran policy. The administration cited that fear in opposing and then weakening legislation that would sanction Iran's Central Bank and in belittling the prospects for a U.S. military attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. While the administration is right to be concerned, it should take a longer view. A fuller analysis of the oil market suggests that allowing Iran to develop nuclear weapons capability would produce higher oil prices for a longer duration than would either action taken to prevent it.

Cargo ships in the Persian Gulf in December

On December 1 the Senate voted 100-0 in favor of legislation sponsored by Senators Mark Kirk and Robert Menendez that would sanction companies that deal with the Central Bank of Iran (CBI). A primary purpose of the legislation was to undercut Iran's oil exports, which are financed through the CBI and supply more than half of Iran's state revenue. This was a notable achievement. Many considered CBI sanctions the "nuclear option" of sanctions and the best possible, and perhaps last available, means short of military action to prevent a nuclear Iran. The administration, however, opposed this legislation, partly out of concern that it would reduce the supply of oil in the market, driving prices up and undermining the fragile global economy—this at a time President Obama is focused on reelection.

The administration managed to persuade the bill's authors to weaken the legislation, which finally passed both congressional chambers on December 15. Obama signed it on December 31. It gave the president greater discretion over whether and what sort of sanctions to impose on financial institutions dealing with the CBI. Sanctions would take effect six months after the legislation is signed into law. The president can grant exemptions to financial institutions whose parent countries are cooperating with U.S. policy toward Iran, and can waive sanctions altogether if it is "in the national security interest" of the United States. The administration must inform Congress bimonthly whether there is sufficient non-Iranian oil supply to allow foreign buyers of Iranian crude to reduce their purchases from Iran significantly. There is another round of potentially tough sanctions legislation that could pass this spring, which includes sanctioning the CBI if it is determined to be supporting Iran's weapons of mass destruction or terrorism.

For these sanctions to exert any meaningful pressure on Iran, international support will be crucial since American companies already do not purchase Iranian oil. Instead, almost three-quarters of Iranian oil exports in the first 11 months of 2011 were purchased by four countries: China (27 percent), India (18 percent), South Korea (12 percent), and Japan (16 percent). The European Union bought only a little more than India (22 percent), with Italy the largest buyer (8 percent). Only if the four main Asian buyers stop buying Iranian oil will Iran's revenue truly suffer. If these Asian countries do not reduce or cease their oil purchases from Iran and some European countries do (those countries now indicating support for an import ban account for 5-12 percent of Iranian oil exports), Iran will be forced to sell

EPA / ABEDIN TAHERKENAREH / LANDOV

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more oil to Asia. With greater leverage, the Asian buyers will likely demand a discount. This will reduce Iran's oil revenue but not enough to force Tehran to cease its nuclear program.

The administration reportedly has already asked these Asian countries to reduce their Iranian oil purchases. The Saudi oil minister has said, and his country's oil production numbers confirm, that they will provide what their customers and the market need. A former senior Obama administration official has said the Saudis have offered to make up for some of the Iranian supply. (Saudi Arabian oil is comparable to Iran's and could mostly replace it—in contrast to the very high-quality Libyan oil lost during its recent civil war, which was irreplaceable and led to a spike in oil prices.) U.S. requests have largely gone ignored, though South Korea is reportedly considering reducing or stopping its import of Iranian oil.

The CBI sanctions law does provide the Obama administration greater leverage in its discussions with other countries, but probably not enough. Other countries know that the Obama administration is loath to implement the sanctions fully, not only because it is concerned about oil prices but also because severing relationships with foreign banks that hold U.S. bonds could disrupt the U.S. financial system.

To convince Asian buyers to reduce or cease their purchases of Iranian crude, the administration will need to arm itself with more than the CBI law and Saudi oil. Senior Obama officials will need to make it abundantly clear that the only alternative to sanctions is a U.S. or Israeli military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities. In other words, the choice offered should be: Reduce/cease purchase of Iranian oil to pressure Iran enough so that its nuclear threat can be resolved peacefully, or face the real risk of having the oil supply from Iran and the Persian Gulf disrupted for some time following military action.

Instead, the administration has gone out of its way in public to express its opposition to an Israeli military strike and condition the American public—as well as Iran, China, and others—not to expect a U.S. strike. Despite repeated assertions that they are keeping "all options on the table," Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has followed the practice of his predecessor Robert Gates in highlighting the risks of a military strike. Twice recently, Panetta emphasized a strike's "unintended consequences." He listed five categories of them in a speech on December 2, including high oil prices, which the *Washington Post* criticized in an editorial entitled "The Wrong Signals to Iran." Panetta and Obama have since strengthened their rhetoric, but the damage was done. Indeed, the administration has not made any credible preparations, at least overt ones, such as military exercises and deployments, for a strike.

Thus, as long as the administration continues to derogate publicly a military option against Iran, CBI sanctions are unlikely to be adequate. By publicly eschewing a military option by Israel or the United States, the administration has undercut the chance for CBI sanctions to work and inadvertently made war more, not less, likely.

This is certainly the case regarding an Israeli attack. Israeli officials have suggested that CBI sanctions are the last chance to prevent peacefully a nuclear Iran. An Israeli attack would indeed lead to a spike in oil prices, the duration and extent of which would depend upon the nature and intensity of the Iranian response. Iran could retaliate against Israel with missiles and have its Lebanese terrorist proxy Hezbollah rain down many of its 50,000 rockets upon central and northern Israel, including Tel Aviv. Still, Iran might be constrained from expanding its target area lest it invite an American response. An Israel-Iran conflict could last a few days or a few weeks, during which tankers could avoid loading oil from Iran or southern Iraq. Oil prices would certainly spike during such a conflict, and that rise could be sustained afterwards if there were damage to Iran's oil facilities.

If the United States attacked Iran's nuclear infrastructure, the attack would likely be more sustained and more intense than an Israeli strike, and the theater of conflict would cover a larger area, leading to a higher and longer spike in oil prices. A U.S. attack would also likely inflict a lot more damage on Iran. The United States could employ its vast air and naval assets to fire missiles and drop bombs that would cripple not only Iran's nuclear infrastructure but also its defensive and offensive military capabilities. Iran could react ferociously, knowing it had less to lose than if responding to an Israeli strike alone. It could try to disrupt the flow of oil from the Strait of Hormuz—using mines, gunboats, missiles, and so on—to prevent its enemy neighbors from exporting oil and to raise the cost of the military action and increase international pressure on the United States to cease its actions. The Iranians could also attack the oil facilities of Saudi Arabia and other neighbors that were supporting the U.S. strike. The duration and extent of that impact could depend on the magnitude, if any, of the damage to energy facilities of the Persian Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. The United States and other major consuming countries could mitigate the rise in oil prices by releasing their strategic reserves, but the spike in oil prices would still be significant.

However great the impact on oil prices of military action to address the Iranian threat, it could be relatively minimal and short-lived compared with the sustained period of higher prices that would result from Iran passing the nuclear threshold. This would create longer-term economic damage to the United States.

Consider first the potential consequences of a nuclear Iran. It could set off a proliferation cascade across the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia leading the way in acquiring

nuclear capability. Iran would also be in a position to transfer nuclear materials to its terrorist allies. Further, Iran would seek to dominate the energy-rich Persian Gulf emirates and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), threaten Israel's existence, destabilize moderate Arab regimes, subvert U.S. efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, embolden radicals, violently oppose the Middle East peace process, and increase support for terrorism and proxy warfare across the region. Former undersecretary of defense Eric Edelman, Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., and Evan Braden Montgomery argued in *Foreign Affairs* that Israel and Iran could each have incentives to strike the other first with nuclear weapons. Similarly, Ambassador Dennis Ross, who recently served as a senior Mideast official in the Obama White House, explained that in such a situation the "potential for miscalculation" would be "enormous." It is likely that some sort of conflict could emerge in the region involving both nuclear powers, which could drag in the United States. The U.S. position in the region, including the perception of its ability to secure the Strait of Hormuz, would plummet.

All these potential consequences would heighten risks for the secure and sufficient supply of oil from the Persian Gulf, made worse by rising Iranian strength in OPEC and the need of major energy-importing countries, primarily in Asia, to deal delicately with Iran. The result would be a long-term rise in oil, gasoline, and heating fuel prices that would have serious negative implications for the fragile U.S. economy. Oil prices reflect many factors, including transit costs, current supply, projected future supply, and demand. Transit costs in turn include insurance premiums, which vary with the chance that vessels could be damaged or lost. The political risk to delivery is another factor; even without nuclear weapons Iran already has raised oil prices by threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz. In short, supply and transit projections reflect consideration of risks, and such risks would be tremendously heightened if Iran developed nuclear weapons. To begin to assess the economic consequences, consider that roughly every $10 rise in annual oil prices produces a nearly 0.5 percent decline in U.S. gross domestic product.

It is impossible to predict how the Iranian crisis will play out. The most desirable but least likely scenario is an elegant resolution that inflicts no short-term economic sacrifice on the United States. If the crisis gets resolved through tough sanctions or military action, the economic pain could be significant but relatively short-lived. The worst prospect both strategically and economically is a nuclear-armed Iran. The United States needs to prevent that from developing for both security and economic reasons. ♦

One Korea, After All

Time to undo the Kim family regime

By Ross Terrill

With 28-year-old Kim Jong Eun propped up to handle Pyongyang's succession crisis, three facts about North Korea are salient. Kim Jong Il, who died December 17, like his father was a tyrant whose damage makes Qaddafi seem a choirboy. After six decades of peaceful competition with the capitalist South, the socialist North's per capita GDP is 5 percent of South Korea's. Years of futile disarmament talks with North Korea compare with the worst peace-effort fiascoes of League of Nations days.

George W. Bush's comment to Bob Woodward, "I loathe Kim Jong Il," was a fitter summation of this cruel nonentity than the full-page world-historical pomposity of the *New York Times*'s obituary. Kim Jong Il made but two offerings to his people: poverty and nuclear weapons. Now, in rituals the world takes too seriously, his son Kim Jong Eun gathers titles in Pyongyang's totalitarian edifice as a house may add gargoyles, but it means little. Half a dozen Communist regimes in Europe looked stable until suddenly gone.

"No good options exist," the pundits always say of North Korea. "It's the six-party talks or another Korean War," they declare. Give Seoul's "sunshine policy" toward Pyongyang more time to mellow the Kim family regime. Results justified none of these hopes in 17 years' arguing over the North's nuclear program. There is no way to "address North Korea's security concerns" when Pyongyang simply wants the United States to leave so it may grab the South.

Why did the Obama administration last month express hope for a "stable transition" in Pyongyang? John Bolton correctly wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, "It is a self-fulfilling prophecy for Washington to see [Kim Jong Il's] death only as a risk, rather than an opportunity."

Fortunately, a good option does exist that would terminate the problem of nukes on the Korea peninsula. Talks would switch from Pyongyang's "intentions" and weapons to the shape of a reunified Korea. The basis would be Pyongyang's longstanding suggestion of a Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo and Seoul's similar idea of a Korean National Community.

Restoring the unity of a split country raises transforming possibilities; in this case, it can be "regime change" acceptable to nearly all parties. For 1,269 years there was one Korean state; for six decades there have been two. The reward for 28-year-old Kim Jong Eun would be respect from all Korea and a personal achievement absent in the life of his father and grandfather. Educated in Switzerland, with some knowledge of the West, he is young enough to glimpse redemption from his family's horrible record by permitting peaceful reunification for the Korean people.

Hawks and doves have a rare opportunity to unite in this project. Reunification of Korea is a positive goal and susceptible to subtle negotiation. Hawks would see the Pyongyang regime swallowed into a new Korea government. Doves would see nukes gone from the Korea peninsula. A One Korea government, dominated by southerners, would renounce nuclear weapons. When did an American president or secretary of state last give a speech pushing the reunification of Korea? Obama should deliver one within weeks.

The Korean War (1950-53) stemmed from a struggle over reunification. The war was Kim Il Sung's attempt to reunify Korea by force. The armistice of 1953 left unsolved this crucial issue of reunification and began the unfolding spectacle of freedom's success and tyranny's failure.

World War II and its aftermath were years of fluidity in international relations during which maps were redrawn almost by the week. The Soviet Union and the United States, mopping up against Japan, agreed on slicing Korea into two at the 38th parallel after a late night map examination by State Department officer Dean Rusk in August 1945. Kim Il Sung sought international Communist support for an attack on the South to end the murky maneuvers between his Democratic People's Republic of Korea (proclaimed in September 1948) and Syngman Rhee's Republic of Korea (proclaimed in August 1948), each government claiming to represent the whole nation.

During 1948-49, on the ground in southern Korea, Washington signaled declining commitment to Korea's unity and security as Rhee's fledgling government dealt with Communist rebellions that Stalin was supporting.

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Everett Drumright, who set up the U.S. mission to the Rhee government, conveyed the atmosphere of insouciance about the threat of Kim Il Sung: "In 1948 only two divisions of troops were left in Korea," he said in an interview. "But, over our objections at the embassy, they were recalled in the middle of 1949." The diplomat described Rhee's reaction to Truman's policy: "[He was] extraordinarily bitter about the . . . evacuation and what he saw as a lack of help by the U.S. at this critical juncture." Drumright summed up sadly, "We didn't know what was going on in Washington."

At the end of 1949, Kim lacked Moscow's and Beijing's support to grab the South. But in January 1950, Washington disastrously signaled its limited strategic interest in Korea in remarks by Secretary of State Dean Acheson. In March, Stalin told Kim he would support an armed reunification if Mao could be brought on board.

Mao was cautious, but assurances from Stalin (of Soviet air support) and from Kim (that Washington would not jump in and that the South would rise up to embrace socialism) persuaded him to agree and prepare for war.

Kim Jong Eun

When North Korea attacked in June 1950, Truman reversed himself and sent substantial forces from Japan into Korea. Mao, already prepared for intervention, sent more than 200,000 troops when the U.S. and South Korean armies pushed back the North's forces and reached the Chinese border.

China suffered 152,000 dead and 383,000 badly wounded in the war. Urgent home reconstruction tasks of Mao's brand-new regime were also disrupted. A door slammed closed against Mao's quest for the China seat in the Security Council of the United Nations. Incorporation of Taiwan into the PRC was indefinitely postponed. Beijing did not recover from the class-struggle mentality developed during the "anti-imperialist" Korean War until the death of Mao in 1976.

The Korean people lost even more in the war and later from the spiritual deprivation of division and the intensifying human tragedy within failed North Korea. As a result of the role of Stalin and Mao (backing Kim) and of Washington's failure to deter Kim, reunification was put out of reach for generations.

U.S. officials often declare the Kim dynasty inscrutable. In 2006, Nicholas Burns, then number three at the State Department, said that without a U.S. embassy in North Korea "it is hard to know what Pyongyang wants." Not really. Kim Jong Il wanted exactly what his father sought in June 1950: a reunified Korea under Communist leadership, by military means if necessary and possible.

You would never know this from Jimmy Carter's prattling about North Korea's "seeking attention" and "respect" with its nuclear program. If all Pyongyang wanted was to be secure as a bug in its Stalinist rug, it would not have attacked South Korea in 1950, attempted assassinations of two South Korean presidents, and continued to attack the South—torpedoing the naval vessel *Cheonan* and shelling Yeonpyeong Island—even into the Obama years.

Our best tribute to the bravery of U.S., South Korean, and other soldiers 60 years ago, and our most appropriate response to the sudden political fluidity in Pyongyang, would be the reunification of Korea under democracy. It would be a smoke-and-mirrors process of negotiation that offered benefit to all parties—until the last stage.

A quiet bargain between the United States and China is the key. Beijing accepts the end of Stalinism in North Korea. Washington and its allies offer Beijing a reunified Korea free of U.S. troops and nuclear weapons. Given Pyongyang's virulence toward Seoul last week, no chance exists for the two Korean states to take the first step. Obama and Hu Jintao must jointly urge the reunification process.

Beijing has long preferred the devil it knows (a Stalinist ally in Pyongyang) to an unknown devil (a unified Korea). But a threshold was reached in 2006 when Beijing said it was "brazen" of North Korea to perform a nuclear test; leading Korea specialists in China later declared past negotiations with Pyongyang "a failure." Pyongyang's defiance of Beijing, said Professor Zhang Liangui of the Central Communist Party School, is "the worst setback for Chinese foreign policy in the history of the PRC." Yan Xuetong of Qinghua University compared the breach between North Korea and China to the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s. "The old relationship has gone to hell," he declared. "It's a big slap to China."

This was strong medicine. These specialists did not speak out without a green light from a senior figure. One must be restrained in hoping for a better Korea policy from a government headed by Hu Jintao, who has praised both the North Korean and Cuban regimes, but Beijing's tie with Pyongyang seems atavistic for a modernizing China. An adviser to Hu Jintao at People's University told me over dinner in Beijing in November that Hu has not really praised North Korea; he just favors "the stability" of the present situation. But younger Chinese Communists no longer want China to be known for propping up Asia's most repressive and unsuccessful regime.

It is China, after all, not the United States, that has just two modest rivers between it and Korea; China that would feel the consequences of nuclear explosions on the Korean Peninsula. "It was a stupid policy for China to view North Korea's nuclear weapons as potential leverage against the

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United States," said Professor Zhang. "Instead the nuclear weapons will be mainly aimed at China." Quite possibly.

Reunification would be seen as a process offering open-ended paths to One Korea. North Korea would cherish an initial hope of major input into reunification that would be dashed by the huge gap in muscle and prosperity between South and North. Seoul's failed "sunshine policy" would suddenly come into its own as the totalitarian edifice in Pyongyang cracked and compromises, deals, defections, realignments of all kinds became possible. Reunification would end up being regime change cast in a new dress. The system entrenched in Pyongyang could never act thus, but an impulsive 28-year-old offered a role in a new One Korea government just might.

Japan would help finance post-reunification Korea—along with the U.N., World Bank, and perhaps the IMF—in return for the alleviation of a major security concern. A Korea deal could well be the key to preventing a downward spiral in Japan-China relations and the disaster of Japan making its own nuclear weapons. Japan's worry about China is tomorrow's issue for Beijing; North Korea's fate should be yesterday's.

Let a unified non-Communist Korea lean where it chooses. It is likely to be friendly to China, but not Beijing's ally. Koreans would probably be warm to Washington and continue the present close economic and cultural relationship with U.S. society. Civil with Japan, the new Korea would also keep the door open to Russia as insurance against China.

Beijing did not want Kim Jong Eun to succeed his father, seeing another father-to-son succession as unsocialist and stifling. Now is a good time for the Chinese to roll the dice for reunification as they have zero investment in Kim Jong Eun. "One Korea" is no less of an imperative than "One China," after all. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said last month: "China and North Korea have always maintained high-level visits, and we welcome North Korea's leaders to visit China when convenient for both parties." It is significant that he did not say "leader," but "leaders." Likewise, impersonal wording marked most of the Chinese statements after Kim Jong Il's death and his son's elevation to post after post: "The Chinese people have always stood by the Korean people."

Some feel the democracies should just muddle along on North Korea since crumbling dictatorships are dangerous. Indeed, there is risk. The best argument against reunification is the danger of desperate acts in the North as the outcome of the process becomes clear. North Korea has a one-million-plus army whose loyalties could waver or fracture. There are probably chemical and biological weapons close to the DMZ that could fall into crazy hands. However, the international structure surrounding a step-by-step reunification process, orchestrated from the wings by Washington and Beijing, would modify the danger. Above all, a boss of North Korea in his twenties presents a huge opportunity for Obama to "transform" the Korea issue.

Overlooked by believers in everlasting "talks" is the immorality of sustaining North Korea. Condoleezza Rice once said the collapse of the Soviet Union was the biggest victory for human rights in the 20th century. How then to justify propping up North Korea? Each billion in aid—most is from China—prolongs Pyongyang's repression and military braggadocio. The gap between South and North grows every year, making reunification more costly for Seoul. Surely the end of the Pyongyang regime would be a spectacular victory for human rights in Asia.

The writing is on the wall for the miserable Pyongyang regime, and the fence-sitting should be over for China. No longer poor and a victim, China can put deeds behind its words about "peace and development" and "international community." Japan's new prime minister, Yoshihiko Noda, setting off for Beijing last week, lamely declared: "It is very timely to exchange views with the host of the six-party talks and the country with the most influence on North Korea." Not only did Noda overlook the futility of the talks but also that China's "influence" sustains the existence of the wretched Pyongyang regime.

Four policies on Korea are possible for Beijing: Protect North Korea, with slight restraint upon it, resulting in no change. Actively promote an indefinite life for Stalinist Pyongyang ("Our East Germany," Korea scholars in Beijing whisper; "if it falls Communist rule in China may also fall"). Gradually draw the North into Northeast China as a dependent "autonomous region," benefiting Beijing's strategic situation but infuriating Seoul. Finally and best, China could pull off its first diplomatic triumph as a risen power by orchestrating, with Washington, the reunification of One Korea, bringing a new vista to Northeast Asia.

The charade of treating North Korea as a troubled child requiring kid-glove handling by five patient adults has been fruitless. Steps toward Korean reunification can crack the nuclear threat from Pyongyang, lend hope to people in the North, and eventually ease a wracking pain at the heart of Northeast Asia. One Korea, for all its unknowns, is the solution. A grand bargain between Washington and Beijing can trigger the process. Japan spurred Korean nationalism through its colonial rule. Washington and Moscow were responsible for dividing Korea. These two plus Beijing bore heavy responsibility for the outbreak of the Korean War.

Korea is owed its reunification, the spiritual battle with the North for Korea's future has been won by Seoul, and the heartbreaking cost of a third Kim dictatorship would outweigh the risk and price of a managed unification. ♦

Bankers Versus Capitalism

When it comes to defending private enterprise, Wall Street is its own worst enemy

By Irwin M. Stelzer

America's more or less free-market capitalism is not under threat from Marxist-Leninism: That system's demonstrated failures have consigned it to the ash-heap of history. Nor is it under threat from China's system of managed economy plus political repression: We can't even abide police breaking up a disease-infested occupy-something-or-other encampment. It is not even under threat from socialism, the hysterical charges of some anti-Obama extremists notwithstanding.

No, it faces a far more subtle enemy—the gradual loss of acceptance of the idea that markets more efficiently allocate resources than governments, of the parallel idea that properly but not excessively regulated markets produce unparalleled levels of material wellbeing (something Marx conceded), and, finally, of the conviction that material prosperity is fairly shared among all who participate in its creation, with enough left over to care for those too ill, old, or otherwise impaired to participate in productive activity. When the broad consensus erodes that capitalism as practiced in America is better at creating and distributing wealth than any other system, the way is open for fundamental legislative and regulatory changes that strip the system of its flexibility and innovative drive.

Not the real threat to capitalism

Which is what makes the behavior of the leaders of our financial sector so inexplicable. Start with a few widely agreed facts. The financial sector does not have a recent history of which it can be proud. Investment banks bet their own money that the mortgage bubble would burst while at the same time advising their clients to buy mortgage-backed securities. Managers of our largest banks took on risks they did not understand, safe in the knowledge that they were too big to fail—that the government would have no choice but to bail them out in order to avoid a cataclysm, or at least a deep recession. Compensation was decoupled from performance, with failed executives tottering off onto their country clubs' golf courses after pocketing multimillion-dollar bonuses and being awarded the use of company jets and office facilities.

Some idea of the mindset of the leaders of the financial community can be gleaned from their response to criticism. Lloyd Blankfein, head of Goldman Sachs, claimed to be doing "God's work," a linking of God and Mammon that might have come as a surprise to the Lord. Charles "Chuck" Prince III, soon to be defrocked as CEO of Citigroup and sent packing with multimillions in payoffs, pensions, and perks after a reported $64 billion decline in the value of the bank over which he presided, explained the intellectually demanding risk analysis techniques he applied in his work: "When the music stops, in terms of liquidity, things will be complicated. But as long as the music is playing, you've got to get up and dance. We're still dancing." So were the passengers on the *Titanic* when it hit that iceberg.

Meanwhile, income inequality increased. We are not sure of all the reasons for this development, but we

AP / BEN MARGOT

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do know that it is in part because globalization brought millions of dollar-a-day workers into the international economy to compete with American workers; in part because the premium for skills and training was rising as the political class ceded control of the American education system to dirigiste teachers' unions that prevented needed adaptations to the new world; and in part because money talks in the rooms in which the tax code is twisted to the advantage of special interests. Worse, mobility fell, creating an atmosphere ripe for an embattled president to declare class war rather than take on entrenched interests, i.e., unions fighting to prevent entry into trades and to preserve extortionate pensions; bankers willing to pour millions into Obama's campaign coffers in return for prestigious photo-ops and appointments to meaningless committees; billionaires pressing him to increase taxes on families with relatively modest incomes while their capital gains and deal-generated profits receive gentler treatment at the hands of the tax collector.

None of these ills seems curable in the face of entrenched opposition by members of the financial and business communities, and other interest groups. The Democrats quite predictably defend the trade unions that fund them, and what they see as the disadvantaged, never mind that that group now includes wealthy older people who would be offended if their Social Security and medical benefits were reduced a trifle by means testing. The Republicans see no reason why the very, very wealthy should have their tax burden increased a bit, their corporate clients should lose their special tax benefits, or the lucky winners of the gene lottery should pay higher taxes on their inheritances. The result of this crony capitalism—each party with its own cronies—is a lack of radicalism, a you-don't-gore-my-ox-and-I-won't-touch-your-sacred-cow system.

Enough whining. As Lenin asked, "What is to be done?" Voter action at the polls is clearly indicated, although the appalling lack of choice—a Democrat wedded to the economics of the past, and either a clearly nutty or a cautious, establishment Republican technocrat—suggests that the radical change the moment calls for will not come from the political class, at least until the young Turks in the Republican party mature while, we hope, remaining, well, young Turks. So what is to be done is what can be done—remove some of the most glaring defects in the capitalist system, starting with the financial sector. That will take conservative support for change—support not only from the conservative punditry, but from the business community.

Recall: The titans of finance are not well positioned to display a lack of sympathy for those suffering from the consequences of their errors. They still hold their jobs only because the taxpayers bailed them out, with the Fed providing $1.2 trillion of public money on top of other bailout funds, the alternative—watching the financial system melt down—being too gruesome to contemplate. No good saying that without Wall Street there would be no Main Street. The facts are that Main Street is littered with shuttered shops, while appallingly managed banks have survived, and that the foreclosure rate in Greenwich, Connecticut, the preferred home of hedge fund managers and those financial executives who prefer sweeping lawns to the sweeping penthouse views favored by some of their colleagues, is far below the national average.

Titans of finance are not well positioned to display a lack of sympathy for those suffering from the consequences of their errors. They still hold their jobs thanks to taxpayers.

Yet, pick up your daily paper for the sort of anecdotes that sometimes trump data. Bank of America hires a debt collection agency that a Florida judge finds illegally harasses widows to pay the credit-card debts of their deceased husbands. Here is part of the report in the *Wall Street Journal*:

> Bank of America and other major U.S. lenders hand over accounts of the deceased to firms specializing in death-debt collection. The collection firms then zero in on family members who they think might agree to pay some of what the dead person owed even though they have no legal obligation to do so . . . duping relatives into thinking they have to pay the debts of the deceased.

One anecdote should not be the basis of policy. But such an anecdote backed by numerous tales of homeowners who failed in their attempts to negotiate easier terms so as to avoid foreclosure tells something about the insensitivity of leading bankers to the threat posed to the capitalist system by the difficulties faced by millions of Americans. These bankers might do well to cast an eye over the magazine rack of their local newsstand, where *Consumer Reports*'s cover blares, "Fight Back Against Your Bank." We're not talking the *Nation* or the *New Republic* here, but the stuff which middle-class America reads.

Sure, it is easy to say people should never have bought homes they cannot afford. But many of these people could indeed afford those homes in the opinion of the banks that lent them the money, before securitizing their mortgages into bundles that the rating agencies saw as virtually riskless—triple-A rated—and passing them off to investors.

Many were simply the victims of a financial calamity they did not produce, others of globalization and inept trade policy that allowed China's currency manipulators to destroy their jobs, still others of government programs that lured them into buying homes that would prove beyond their means, especially when the low, starter-interest rates willingly offered by the banks ratcheted up.

The odd part of the banks' preference for foreclosure over mortgage restructuring is that they end up with houses they cannot manage and lawns they cannot mow, properties that become rundown with dire consequences for entire blocks and neighborhoods, and that end up being sold for a fraction of their value. True, foreclosure does avoid moral hazard, an advantage not to be ignored. But that advantage has to be weighed against the costs of a wave of foreclosures. I wonder if those bankers, with the wisdom of hindsight, would have preferred a bit of moral hazard to the failure of Lehman Brothers. Most important is the failure of the bankers to ask themselves what sort of policy towards foreclosures is consistent with the long-term acceptability and survival of American capitalism. And the failure of Republican politicians to ask themselves just why they support banks' opposition to allowing bankruptcy judges to include mortgage obligations when they restructure the debts of those seeking bankruptcy protection, as many Democrats propose. Executives of American Airlines are applauded by the financial community for their shrewd use of the bankruptcy laws to get out from under their contractual obligations. Homeowners who do the same thing are considered immoral.

Occupy Pittsburgh protesters

Most surprising are the objections of leaders of the banking community to quite sensible reforms, their willingness to sacrifice long-term support for the market system to the desire for short-term profits. It is true, for example, that higher capital requirements for banks, requirements that "don't go nearly far enough" according to John Cochrane, finance professor at the University of Chicago, will reduce their profits. That is so—but only because requiring banks to hold more capital reduces the risk of failure or the need for bailouts, risks that have until now been borne by taxpayers.

Also difficult to understand is their failure to comprehend that some practices, such as imposing retroactive increases in interest rates on bank credit cards, are deeply objectionable to consumers, even if technically justifiable. And their failure to realize that large bonuses at a time when 25 million Americans can't find any or enough work are an excess they might want to forgo in the interests of maintaining support for the system that has been kind to them—including bailing them out when they hit the rocks. One investment bank warned its highflyers not to be seen in Porsche showrooms, so it's not as if these bonus recipients are unaware that something potentially unpleasant is brewing out there in the world beyond their office towers.

Bankers are not alone in their failure to understand that something must be done to prevent the opposition to many features of the current system from creating an atmosphere that will support "reforms" so draconian that the resulting system will retain few of the virtues of the existing one. The corpocracy at times seems equally obtuse, as when its leaders call for repeal of the provisions of the Sarbanes-Oxley law that make it easier for shareholders to rid themselves of underperforming directors, and require that directors be truly independent, rather than chums of the CEO, especially when serving on compensation committees. The breaking of the link between performance and reward that results from friends-of-the-CEO boards of directors does as much to undermine capitalism's claim to legitimacy as financiers' obtuseness about their responsibility to act as if they are members of a society that extends beyond executive dining rooms and country clubs.

I am not one who sees in the Occupiers the wave of the future. They are not the real worry to those of us who fear for the future of market capitalism in America. It is the failure of the major beneficiaries of the capitalist system to understand that openness to reform, combined with a bit of restraint when carving up the huge pie that capitalism is capable of producing, is the best way to head off those people who would alter market capitalism beyond recognition by imposing punitive taxes, onerous regulations, investment-distorting subsidies, along with a bloated government. Those folks are dangerous enough to America's future prosperity without being handed the gift of obtuse opposition to needed change. ♦

AP / KEITH SRAKOCIC

'The Proclamation of the German Empire' by Anton von Werner (1885). Bismarck, at center, in white tunic.

Germany's Godfather

The life and legacy of Otto von Bismarck

BY STEVEN OZMENT

Jonathan Steinberg presents the fabled German chancellor as both an egomaniacal hypochondriac and a political-military genius: "He is the statesman who unified Germany in three wars . . . a hypochondriac with the constitution of an ox, a brutal tyrant who could easily shed tears, a convert to an extreme form of evangelical Protestantism, who secularized schools and introduced civil divorce."

Bismarck
A Life
by Jonathan Steinberg
Oxford, 592 pp., $34.95

The reader learns early and often that Bismarck "made Germany but never ruled it." As chancellor (1862-90) he served a line of three long-lived kings, any one of whom could have fired him at will—and at the end, one did. Active in politics from 1847 to 1890, he also maintained a hate/awe relationship with the large political parties. Although he changed the world, Steinberg seems to think it might have been much ado about nothing. Bismarck was a shallow country squire, devoid of true leadership qualities, always looking out for himself, more an accident of German history than any gift to it. *Bismarck:*

Steven Ozment, McLean Professor of Ancient and Modern History at Harvard, has just published The Serpent and the Lamb: Cranach, Luther and the Making of the Reformation *(Yale).*

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A Life is an effort to put Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) in his proper historical place and importance from a modern perspective.

In the letters and memoirs of men and women who were often in his presence, Steinberg finds the descriptions "tyrant" and "dictator" popping up. Defiant from his youth, he evaded conscription only, in his later adult life, to wear military uniforms without any proper claim to them. Many who worked with or under him were often startled by his fragile health, both physical and mental. As Steinberg puts it: "'Hypochondria' hardly does justice to his complaints." Steinberg also believes that Bismarck's power and success came solely from the man himself, not from great "institutions, mass society, or 'forces and factors.' . . . Bismarck somehow had more of every aspect of self than anybody around him, and all who knew him—without exception—testify to a kind of magnetic pull." The author also testifies to a "hypnotic effect" running irrepressibly through his writings.

For 26 years he served Prussia's King William I, playing an "alter" or counter "king" when the divided reigning king avoided hard decisions Bismarck knew the state must make. In getting the royal attention, he resorted to both real and *faux* temper tantrums, hysteria, tears, and unending threats of resignation. If Steinberg has gotten it right, Bismarck manipulated all the kings he served both to their faces and behind their backs. He transformed his times solely by his "sovereign self," much as Hitler did across the whole of Germany in the 1930s and '40s. But when Bismarck spoke for himself, he exposed the bondage of the will: No human being could control his own destiny, much less that of the masses. Before "the roaring stream of Providence and history," as he put it, even the bravest and smartest could only jump in, float with the stream, and take what it gave him. The sovereign self was a myth.

Steinberg's biography claims to differ from its predecessors in aim and method. His aim is to explain how Bismarck survived his debilities and exercised political and military power so deftly. His method is to cast a wide net over contemporaries—friends and foes, Germans and foreigners, young and old—who worked under him, or spent time with him, and recorded their experiences in letters and memoirs. Such recollections and testaments become Steinberg's coauthors at numerous junctions, supplementing and authenticating the mainstream story. Although at times repetitious and inflationary, these interventions do give Bismarck and his age a real-life tint.

At home and abroad, Bismarck rocked boats and steadied them—which might be expected from one of history's great control freaks. In foreign affairs he was handicapped on the diplomatic front by the unknown and untrustworthy; but by taking firm and "entirely rational action" he garnered fame for himself and respect for Germany throughout the international community. In domestic affairs, however, he clashed constantly with opposing liberals, conservatives, and Roman Catholics, whose familiarity and dedication to alternative causes induced new fits of rage and irrational behavior in the chancellor.

Born into the culture of the Old Prussian nobility, the proud Junker class, Bismarck grew up with its virtues: devotion to duty, efficiency, punctuality, and self-sacrifice, to which the military culture of Frederick the Great and evangelical Protestant piety were thrown into the mix. For Steinberg, who never flatters his subject, that mixture was a seedbed of anti-Semitism and warmongering. The author does some raging of his own when he declares Bismarck's greatest achievement to have been his preservation of "those 'darkest characteristics' of the Junker class through three wars, the unification of Germany, the emergence of democracy, capitalism, industrialization, and the development of the telegraph, the railroad, and . . . telephone."

Young Otto grew up with an easy-going if ineffectual father, and a brainy and attractive, but hard and cold, mother. She pointed him in the direction he needed to go. In later life he was contemptuous of men who let women dominate them and he had no love for intellectuals and academics. But the worst of humankind to his mind were government bureaucrats, whom he famously labeled "the 'poop-makers' of society." In getting to the core of the man, one of Steinberg's "most striking findings" is the discovery that Bismarck's health and virtue deteriorated as his political power grew, taking a toll on a fragile self that might have been deeply damaged in childhood.

Like earlier biographers, Steinberg likes to put his subject on the couch and let him vent his hatred of royalty (Empress Victoria), which he readily did in "disgusting, misogynistic, and prurient outburst[s]." Steinberg also tallies his resignation threats to the king, retreats to Berlin without royal permission, and recurring illnesses and bouts of hypochondria, which (so Steinberg says) were also "ingenious tactics" to get his way when denied by higher authority.

Steinberg also perceives a recurring "psychic triangle" between a weak emperor, a strong empress, and a torn Bismarck that disrupted all of their lives. Bismarck's chronic worry, sleeplessness, and gluttony threatened his effectiveness, his sanity, and his life. Among the physicians' interventions was the "surrogate . . . warmth of a loving mother," who was conjured at his bedside by wrapping him up in warm, damp towels, and holding his hand firmly until he fell asleep.

For all the author's dark backgrounding of his subject, the reader must remember that Bismarck was not a persistently propped-up basket case. He attended very good schools and acquitted himself well. At 14 he displayed the skills of "one of the best letter writers of the 19th century." He entered the University of Göttingen, an aristocratic stronghold, where he met the talented Bostonian John Lothrop Motley, who became a true friend, and later the U.S. ambassador to Vienna and London. Motley saw "a special aura" about Bismarck and thought him a "very rational sort of person," despite his need to rule and dominate

all around him. Already, in these early years, he was living a strained life under fire within and without, both imagined and real, a person in whom an empathetic author and reader might glimpse a rugged heroism.

At 22 he was a handsome, six-foot-four linguist who spoke excellent English and sailed through his civil service exam, only to abandon the work for which he trained. With time on his hands he chased after aristocratic English ladies, displaying (according to Steinberg) "every sign of a proud, fatuously self-confident, provincial gentleman swept away by the wealth and style of the English aristocracy . . . [a courtier] desperately out of his class."

In 1838, unemployed, in debt, and evading military service, Bismarck's father made over his three Pomeranian estates to Otto and his brother. He now managed his father's rural properties for a year, becoming a full-time farmer secure in a world dominated by Pomeranian nobles. In these transitional years he was effusive, prone to accidents, and famous for shooting out windows, a reckless sort of life that earned him the title "The Mad Junker."

His letters, Steinberg claims, suggest that "sexual urges" were no small part of his wild behavior. After the aristocratic English ladies, the next feminine hands into which he fell were those of an aristocratic Protestant pietist, Marie von Thadden-Trieglaff, whose social circle was a kind of "'born-again' Christian" assemblage. Steinberg sees in Marie's group Bismarck's "'first political party' . . . the platform for everything that followed." It was in her circle that he met his future wife, Johanna von Puttkamer, and his future political patron, the Prussian prince Ernst Ludwig von Gerlach, in the 1840s the leading political patron of the expectant Bismarck. Approaching midcentury, Gerlach convinced Berlin to appoint the 37-year-old Mad Junker with no diplomatic experience to the second-most important diplomatic post in Germany: Prussian ambassador to the Federal German Council in Frankfurt.

In December 1846, a lonely and needy Bismarck wrote to Johanna's father asking him for her hand in marriage, which he approved in January. In these bright months he showered Johanna with long letters, each with a different and more extravagant form of address in English, French, or Italian, quite for the moment a romantic courtier! That same year, 1847, saw Bismarck elected to the local provincial diet. That success would separate the newlyweds for long periods of time, increasing their discontent. Bismarck had yearned for a wife like his mother and Marie, but his fear of failure moved him to "survive and put an end to his loneliness [with] a plain and limited" wife. Therein lay "the void at the core of the Bismarcks' relationship."

Bismarck stepped into the political limelight on May 17, 1847, when he made his maiden speech to the Vereinigter Landtag, the United Prussian Diet, in Berlin. Both the man and his politics spoke bluntly and to the point: He would gain his goals by conflict, not by consensus, he proclaimed. This was pure Bismarckian theater that the Germans, and the world, would hear again. Recoiling from the debut, Steinberg, living a century-and-a-half away, dismisses everything Bismarck said, accusing him of never having taken "full responsibility for his acts," and paints him as a "gigantic ego" that had a "constant need to be seen to be right."

Bismarck's next major performance occurred on July 15, 1847, a debate over removing the civil disabilities that denied Jews the right to hold public office and serve in the bureaucracy of a Christian state. Bismarck joined his fellow Junkers in voting it down. Now on the march to power, he concluded that "a career through the [royal] court" was his best opportunity to save the traditional monarchical/aristocratic order and unify Germany in and through the coming revolution. He would unify Germany both as skilled politician and statesman as well as the dark prince of "blood and iron."

The first task at hand was to define and unite the new Germany under the military leadership of the Gerlach brothers. Moving swiftly, he became the military governor of Berlin uttering, as he accepted, these words: "I go into the matter like a child into the dark." Four months later he joined the Prussian provisional diet in Brandenburg. On the heels of these promotions Gerlach embraced him publicly as one "of the reliable people upon whom we can call."

As Bismarck succeeds and rises, Steinberg again reminds readers that this is a man who begrudges every minute he is away from dirty politics. He also attacks Bismarck as an uninvolved husband and parent who was "filled . . . with gloom" whenever he vacationed with his wife and children at the seaside, wishing all the time that it was September: "September meant parliament, Berlin and, at long last, escape from the stresses of family life." Although often away from his family, Bismarck's personal letters were never uncaring or unloving; they were also frequent and entertaining to Johanna and their children. Even Steinberg agrees that Bismarck was "a writer of comic genius."

In 1851 Bismarck became Prussian ambassador to the German Union, which was composed of Austria and Prussia. Both states were independent sovereigns but unequal military powers, and now confronted each other. In the standoff, Prussia had the upper hand. To render Austria and the smaller German states pliable Bismarck "advertised" a Prussian accommodation with the new king of France, Napoleon III. Giving the small states such a scare was calling them home to Greater Germany. As Steinberg explains Bismarck's "technique," the successful diplomatic prince must "create fear and uncertainty in a crisis, so that opponents cannot be certain how Prussia will act, and be absolutely unscrupulous in the choice of his means."

In discussing political philosophy, Bismarck believed that his entire life was spent "gambling for high stakes with other people's money." Practicing politics as gambling, he gave them a new diplomatic style, *Realpolitik*, meaning "do what works and serves your interests . . . politics is less a science than an

art . . . one must have the talent for it." The British ambassador to Prussia confirmed Bismarck's gifts:

> Bismarck is made up of two individuals, a colossal chess player full of the most daring combinations and with the quickest eye for the right combination at the right moment and who will sacrifice everything even his *personal hatred* to the success of his game—and an individual with the strangest and still stronger antipathies who will sacrifice everything *except his combinations*.

In 1858 Emperor Frederick William IV suffered a series of strokes that damaged his speech, and his powers were given over to Crown Prince William. The regent dismissed the conservatives and appointed a new liberal government packed with Bismarck's enemies. The new regime welcomed in the "New Liberal" era, while Bismarck deemed it hopeless, hunkered down, and bided his time. Appointed by the new emperor to be Prussian envoy to the court of Czar Alexander, Bismarck paled at the thought of the long journey to faraway, expensive St. Petersburg. But once having settled in, he embraced his new assignment, and letters home conveyed "a mellow sense of well-being." Always alert when women were on the scene, he was swept off his feet by the Dowager Czarina Alexandra Feodorovna, and her presence put him at peace with himself: "For me she has something in her kindness that is maternal. . . . I can talk to her as if I had known her from my childhood. . . . I have not felt so well for ages!"

In 1859, war broke out between France and Austria. Bismarck now preached, "We are not rich enough to use up our strength in wars that do not earn us anything." Henceforth, Prussia would take advantage of the times and carve out its own fate by "iron and fire." Austria's distress was the opportune time for Prussia to redesign the German Union, send troops to the Austrian border, and threaten to overrun the intransigent smaller states during the war between France and Austria. Bismarck put his allies in a row with German unification clearly in his sights.

But from the stress and strain of it all, a fragile Bismarck found himself laid up in Berlin, once again at war with his private demons, and none of his anger-management plans succeeded. Neither religious faith nor Prussian physicians gave his body, mind, or soul any peace, and worry over the expense of Berlin life and the presence of the brassy Prince Regent in the city appear to have been the culprits. At this level of illness, writes Steinberg, only two cures had ever given him any relief: "Recognition from the All-Highest authority and lots of food." On Bismarck *in extremis*, Steinberg deadpans:

KATHERINE EASTLAND

> The cure was simple and Christian: "love thine enemies!" . . . It was Bismarck's tragedy—and Germany's—that he never learned how to be a proper Christian, had no understanding of the virtue of humility, and still less about the interaction of his sick body and sick soul.

During the crisis years of 1859-62, Bismarck's friends and admirers, prominent among them the war minister, Albrecht Graf von Roon, urged the king to rehabilitate Bismarck by making him minister-president (prime minister), despite the consternation of the Liberals. So it was not until April-May 1862, in the midst of a ministerial crisis, that the king thought again about bringing Bismarck in from the cold to take the highest ministerial position. At the end of the deliberations, the new chancellor received a royal summons to leave St. Petersburg for Berlin and join the consultations. In preparation for the meeting, Roon prepared a brief, up-to-date assessment of Bismarck's present state of mind and body:

> Bismarck-Schönhausen has great moral courage. A decisive spirit expresses itself in the energetic tone of his voice in all his speeches. He can sweep people along with him. . . . [He] lacks a thorough political education. . . . He has a series of contradictions in his character. . . . [Like his wife] he inclines to a determined Lutheranism . . . but is irresponsible. There is an absent-mindedness in him and he can easily be stirred by sympathies and antipathies. . . . He is thoroughly honest and straight, but his policies can be immoral. By nature he has an unforgiving, vengeful tendency, which his religious sensibility and nobility of character keep under control.

The new minister-president traveled to London, where he met Benjamin Disraeli in the home of the Russian ambassador. To many, Disraeli was the only contemporary who could match Bismarck in wit and political agility. When they met, Disraeli asked for (and received) a summary of Bismarck's plans for Germany: "I shall soon be compelled to undertake the conduct of the Prussian government [as chancellor]. My first care will be to reorganize the army, with or without the help of the Landtag. As soon as the army shall

have been brought into such a condition as to inspire respect, I shall seize the first best pretext to declare war against Austria, dissolve the German Diet, subdue the minor states and give national unity to Germany under Prussian leadership."

Nine years later, everything Bismarck had told Disraeli he was going to do as chancellor had been done, exactly as stated. As Steinberg kindly concedes:

> These nine years, and this "revolution," constitute the greatest diplomatic and political achievement by any leader in the last two centuries, for Bismarck accomplished all this without commanding a single soldier, without dominating a vast parliamentary majority. . . . The scale of Bismarck's triumph cannot be exaggerated. He alone had brought about a complete transformation of the European international order.

Looking back, Bismarck's political feats should not be ridiculed by modern historians who reject conservative politics, nor should his belief in providence in history be scoffed at by modern skeptics. What Bismarck accomplished was not done by deceit and lies; nor does one immediately see how quasi-mystical forces radiating from "sovereign selves" and royal "psychic triangles" gave Bismarck the upper hand over the Prussian king.

Beyond an uncomfortable mix of threats and blandishments that made people distrust Bismarck, what the Prussian king saw in him, and came to trust him for, was something more like a gifted latter-day knight, a relic of history, who knew how to gamble, win wars, and unite kindred lands by both reason and force, no matter the odds. As Steinberg has it, neither King William I, the army generals, the outside flanking powers, the Czarist Empire, Napoleon's France, and Great Britain were any match for Bismarck. *That* was the chancellor's political and military magic. The scale of his triumph over Austria was incalculably telling. The unification of Germany, sought since the days of Tacitus and not completely secured until 1990, owed everything to this fearsome, unlovable knight.

Celebrated throughout Germany for his military prowess, Bismarck moved politically to complete his plans for the new German state, a goal he could only reach by embracing the Liberal party, which he did from 1866 to the late 1870s. Among the three parties dominating the new Germany, the Liberals had both pro- and anti-Bismarck wings, while the Conservatives increasingly turned against him, and Catholics prayed daily to see him in his grave. The most powerful figure of the 19th century now had no real parliamentary support and would remain dependent on the person, emotions, and attitudes of a very old monarch, King William I.

The new constitution was a roadmap of the chancellor's political mind. The rights of democracy appeared with fixed limits: no bill of rights, no separate judiciary, no power to collect direct taxes. A gloomy Steinberg summarizes: "He had unified millions of Germans in a new state and their elected representatives had sacrificed liberal rights taken for granted elsewhere without a serious fight. The new Germany retained all the worst features of Prussian semi-absolutism and placed them in the hands of Otto von Bismarck." On April 16, 1871, the Reichstag approved the constitution, and Bismarck's challenge was to preserve the new Germany and make it work as he willed.

Of course, Bismarck knew that unifying and governing a state was a different kind of war, but still a war. He brought his ruthlessness to the new Germany, which he wanted to run by himself, without anyone looking over his shoulder, believing perhaps that it might disperse his demons. But in a time (1871-90) when his political brand was in decline, going it alone was a perfect recipe for conjuring those demons up. On the horizon lay the *Kulturkampf.* Even his reputation as an honest international broker diminished after he botched the mediation of issues left over from the Russo-Turkish War, leaving Russia on the short end of reparations. In 1875 he wanted most of the new state's revenue to come from "income tax from the really rich people," but in the end he favored indirect taxes, arguing that they were "less burdensome."

Steinberg repeatedly comes close to dismissing Bismarck's legitimacy, representing him as a ruthless and unprincipled ruler in both peace and war. Yet he expresses a gentleman's sympathy for the old warrior's vulnerability in old age: Surrounded by people who did not like him, would not assist him, and eagerly awaited his overdue demise, the king now held all power over him—and the king's wife publicly reviled him. For a proud Bismarck, powerlessness was the supreme torture. Showing them that he was still the man of "fire and iron," both militarily and diplomatically, Bismarck decided to beef up German security with a new Austrian alliance. His goal was to restore the Three Emperors' League, "the greatest prospect of European peace." Defying the king as in days of old, he went to Vienna to make the arrangements. The Austrians welcomed him with "the treatment reserved for modern superstars," and the Austro-German Treaty was concluded in two days, a successful coup for the old warhorse. Although unhappy with Prince Bismarck going off the reservation—again—King William conceded that "Bismarck is more necessary than I am."

At this time, a tidal wave of public anti-Semitism struck Germany, ending the liberal era and beginning another stage in German-Jewish history that would end with the Holocaust. Having lived among the Prussian Junkers and Christian Pietists, both of whom believed that Jews had no rightful place in a Christian state, Bismarck joined with them, abandoning the Christian state for the secular state, taking with him an unspoken cultural belief that a Jew cannot also be a German. Reading history backwards, Steinberg pounces on what he calls "Bismarck's real gift to Hitler," by which he means his personal model as a "sovereign self" and "genius-statesman," presumably

superior to other parliamentarians, which Hitler certainly believed himself to be.

By such reasoning and linkage, Steinberg can conceive of the Hitler of the 1930s and '40s being welcomed into Bismarck's 1880s cabinet, and vice versa. With anti-Semitism rife in the late-19th-century German establishment, Bismarck "had nothing to say" publicly on the subject, but floated with "the roaring stream of Providence and history," taking what enlightenment it gave him. But when a Liberal parliamentarian finds the anti-Semitic movements of the time clinging to Bismarck's coattails, "however much he rejects them and lets his press scold them for their excesses, they go right on cuddling up to him." In doing so they showed their true colors and confirmed what Steinberg correctly tells us: "German liberalism," not Jewry, was Bismarck's "real enemy."

Within a hundred days William I and his son Frederick III died, leaving the headstrong, 29-year-old William II the new king. This accident of heredity proved to be Bismarck's undoing as well, inasmuch as the royal power passed to a weak, unfriendly monarch. For 26 years Bismarck had been under the protective wing of William I, but the glory days when William I let General Moltke command his armies and Bismarck run the state were fast waning. Bismarck was now vulnerable to the same palace intrigue that had made him the most powerful statesman of the age. The youthful William II did not look on the old chancellor as the greatest military strategist, or as the world's most successful politician. Bismarck had now to worry that the young William would discharge him, and that was just what he did.

Steinberg signs off as he signed on, terminating the life of the Iron Chancellor with this remembrance and lesson:

> Having crushed his parliamentary opponents, flattened and abused his ministers, and refused to allow himself to be bound by any loyalty, Bismarck had no ally left when he needed it. ♦

B&A

Women in Love

The high cost of mixing success and attachment.

BY ELIZABETH POWERS

Dorothy Thompson, 1920

In 1942 George Stevens made a romantic comedy for MGM called *Woman of the Year*. Based on the journalist Dorothy Thompson, one of the subjects here, it concerned the obstacles to marital bliss faced by an emancipated woman and her former colleague turned husband. With Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy as the combative partners, everything turned out well.

Elizabeth Powers is the editor of Freedom of Speech: The History of an Idea *(Bucknell).*

Dangerous Ambition
Rebecca West and Dorothy Thompson, New Women in Search of Love and Power
by Susan Hertog
Ballantine Books, 512 pp., $30

In *Dangerous Ambition*, we learn the unvarnished truth about Thompson's marriage to Sinclair Lewis, who, despite being a major novelist (and Nobelist), was an abusive alcoholic who felt emasculated by his wife's public success. With the help of lots of prescription drugs, Thompson kept

her career from flagging and a terrible marriage going for a very long time.

This movie is mentioned at the outset because Dorothy Thompson, unlike the other subject of *Dangerous Ambition*, may not be familiar—even to readers of The Weekly Standard. Like the ambitious career woman in *Woman of the Year*, Thompson represented a new phenomenon in American life in which the public took much interest.

An authentic American product, from a small town in upstate New York, in 1924 she became the first woman to head a major overseas news bureau, in Berlin. Her reporting from interwar Europe was legendary. One biographer has written that "she had a gift for walking in where news was breaking." She reported from Russia on the "experiment" going on there in the late 1920s and was the first foreign reporter to interview Adolf Hitler. Her radio broadcasts advocating U.S. intervention in World War II helped to keep Franklin Roosevelt in the White House for a third term. In *Time*'s cover story on her in 1939, she was named the second-most influential woman in America (after Eleanor Roosevelt).

In criss-crossing chapters, Susan Hertog, biographer of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, couples this rise with that of another relentlessly ambitious woman, Rebecca West. (Born Cicely Fairfield, she took her public name from the heroine of Ibsen's drama *Rosmersholm*.) West came from a more typical middle-class European background, but, like Thompson, she achieved success as soon as she put pen to paper. The two were friends, and *Dangerous Ambition* narrates a kind of "parallel lives" against the background of the political dramas of the first half of the 20th century: suffrage and socialism, World War I, German rearmament and fascism, World War II and the succeeding realignment of political power, the creation of Israel and the rise of the Palestinian problem.

West was likewise a celebrity journalist featured on the cover of *Time*. Her journalistic coup was coverage for the *New Yorker* of the Nuremberg trials (during which she had an affair with Francis Biddle, one of the two American judges). Both women, however, became superannuated after reaching this zenith. By the 1950s, as the Cold War heated up, their outspoken opposition to totalitarianism left them misunderstood or abandoned by their intellectual cohort, mostly on the left.

Dangerous Ambition offers many insights into the attempts of that intellectual class to influence the ideological milieu of the West in the first half of the 20th century. For instance, though disliking FDR's New Deal, Thompson embraced him over Wendell Willkie in 1940 because of the latter's isolationism. Her writings and broadcasts kept up a steady drumbeat for intervention in World War II and, later, internationalism and the Arab cause when, according to Hertog, she crossed the line into outright advocacy journalism.

A gifted writer, Thompson got some things right ("Experience has demonstrated the obstinacy of the principle of private ownership in the matter of sauce pans," from *The New Russia*) and other things wrong (her 1931 interview with Hitler convinced her of his "utter insignificance"). West is the bigger thinker, with a number of considerable literary achievements, including her prescient 1941 study of the Balkans, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*. This work, too, had a large aim: It "was to be her means of preserving democracy" in the face of "the poison of fascism."

As the title indicates, ambition had its perils. The lesson we are to draw concerns the conflict suffered by two women in thrall to what Hertog calls "Victorian" gender expectations: Like Tess Harding in *Woman of the Year*, both wanted a career but also to be loved and cherished by a life partner. Here, too, the "parallel lives" work well. Both women were born in the 1890s and had a broken background in common. Thompson's mother died when she was eight; and père Fairfield abandoned the family home when Cicely was eight. The central calamitous event for both was the misfortune of entering into a relationship with a famous man. Thompson married Sinclair Lewis, to whom she was introduced in Berlin, and West had a 10-year liaison with H. G. Wells, beginning in 1913. For West, this liaison led to a period of social isolation, just when she was taking her place as a major literary figure. She had a child out of wedlock, a circumstance she spent the rest of her life trying to keep from becoming public. Thompson's son with Lewis was legitimate, but like Anthony West, Michael Lewis suffered from parental neglect.

Many of the gory details have been published elsewhere, especially concerning West's son, and neither woman comes off well in the telling. For instance, West deemed Anthony "a total loss, he has spoiled my work and my friendships, he is the worst thing that ever happened to me. . . . He is like some horrible dwarf in a fairy tale." Similarly, at 18 months, Michael Lewis was left in the care of a nurse while Thompson "embarked on a whirlwind tour of forty cities, hell-bent on informing Americans about the changing landscape of German politics." His childhood was spent in schools out of sight of either parent.

The great gap between appearance and reality seems to characterize the human type portrayed here, the world-improver who neglects those near and dear, especially those most dependent on her. But the travesty of professed ideals does not end there. Absolutely no one ends up looking good in this book. In their relations with friends, spouses, and lovers, West and Thompson show themselves alternately to be needy, irrational, irresponsible, vindictive, disloyal, backbiting, and petty. Their contempt for ordinary folks ran deep: Americans were spoiled, materialistic (this during the Depression!), vulgar, superficial, hedonistic, devoid of ideas and ethical underpinnings, and small-minded. Among other things, we are reminded that public intellectuals like to buy houses and entertain in lavish style, even while reporting on food shortages from a war-ravaged continent.

What is Susan Hertog's attitude toward her flawed subjects? It is difficult to decide. While much is worthy of condemnation, she stands at a distance.

> Rebecca and Dorothy were delusory when it came to love. They projected idealized stereotypes onto their men, and demanded more of them than any man could fulfill. Given their emotional deprivation as children, and their impulse toward social legitimacy, there was no amount of piety for Dorothy, or psychoanalysis for Rebecca, that could compensate for the emotional damage they caused and incurred. And the men they chose … were equally crippled.

Ultimately readers will agree with Hertog's conclusion: "While the conflict that existed within them lives in all those whose aspirations exceed the social expectations of their time and place, the distortions their ambitions engendered in their personal relations are uniquely their own." ♦

B&A

Choosing Sides

Ideological divisions in the GOP are not exactly news.

BY ALONZO L. HAMBY

Robert A. Taft, left, Thomas E. Dewey, right

The first master's thesis defense committee on which I served, more years ago than I care to count, evaluated an effort titled "Liberal Deviations of Robert A. Taft, 1945-1953." As a young assistant professor still intoxicated by a heady academic liberal consensus, I was prone to dismiss the author's assertion that Senator Taft was something more than an iron-hearted reactionary. His backing of limited federal aid to education and subsidies for low- and middle-income housing struck me as Potemkin villages designed for political impact and little more. Still, the thesis made a valid point.

The Roots of Modern Conservatism
Dewey, Taft, and the Battle for the Soul of the Republican Party
by Michael Bowen
North Carolina, 288 pp., $45

In the popular mind at the time, and in the shorthand that enables our historical memory, Taft, when remembered at all, is labeled "Mr. Conservative" or "Mr. Republican." The labels certainly capture his heart but not his political calculation. In the conventional conservative narrative of post-World War II politics, Taft's nemesis was Thomas E. Dewey, the smooth, mustachioed governor of New York, a pallid liberal who at times described himself as a "New Deal Republican." Michael Bowen's flawed but suggestive effort to get at the origins of the conservative revival that began with the grassroots coalition that formed around Barry Goldwater at the end of the 1950s dents both these caricatures.

Dewey, who began his career as a rackets-busting district attorney, had broken the New Deal grip on New York state by winning election as governor in 1942. He would serve three four-year terms in the office, running a moderate and efficient administration that avoided scandals, maintained essential state services, and displayed solicitude for the numerous minorities embedded in the state's polyglot electorate.

As governor of the nation's most important urban state, he clearly felt that he had to come to terms with New Deal liberalism. Essentially an accommodationist in a left-leaning political environment, Dewey promised more of the same with greater efficiency. This attitude dominated his run for president against Harry Truman in 1948. Handsome in the fashion of an aging matinee idol, he was all New York right down to his late-in-life liaison with the glamorous actress and television personality Kitty Carlisle.

Taft, on the other hand, seemed the genuine article. Yale and Harvard Law School education notwithstanding, he looked and acted the epitome of a Midwestern provincial. He was devoted to the conservative heritage of his father, President and, later, Chief Justice William Howard Taft. He had

Alonzo L. Hamby, biographer of Harry Truman and the author, most recently, of For the Survival of Democracy: Franklin Roosevelt and the World Crisis of the 1930s, *teaches history at Ohio University.*

the appearance of a local banker or manufacturer who would be a regular presence at Rotary Club meetings and a force in the local Chamber of Commerce. Asked to give housewives advice on how to cope with rapidly increasing food prices, he replied, "Eat less." (The full quotation was "Eat less meat and eat less extravagantly." The news media helpfully reduced the advice to two words.) He was cosponsor

As governor of the nation's most important urban state, Dewey clearly felt that he had to come to terms with New Deal liberalism. Handsome in the fashion of an aging matinee idol, he was all New York right down to his late-in-life liaison with the glamorous actress and television personality Kitty Carlisle.

of the most important piece of anti-union legislation in American history, the Taft-Hartley Act.

Little wonder, then, that he was widely seen as a conservative champion. Yet his housing and education bills—perhaps motivated by political expediency, perhaps by a pragmatic problem-solving impulse—seemingly displayed a willingness to compromise with New Dealism.

Dewey was Wall Street, Taft Main Street. Dewey was suave, Taft blunt. Style mattered, and magnified differences in degree. Taft, his deviations from conservative orthodoxy notwithstanding, won the hearts of what Bowen calls the GOP Old Guard. Dewey got the more qualified allegiance of Republicans who thought him electable. After he proved to be a two-time loser, he pulled the hat trick of naming a designated successor of limitless electability, Dwight Eisenhower. The bland moderation of Eisenhower's presidency, Bowen tells us, gave birth to a vigorous new conservatism that would transform the Republican party.

Alas, this pedestrian narrative tells us very little about that new conservative activism, or for that matter about the Old Guard conservatives who rallied to Taft. It is mostly about a long struggle between Taftites and Deweyites for control of the party machinery. It culminated after Eisenhower's accession in a years-long political purge of Taft loyalists that Stalin would have envied.

This is useful academic microhistory, but far from the grand promise of the book's title, which leads one to expect an account of William F. Buckley Jr., and *National Review* emerging from the ashes to lead a resurgence of Hayekian and Randian libertarians, collegiate activists, and a right-wing Popular Front of the disenchanted. The author gives us, perhaps, a few seeds of modern conservatism; those interested in the roots will need to repair to the work of, among others, Gregory Schneider on Young Americans for Freedom, John Kelley on libertarianism, Lisa McGirr on right-wing suburban politics, and Lee Edwards on Buckley. ♦

B&A

It Could Be Verse

The unexpected poet among us.

BY ELI LEHRER

Based on his commercial success alone, Shel Silverstein (1932-1999) deserves a great deal of attention from those who care about American poetry. Consider the facts: Both the books of poems and drawings that Silverstein published during his life remain in demand more than a quarter century later. Furthermore, nobody else writing verse in English—not T.S. Eliot, not Robert Frost, certainly not Mary Oliver—has sold close to as many collections of poetry as Silverstein. While Silverstein granted no extended interviews and made almost no public appearances during the 20 or so years before his death, the popularity of his previously published poetry has endured for a broad general audience.

Every Thing On It
Poems and Drawings
by Shel Silverstein
HarperCollins, 208 pp., $19.99

That's why the publication of Silverstein's newest book, his second posthumous collection of poems and drawings, deserves attention. Silverstein isn't a great poet—he never said he was—but his witty verse, with its appeal to children and adults alike, has earned him a firm place among America's top contemporary poets.

The basics about Silverstein first. He was a cartoonist before anything else, and nearly all of his poems include pictures. After his Korean War service, partly spent drawing cartoons for *Stars and Stripes*, he landed a job as *Playboy*'s house cartoonist in its heyday. During the 1960s and '70s, he branched out into writing plays—some of them decently reviewed but none of them easily available today—and songs. (Johnny Cash's "A Boy Named Sue" is probably

Eli Lehrer is vice president of the Heartland Institute.

the most famous.) His early forays into children's literature sold modestly, but he hit pay dirt with the issue of *The Giving Tree*, a treacly if sincere fable about a boy who relies on a large tree in every phase of life. Two collections of poems and drawings—*Where the Sidewalk Ends* and *A Light in the Attic*—followed and climbed the bestseller lists even as the author himself retreated from the public spotlight.

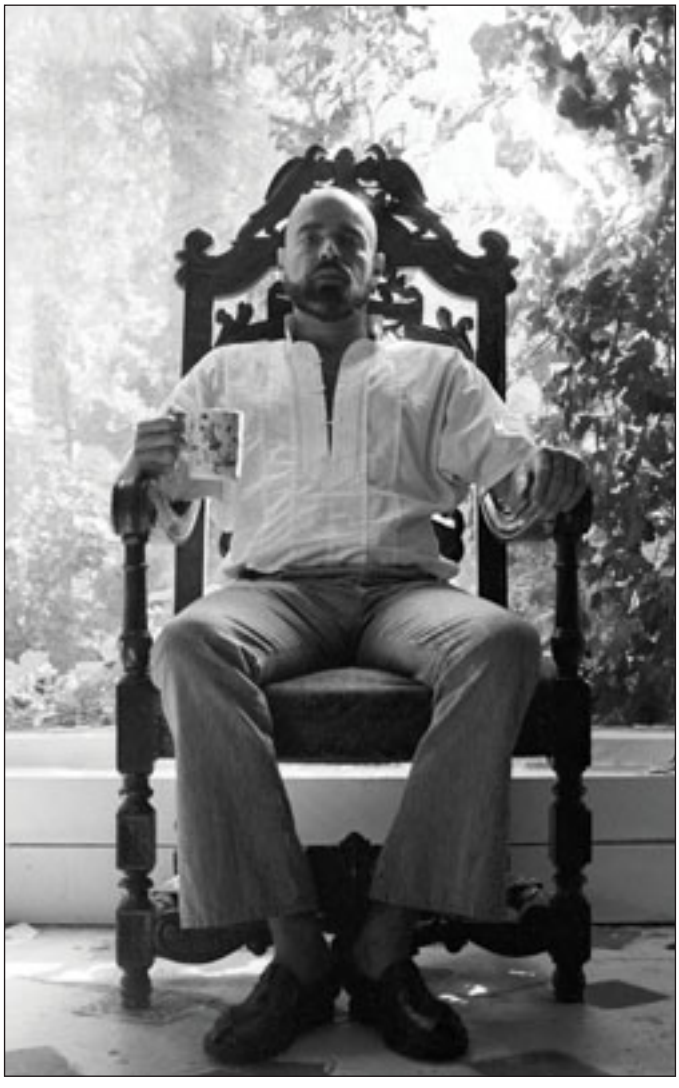
Since Silverstein's death, several other works under his name have landed in bookstores. Like his previous output, *Every Thing On It* clearly targets children. The most frequent topics—friendship, family relations, the rules of adult society, school, nightmares, wish fulfillment, and wordplay itself—are just the things that most concern the prepubescent set. There's a hint of transgression on almost every page (bodily functions aren't avoided, for example) but rarely in ways that would offend any adult with a modicum of modernist sensibility. There's not even a hint of sex, and while there's a fair amount of violence, often to dispose of siblings or bullies, it's so clearly cartoonish that hardly anyone could object.

Most of the poems here are simple. Take "The Pelican" as an example: It reads, in full:

> *Pickin' big fish from the seas*
> *The pelican can do with ease*
> *But pickin' up a tiny ant*
> *Is something that a* pelicant.

This is somewhat funny, quite playful, somewhat ironic, and perhaps memorable, but obviously it's little more than a joke: It offers no emotional resonance at all.

On the other hand, some poems that are quite basic in their language and subject can still provoke thought. One poem, "Nasty School," envisions a house of learning where *You must put gum on everybody's seat, / And when there is a test, you'll have to promise that you'll cheat*. This—and the rest of the poem—imagines a truly bizarre school world where everything confounds expectations. It's laugh-out-loud funny and, although not complicated, still manages to raise some questions about the purpose of the sometimes arbitrary rules that elementary and middle school students must follow to remain in good standing with their teachers.



Shel Silverstein (ca. 1968)

GETTY IMAGES

And sometimes Silverstein shows that he's a very good poet by any objective standard. One poem in *Every Thing On It*, "Wall Marks," is conveyed in a child's voice at once beautiful and naïve. The speaker says that *Mama keeps reminding me* of a father who would *put a ruler on my head / And mark the spot and write the date* and then concludes: *But I don't understand at all / Just why she cries each time she sees / Those scratchy marks there on the wall*.

Although it is told in the simplest language, the poem offers a good deal worth mulling over. The use of the word "mama" (a babyspeak term that few over seven would use) and slightly odd phrasing (why "scratchy marks" rather than "scratch marks"?) indicates that the speaker might be barely out of diapers. In this context, the final lines become particularly haunting: Why is mama crying? Is the father dead? Was there a divorce? Something else? The whole experience of reading and rereading the poem is thought-provoking and discomforting. It does just what poetry should and offers precocious young readers a level of complexity that can interest them in poetry itself. It may not be the sort of thing that made him popular—it's certainly not funny and may not appeal to very young children—but it shows a keen appreciation for the sound and sense of poetry.

In all, there's no great mystery as to why Shel Silverstein has become so popular. As critic Ruth MacDonald has pointed out, Silverstein fits quite well into the rich American tradition of regional poets that Dana Gioia did so much to identify and promote when he was chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. Like Carl Sandburg or Ted Kooser, Silverstein writes for a specific audience (children in his case), addresses their concerns, and does so with language that possesses beauty if not complexity. ♦

"Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin on Wednesday said he was ready for dialogue with the opposition, including his rivals at the presidential polls."

—RIA Novosti, December 28, 2011

PARODY

...n't that make you happy...

...NUARY 10, 2012 — ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

PUTIN EMBRACES 'DIALOGUE' WITH OPPOSITION FIGURES

Several Critics Disappear During 'Friendly Chat'

By ELLEN BARRY

MOSCOW — In a televised discussion at Moscow State University, Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin encouraged opposition candidates and other critics to engage him in open dialogue. "I am reasonable man," said Putin. "Please, ask me any question. Tell me what is in your heart."

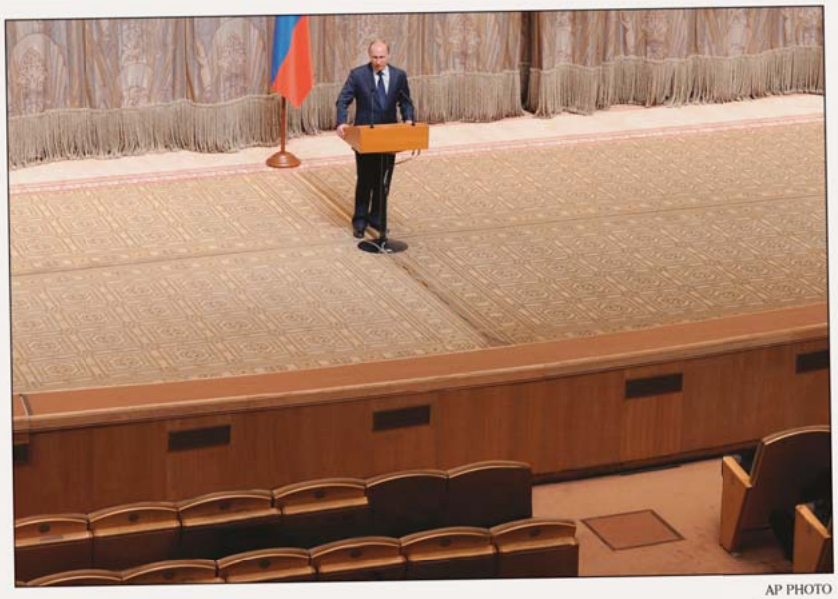
The first questioner was a journalist, who stood up to ask the prime minister about serious reforms such as term limits. Putin replied, "Yes, yes, interesting. What is your name? Where do you live?" The journalist was then surrounded by FSB agents and subsequently disappeared. When asked of the reporter's whereabouts, a government spokesperson assured the press, "The man had deadline. Emphasis on dead."

On stage, Putin next urged several college students to be honest about their opinions of his governing style. "Heavy, um, heavy handed," one student mumbled reluctantly. The prime minister shook his head in disappointment. "I am sorry you feel that way, but you are wrong. I am not heavy handed. The head of my security team, now he's heavy handed. But why don't you be the judge?" The students were then led away to a police van. "Sometimes education is not enough," Mr. Putin lamented. "But re-education can do wonders."

The prime minister praised the evening's discussion as an important step forward for the country. "This is good, this is very good," said Putin, before taking the next question. A man named Irtimd Vedevdem asked, "Oh, Great Prime Minister, Father of Russian People, you are martial arts master, skilled hunter, and political mastermind. Is there anything you can't do?" Putin paused before replying: "A very tough question, indeed. But you forgot to mention my love for Siberian tigers. Why didn't you say that? Too much on your mind? Perhaps you should take a nice vacation. In Siberia."

The open forum, which Putin described as "mostly productive," came to an unfortunate end, however, when several audience members accidentally fell through a trap-

Continued on Page A13



AP PHOTO

"Anyone? Anyone?": Mr. Putin takes questions at the end of a dialogue session.

Romney's Doctors Give Thumbs Up

'His exoskeleton is remarkably lifelike'