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the weekly

# Standard

FEBRUARY 20, 2012

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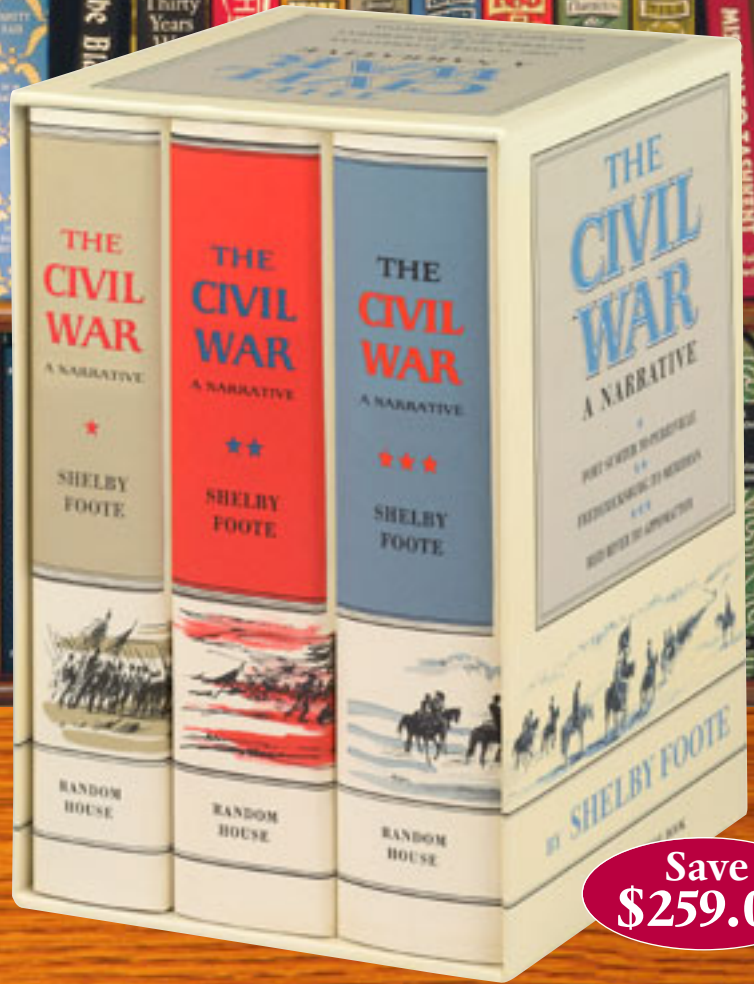
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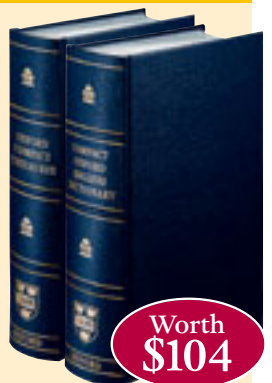
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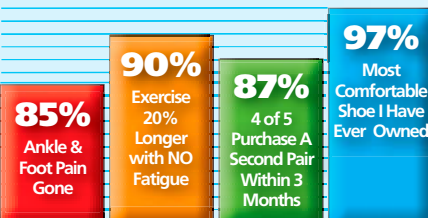
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# Erroneous Progressive Condescension

THE SCRAPBOOK has been pondering a minor detail from an item that appeared here last week. In describing the Planned Parenthood/Susan G. Komen fundraising episode, we mentioned that Greg Sargent, a *Washington Post* blogger, had been boasting on his Twitter feed about pressure exerted on the Komen foundation by congressional Democrats. Somebody wrote in to push back: “Senators are now censoring private organizations? This is crazy.” Sargent scoffed: “Not quite sure I see the ‘censorship’ at play here.”

At which moment THE SCRAPBOOK exclaimed to itself: Bingo! Another example of Erroneous Progressive Condescension. Did you like that patronizing “not quite sure” just before the zinger? THE SCRAPBOOK could well imagine Sargent shaking his head at this example of another right-wing clod who seemed to think the Senate was “censoring” the Komen foundation over its decision to withhold funds from Planned Parenthood.

Except that’s not what was said, and the clod in this instance is Greg Sargent. The Twitter inquiry did not accuse the Senate of “censoring” anyone; it criticized Senate Democrats for “censoring” a private organization—a very different thing, and a perfectly defensible complaint. We’re too old to be shocked that a journalist employed

by the leading newspaper in the nation’s capital would be unaware of the meaning of “censure,” a term used more than occasionally on Capitol Hill. But it is revelatory.

In fact, there is a long and undistinguished history of progressive journalists poking fun at conservatives about spelling and grammar and meaning without realizing that, in fact, they are the ones who are woefully, outrageously ignorant. Last month, for example, Larry Doyle of *Time* wrote a tendentious account of the GOP campaign, including this observation:

Gingrich has a point. Mitt Romney does think we’re stupid. Gingrich, on the other hand, knows we’re stupid—at least compared to Gingrich, whose ideas are so large only a head of his size can contain them.

THE SCRAPBOOK concedes that Doyle is entitled to his opinions, and even to make juvenile comments about the candidates’ physical appearance. But he forfeits any right to condescension with his next sentence: “And they are both towing the internal party line.” No, they’re not; they’re *toeing* the party line. Politicians do not “tow” party lines in the sense of heaving them over their backs and dragging them along the floor. They “*toe*” the line in accor-

dance with the ancient parliamentary practice of keeping members contained within physical barriers.

Or consider the *Washington Post*’s ace political reporter, David A. Fahrenthold, who opined on a recent Gingrich speech:

“Obama is big food stamp,” Gingrich said, leaving grammar behind in his fervor to tie Romney to President Obama. “He’s little food stamp.”

Leaving grammar behind? You hardly needed to be in the hall to comprehend that Gingrich was characterizing Obama as Big Food Stamp and Romney as Little Food Stamp—a rhetorical device that ought to be familiar to any journalist employed by a newspaper that routinely refers to Big Tobacco and Big Oil and Big Pharma.

Which raises one final, troubling point for THE SCRAPBOOK. Yes, it is annoying when left-wing journalists deploy condescension and sarcasm and abuse when they (mistakenly) accuse conservatives of errors in spelling and usage. But it is genuinely appalling that neither *Time* nor the *Washington Post* any longer seems to employ editors who know about toeing the line, or the difference between “censure” and “*cancel*,” and whose duties used to include saving such arrogant/ignorant writers from themselves. ♦

## And Bébé Makes Four?

This week’s newspaper item that left THE SCRAPBOOK wondering when the other three horsemen will arrive comes to us via the *Washington Post*’s “On Parenting” blog: “When French parenting mixes with threesomes: A lesson on hiding indiscretions from the kids.”

The item concerns Pamela Druckerman, author of the new book *Bringing Up Bébé: One American Mother Discovers the Wisdom of French Parenting*. It seems that just as the public-

ity machine for *Bringing Up Bébé* was heating up, a blogger at *Slate* unearthed an article Druckerman wrote for *Marie Claire* in 2010 called “How I Planned a Ménage à Trois.”

As you can imagine, the article is pure Norman Rockwell. It seems Druckerman’s husband uncomplainingly buys diapers and doesn’t spend money on himself. The only desire this otherwise monastic gentleman has voiced is for a threesome. Druckerman decides granting this wish would be a more appropriate gift for his 40th birthday than

the vintage watch she was eyeing, since this “wouldn’t technically be cheating.” Finding a third wheel isn’t easy, but “it turns out that all of my girlfriends and practically all the spouses of his friends would potentially make the cut, including the pregnant ones.” This beast with too many backs is eventually consummated and Mrs. Druckerman receives “a series of heartfelt thank-you notes” from her husband.

THE SCRAPBOOK knows exactly what you must be thinking at this point—if *liberté, égalité, infidélité* is a

good template for marriage, surely Drucker­man must have a lot to teach us about parenting, *non*?

Confronted by the revelation of Drucker­man's unusual ideas about marriage, the *Washington Post* uses this as a teachable moment for other parents. But don't worry, the *Post* doesn't get all judgmental.

"Superior smirks aside, Drucker­man's embarrassment does raise an issue that vexes many parents these days: What to do about past indiscretions once we take on the role of a parent?" asks the *Post*'s parenting blog.

Needless to say, we're not sure what the *Post* means by "past indiscretions." This is not awkwardly admitting to a teenager you once smoked marijuana in college. These are married parents. Drucker­man wrote about her threesome less than two years ago, and is now inviting the world to buy her child-rearing advice.

Apparently, Drucker­man sensed the disconnect and asked *Marie Claire*'s editors to remove her article from their online archive, but the Internet, unfortunately for her, has never included a delete key. Here's a free bit of advice for Drucker­man: Barring not committing them in the first place, the best way to avoid confronting past indiscretions is not to write about them for publication. ♦

## End of the WWI Era

THE SCRAPBOOK notes with regret the death last week of Florence Green in a nursing home in eastern England. She was two weeks shy of her 111th birthday. The particulars of Mrs. Green's very long life are not notable in themselves. She was born Florence Patterson in London, a month after the death of Queen Victoria. During her childhood the Patterson family moved to King's Lynn, Norfolk, where she spent the next hundred years. She married a railway worker, Walter Green, in 1920, with whom she had two daughters and a son.

These simple annals of Florence Green's existence would have un-

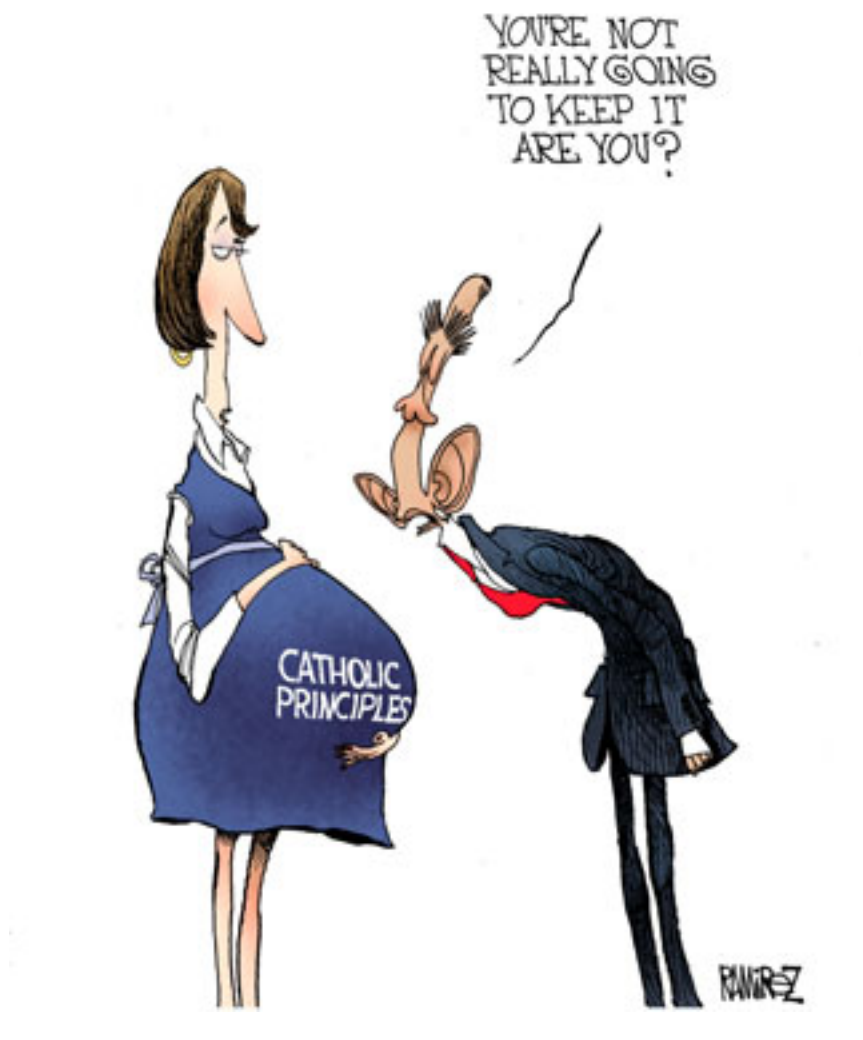
doubtedly passed into oblivion had it not been discovered, just a few years ago, that she had in fact served in the First World War—making her since last year the final living veteran of that conflict. Two months before the Armistice, at age 17, she enlisted in the women's auxiliary of the Royal Air Force, where she served as a steward in the officers' mess at two bases near her home in Norfolk.

"It was very pleasant, and they were lovely," she remembered. "Not a bit of bother." Indeed, she "met dozens of pilots and would go on dates." When they asked if she wished to take a ride in one of the aircraft, though, Miss Patterson declined: She was afraid to fly.

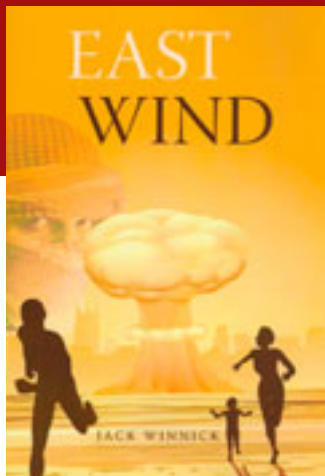
It is impossible to say with absolute certainty that Mrs. Green was the last uniformed survivor of a conflict that involved tens of millions. And of

course, the carnage and destruction of the Great War affected many millions of civilians throughout Europe, the Middle East, and North America, some of whom are undoubtedly still alive. A child whose town was shelled or whose father was killed may fairly be described as a survivor of the war.

Nevertheless, with Florence Green, the British flag will cover her coffin, an official chapter will close, and her burial will sever a last thread to "the war to end all wars" from which so many subsequent conflicts arose. Time is relentless: World War I ended 93 years ago, World War II 66 years ago; even the Vietnam war ended nearly 40 years ago. But the passage of time does not lessen our appreciation for those—including the flirtatious young mess steward Florence Patterson—who served their nation in a just cause. ♦



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## Must Reading

**T**HE SCRAPBOOK was thrilled to get its copy the other day of the provocative and important new book by WEEKLY STANDARD contributing editor Robert Kagan, *The World America Made*. The book has, we gather, already been read and even praised by President Obama. But don't hold that against it. You should read it. You'll like it, and learn from it, as we did.

In *The World America Made*, Kagan asks "what the world would have looked like had the United States not been the preeminent power shaping it for the past six decades," and tries "to imagine what the world might look like if America were to decline, as so many nowadays predict."

Kagan makes an analytical and normative case against American decline, and in defense of what he (along with THE SCRAPBOOK's boss, in a famous 1996 *Foreign Affairs* article) once called America's "benevolent hegemony." The book is short, it's punchy, it's right, it's a real contribution to the American foreign policy debate . . . and it's a bargain at less than \$20.00. Get one for yourself, and one for a friend. ♦

## Sentences We Didn't Finish

**L**iberals have been on the defensive about taxes, overall, since Ronald Reagan's election in 1980. So it's invigorating to hear [Maryland governor Martin O'Malley] offer an unashamed argument for the need to pay more if you want quality education, mass transit, new roads . . ." ("Give O'Malley credit for courage on taxes," Robert McCartney, *Washington Post*, February 5). ♦

## Sentences We Didn't Finish, II

**I**n the end, this is a nonsense fact. On its face, it may be technically correct . . ." ("Fact Checker" Glenn Kessler, inadvertently admitting his vocation is deeply problematic, *Washington Post*, February 7). ♦

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## The Dinner Party

When I think about the American-postcard moments of my life—Fourth of July fireworks, Veterans' Day parades, watching *American Chopper* reruns—there is none so emblematic as the evening I just spent in the flat-screened glow of the Super Bowl, having a few pops and making chitchat with my new comrades from the Weather Underground.

Everyone celebrates America in his own peculiar way. Before becoming acclaimed educators, citizen activists, and the notorious friends of Barack Obama, Bill Ayers and his wife, Bernardine Dohrn, used to celebrate their America by bombing the Capitol, bombing the Pentagon, and aspiring to bomb a dancehall full of soldiers at Fort Dix, if only their late comrades hadn't accidentally blown themselves up first. That was what acclaimed-educator types call a "teachable moment": Stick with basic property destruction, because it's all ho-ho-Ho-Chi-Minh until someone puts his eyes out with a nail bomb.

This Mad Hatter's dinner party takes place at the swank Chicago penthouse of a friend of the former Weatherpersons. Bill and Bernardine had auctioned off a dinner—to be cooked by them—to raise funds for a humanities council. The lucky high bidder was my friend, former colleague, and *Daily Caller* editor Tucker Carlson, not renowned as a patron of the arts. His hobbies run to wing-shooting, fly fishing, and causing unrepentant Comies discomfort for sport.

Tucker had invited several guests—me, his brother, *Daily Caller* reporter Jamie Weinstein, a contest winner, and provocateur Andrew Breitbart, aka the most aggressive man on the Internet. (Breitbart once asked me to teach him to fish as a much-needed de-stresser,

then thought better of it, "since every time I see a tree, I just want to kick its ass.") Our Weatherpatrons greet us like old family, surrounded by their own smiling friends/decoys, who are there to "wait on" us and otherwise deflect uncomfortable lines of inquiry. Pointing to bottles of wine, one chirps, "What's your poison?"

Ayers, in skullcap and earrings, shows us to an elaborate spread overlooking the city. We've entered a par-



ody of a multimillion-dollar liberal lair. Unidentifiable abstract sculptures snake about the floor. Framed epigrams from Louise Bourgeois installations ("The Hour Is Devoted To Revenge") line the wall. Cutouts representing the duality of the American spirit, from Thoreau and Rosa Parks (good), to Dick Cheney and Sarah Palin (evil), festoon our plates. Tofu and quinoa—pinko food—is among the seven savory courses served.

Apart from shuffling off to the kitchen or catching a few minutes of the game while avoiding awkward conversations about their past, the Weatherhosts couldn't be nicer. They ask us about our backgrounds, which they already seem familiar with (thanks, Wikipedia!). They plump us with falling-off-the-bone hoisin ribs and fluff us with apple pie and AmeriCone

Dream ice cream. "This is the bomb, Bill," says Breitbart, after sampling the farmhouse cheeses. "It has explosive flavor," I chime in.

They're positively conciliatory—playing radical rope-a-dope. Dohrn has tired altogether of politics, she claims, now preferring to listen to sports radio. Bill facetiously admits that, as suspected, he wrote Obama's *Dreams from My Father*—"The second book isn't as good," he apologizes. When reminded of his past, after saying unradical things to us like, "There's no reason not to be nice to each other" (Ayers once distilled the Weathermen's philosophy as "kill all the rich people"—though presumably not those serving the carrot ginger soup), Bill looks pained. "You're thinking 40 years ago. Read something contemporary." Asked about the "smash monogamy" ethos that led Weather nymphs to engage in orgies (in the belief that an army that ruts together, fights together), Bernardine demurs, "We have to know each other better first."

We have harder questions, left mostly in our pockets. It's difficult to rough people up when they're trilling things at you like, "Enjoy the pecan raisin crisps!" Our pre-game strategy is to take it gently at dinner, then go for broke in the second half. Except there isn't one. We are shown the door before halftime, under the sudden and lame excuse that the apartment owner needs to pick up her kids. In a mad swirl of group photos, goodie bags (complete with Hershey's Kisses), and curt invitations to scoot from a formerly smiling, now pinched-faced Ayers friend, we are deposited in the hallway after less than two hours.

"They took my ribs before I finished them. . . I only had one beer. . . I didn't even get to see Madonna," the contest winner complains.

"What happened?" I ask an equally gobsmacked Breitbart. "I think we just got rolled."

"No," he says, deflated. "We got community organized."

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# The Long and Winding Republican Road

We moderns like our roads direct, our destinations clear, our paths planned, our routes rational. But we delude ourselves. We presume to know in advance what cannot be known. We bask in the conceit of rational control when such control is not to be had. We're then disappointed, even angered, when we discover that life is in fact—to quote those perceptive Oakeshottian critics of modernity, the Beatles—a long and winding road.

But long and winding roads can lead to worthwhile destinations. The limitations of modern rationalism don't preclude a reasonable outcome to our quest. Conservatives, of all people, shouldn't despair when the way forward turns out to be murky, and the ascent full of twists and turns. It's the modern left, after all, who are the terrible simplifiers.

Recall the wise words of Madison, in *Federalist 37*:

When we pass from the works of nature, in which all the delineations are perfectly accurate, and appear to be otherwise only from the imperfection of the eye which surveys them, to the institutions of man, in which the obscurity arises as well from the object itself as from the organ by which it is contemplated, we must perceive the necessity of moderating still further our expectations and hopes from the efforts of human sagacity. . . . Questions daily occur in the course of practice, which prove the obscurity which reins in these subjects, and which puzzle the greatest adepts in political science. . . . Besides the obscurity arising from the complexity of objects, and the imperfection of the human faculties, the medium through which the conceptions of men are conveyed to each other adds a fresh embarrassment. . . . When the Almighty himself condescends to address mankind in

their own language, his meaning, luminous as it must be, is rendered dim and doubtful by the cloudy medium through which it is communicated.

Conservatives in particular shouldn't lament our dim and doubtful foresight of what lies ahead. It is, after all, the condition of human freedom.

And freedom is what Republican primary voters seem to be celebrating in 2012.

They feel free to change their minds as the contest goes on. They feel free to ignore experts telling them how they must think and vote. They feel free to reverse the choices of their fellow Republicans in another state from the week before. They feel free to promote a candidate who was once last to first. They feel free to think that they shouldn't be prohibited from rejecting the allegedly prohibitive favorite. Strikingly, in



a Fox News poll last week, only 17 percent of likely Republican primary voters agreed that “Mitt Romney’s definitely going to win”; 80 percent chose the option, “It’s not over—someone other than Romney could still win.”

In short, GOP voters feel free to believe that the long and winding road on which they have embarked will more likely lead to the doors of the White House than would a short, straight, pundit-sanctioned path.

And freedom is what Republican primary voters want their candidates to celebrate—and to protect—this year. Freedom is *the* word for what we have to lose if the Obama administration gets a second term. The issues at stake this year aren't whether Rick Santorum voted for earmarks as a senator from Pennsylvania, or whether Mitt Romney checks every box of conservative orthodoxy. The issue is whether Obamacare, an unprecedented assault on our freedoms, will be exposed as such and repealed. The issue is whether our

ballooning debt, an unforgiving threat to our future freedoms, will be addressed decisively. The issue is whether the entitlement state, inimical to a politics of individual liberty, will be transformed into a limited government worthy of a free society. The issue is whether our Constitution, guardian of our freedoms, will be reinvigorated. The issue is whether threats to a world in which we and others can enjoy freedom—in particular, a nuclear Iran—will be stopped.

Who would be better at preserving our freedoms and strengthening a free society? Republican primary voters haven't yet decided. And why should they have? None of the candidates has yet earned the nomination. The good news after last Tuesday is that the race won't end prematurely. And we remain confident that Republican voters will reward the candidate—Mitt Romney or Rick Santorum or someone else—who most boldly and seriously addresses these issues.

We trust that the long and winding Republican road will produce, in Tampa in late August, a nominee stronger for the trek he had to endure. And we trust that road will lead, on November 6, to its ultimate destination—a new man in the White House, and a new birth of freedom in America.

—William Kristol

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# Great Scott

Throughout the 2012 election cycle Republicans have pined for a bold, conservative reformer—a leader courageous enough to make difficult choices and articulate enough to explain them to a skeptical public. The good news is they have such a candidate. The less good news: Scott Walker isn't running for president. He's running to hang on to his job as governor of Wisconsin.

Walker is the target of a recall effort funded by national labor unions. Why? Reforms he made to balance the budget have dramatically diminished the influence of public employee unions. If not reversed, these reforms will inspire similar efforts across the country, and the outsized power of public sector unions will finally be reined in.

The election in Wisconsin—which will happen in late spring or summer—could have a profound impact on the 2012 presidential race, with the winning side emerging from the battle organized and energized in one of the most important swing states this November.

Walker came to office in the Republican wave of 2010. He inherited a mess. Under his profligate predecessor, Jim Doyle, state government had operated almost as a slush fund for public employee unions. Giveaways to teachers and others put the state on an unsustainable fiscal path, so Doyle raised some taxes and threatened to raise oth-

ers. He raided a state fund set up to cover medical liability, essentially stealing contributions doctors had made to the pooled account. The Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled against that pilfering, but the money had already been spent. Even after budget gimmickry that would make Fannie and Freddie blush, the official deficit was \$3.6 billion.

Just over a year later, Walker and the Republicans in the state legislature have nearly eliminated the deficit. For the two-year budget cycle, the state will show a \$143 million shortfall because the stagnant economy has resulted in lower tax receipts than had been projected. But the shortfall is for the first half of the cycle; Wisconsin will run a surplus in the current fiscal year. And Walker said last week that he will eliminate the remaining shortfall without raising taxes. It's a credible claim. He reduced the deficit without raising taxes. In fact, one of his first moves upon being sworn in was to cut taxes on businesses. His subsequent reforms have allowed property tax receipts to go down for the first time in years—by some \$47 million.

The recall vote Walker faces comes *because* of these results. The key to his success was his restructuring of health and retirement benefits for many state employees, asking them to contribute 5.8 percent of their salary to their pensions (up from 1 percent or less) and to pay 12.6 percent of their health insurance premiums (up from 6 percent or so).

Even some of the governor's harshest critics acknowledged that such changes were reasonable. "Walker is right about one thing," wrote Eugene Robinson, liberal columnist for the *Washington Post*. "When it comes to pensions and benefits, public workers in Wisconsin have a sweet deal. . . . It's easy to see why the average private-sector worker in Wisconsin—probably paying upward of 25 percent toward health insurance costs and struggling to tuck away something, anything for retirement—might agree with Walker."

Walker understood from his years as Milwaukee County Executive that such changes could not occur without dramatic reforms of collective bargaining for public employee unions. So he proposed them, and Republicans in the state legislature made them law. The reforms also ended compulsory union membership.

The unions correctly understood these changes as a mortal threat. Without compulsory membership, unions would lose a major source of funds. And without the ability to bargain collectively for benefits, the unions would lose their most compelling argument to convince public employees to contribute a chunk of their income—in many cases more than \$1,000 per year—for the privilege of membership. So they took to the streets in massive numbers and pressured the Democrats they'd elected to do everything possible to sabotage Walker's plan. Democrats in the state senate fled to Illinois. Protesters occupied the state capitol. The fight captured national attention for months in 2011.

The unions lost that battle, but they did not give up the war. They launched an aggressive effort to recall several Republicans in the state senate with the hope of reversing the reforms before it became clear that they were working. They spent heavily—an estimated \$30 million—and lost again.

Meanwhile, the results of the changes began coming in. In Milwaukee, the reforms saved some \$11 million, an embarrassing windfall for Democratic mayor Tom Barrett, who had predicted that the city's structural deficit would "explode." Localities across the state have seen similar savings. There is no disputing the central fact of Walker's tenure as governor: His reforms are working.

That's a huge problem for the public employee unions as they try to convince Wisconsinites that the man responsible for this dramatic turnaround should be recalled. So they're focusing on two other issues: his 2010 campaign and an investigation into the activities of former Walker employees.

Their first complaint is that Walker didn't campaign on the specific changes he would make to collective bargaining. Walker concedes that there is some truth to the claim. He wasn't more specific, he says today, because he did not yet know exactly how he would make the changes to collective bargaining. But Walker is conceding too much. He didn't provide a point-by-point proposal to restrict collective bargaining, but it was no mystery that he'd make dramatic changes. Ryan Murray, a top policy adviser to Walker's 2010 campaign, made that clear to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in describing the changes to public employee health and retirement benefits.

"The way the proposal would work is we would take the choice out of the collective bargaining process," he said in comments published on August 29, 2010.

Did that mean an end to collective bargaining over benefits? The reporter certainly seemed to think so. "[Murray] said school districts often have some of the most expensive health benefits in Wisconsin and could receive cheaper insurance through the state if they didn't have to negotiate with unions about who would insure their members." Christina Brey, a spokesman for the Wisconsin Education Association Council, the leading teachers' union, had the same understanding. "Our members oppose taking away their rights to collective bargaining, so they would definitely raise their voices against it." Another teachers' union, the American Federation of Teachers, distributed flyers to its members warning that Walker would "void parts of labor contracts"—something that couldn't happen without changes to collective bargaining laws.

In light of the success of Walker's reforms, complaining about what he said in 2010 seems unlikely to win many

votes. So Walker's opponents want to change the subject. Last week, Mike Tate, chairman of the Wisconsin Democratic party, toured the state in an attempt to link Walker more closely to an investigation of some of his former employees. Here again, Democrats have resorted to distorting reality in order to smear Walker.

There are two separate issues. In the first, a woman who worked for Walker when he was Milwaukee County executive was found posting political comments on the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's* website during working hours. She resigned in May 2010.

The second involves two former Walker employees who allegedly stole money from a veterans' organization that worked with the county on an event held at the Milwaukee County Zoo. John Chisholm, Milwaukee's district attorney, has been investigating the claims for 20 months. There is no indication Walker knew about the employees' activities, much less condoned them. Chisholm has said that Walker is not a target of the investigation—which only exists because Walker requested it when he was presented with the facts.

Some Wisconsin Republicans, pointing out that Chisholm is a Democrat and highlighting the steady stream of leaks coming from his office, are growing concerned that the investigation is a political witch hunt, designed to bloody the governor before voters cast their ballots. Walker, for his part, says that he believes Chisholm is an "earnest" prosecutor who will conduct a fair investigation. That's probably overly generous.

The coming battle for Wisconsin will be a difficult fight for Republicans. Democrats

have shown that they are willing to do just about anything to win. Unions are fighting this battle as if their very existence depends on a victory—and it might.

For conservatives, the fight is about much more than one man in one state. A Walker defeat would send a message that political courage does not pay and political thuggery does. Walker doesn't like to talk about the effect the past year has had on him and his family, but it hasn't been pleasant. He has been subjected to numerous death threats. His wife, Tonette, has been verbally assaulted more times than she can count. His two teen-aged boys have been targeted on Facebook. His modest home in Wauwatosa has been the site of several union protests. Last month, a protester outside Walker's State of the State speech told State Senator John Kleefisch that his wife, Lieutenant Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, is a "f—ing whore."

Walker has been willing to endure these attacks to turn his state around and defend conservative principles. Conservatives should rally behind him.

—Stephen F. Hayes



Scott Walker

# Taking Aim at Santorum

The Romney campaign misfires.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST



On Saturday, February 4, a national poll from Rasmussen Reports showed Rick Santorum as the only Republican to lead President Obama in a head-to-head matchup. The next morning, a PPP poll showed Santorum suddenly leading Mitt Romney in Minnesota. So the Romney campaign responded with what are becoming its trademark tactics. Having completely ignored Santorum since New Hampshire, on Sunday afternoon the Romney team sent

*Jonathan V. Last is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

out a press release calling him “a proud defender of earmarks and pork-barrel spending.” The email contained an oppo-dump of news stories and quotes designed to make Santorum look like a latter-day Ted Stevens.

On Monday a PPP poll was released with more good news for Santorum: It showed him with a 13-point lead in Missouri. So the Romney campaign became more aggressive. Before the clock struck 2:00 P.M., the campaign had sent out four more press releases attacking Santorum. The first labeled Santorum’s criticisms of Romneycare “falsehoods.” The second announced

that Romney surrogate Tim Pawlenty would be holding a conference call to discuss “Santorum’s long-history of pork-barrel spending.” The third was a summary of the Pawlenty call. (Sample: “[Santorum] has been a champion of earmarks, and to hold himself out now as somebody who is an unquestionable conservative in these matters, just is not supported by the facts.”) The fourth was a reminder that Santorum had endorsed Romney in 2008. Or at least it was an excerpt of Santorum’s endorsement. It elided the language which, back in 2008, made it clear that Santorum was coming to Romney as a conservative-of-last-resort.

Over the following days, the Romney campaign pushed forth these little missives at a brisk clip, some with inane conceits. In one, Romney surrogate Jason Chaffetz criticized Santorum for voting in favor of debt-ceiling increases in the late ’90s and early ’00s—which no one, at that time or since, has argued were ill-conceived. (In 2003 and 2004, for example, with the lone exception of John Ensign, only Senate Democrats opposed the increases—making this an exceedingly unreliable litmus test of conservatism.) Chaffetz also suggested that Pennsylvania voters replaced Santorum with a Democrat in 2006 because he was not reliably conservative. In another, sent out the day after Santorum whipped Romney in Missouri, Minnesota, and Colorado, the Romney campaign labeled Santorum “a Washington insider” because he said the following: “There’s not a management problem in Washington, D.C., all right?”

Romney spokeswoman Andrea Saul claimed that this sentence demonstrated that “Rick Santorum says that there is not a problem with the way the federal government is being led. That is ridiculous and again proves why conservatives can’t trust a Washington insider to fix the problems that Washington insiders created.”

In context the Santorum quote reads somewhat differently. What Santorum actually said was,

There’s not a management problem in Washington, all right. There’s a more foundational problem there that goes

DAVE MALAN

to the basic concepts of who we are as a people. And those are deeply moral questions.

In other words, Santorum was arguing that the trouble with Washington isn't merely managerial, but runs deeper.

And Team Romney wonders why people aren't excited about his candidacy.

As an organism, the Romney campaign always attacks when threatened, and Santorum's victories in Missouri, Minnesota, and Colorado were threatening.

There were no delegates at stake in Missouri, yet Romney wasn't simply beaten in the exhibition. He was crushed, losing by 30 points. Santorum has no ties to Missouri and the state isn't an outlier, like Louisiana or West Virginia, with electoral peculiarities. As far as demographics and culture are concerned, it might as well be Ohio. The Romney campaign's explanation for the loss was that they didn't campaign in Missouri.

They did work hard in Colorado, though. And more striking than Romney's 5-point loss to Santorum there was his caucus total. In 2008, 42,218 Coloradans caucused for Romney. This year the number dropped by almost half, to 23,012. Romney made less of an effort in Minnesota, but if anything, the results there were the most problematic: He went from 25,990 caucus supporters in 2008 to 8,222 this time around.

The three-state parlay highlighted not just Santorum's strengths, but Romney's structural weaknesses. At the most elemental level, it remains true that Mitt Romney's greatest challenge is winning votes. He has now lost elections to five different rivals over the course of his career. The last presumptive presidential nominee to have lost to so many opponents was Richard Nixon, and his losses were offset by a large number of electoral victories. Whatever Romney's personal, moral, and intellectual merits, he has stood before voters more than two dozen times now. And they have nearly always expressed a preference for the other fellow—no matter who the other fellow is.

The bedrock argument for Romney

has always been that, whatever his weaknesses at inspiring voters, his money and campaign infrastructure would eventually carry the nomination and make him a formidable challenger for President Obama. In fact, this is precisely the argument the Romney campaign made in a strategy memo last week, on the morning of the elections. (In response, Santorum strategist Hogan Gidley quipped, "I can't wait to put a bumper sticker on my truck that says MONEY-INFRASTRUCTURE 2012.")

Romney's money wasn't brought to bear last week. Unlike in Florida, where he outspent the field by five to one, Romney chose not to put ads on television and radio in Missouri, Minnesota, and Colorado. (Before the Florida vote, there were 65 Romney ads on the air for every Gingrich ad.) In choosing not to outspend Santorum for a week, Romney gave Republican voters a preview of what it might look like if he faces Obama, who will

be able match him (if not outspend him) dollar for dollar.

More worrisome, though, is what the results—particularly in Minnesota and Colorado—suggest about Romney's infrastructure. When a campaign can't keep track of a few thousand core supporters from one election cycle to the next, motivate them, and get them to the polls in a small caucus environment, there are only two explanations: Either the organization is incompetent, or the supporters have had second thoughts.

By the end of last week Romney was worried enough to do some of the contrast-drawing personally. "Senator Santorum and Speaker Gingrich, they are the very Republicans who acted like Democrats," he said at an event in Atlanta. "And when Republicans act like Democrats, they lose."

With a surfeit of political transparency and a shortage of self-awareness, the soundbite was a near-perfect distillation of the Romney candidacy. ♦

## Amateur Hour at the U.N.

The Obama administration's Syria policy goes up in flames. **BY JOHN BOLTON**

Last week, Russia and China obstructed the Obama administration's Syria policy by vetoing an anti-Assad Security Council resolution backed by the Arab League, Britain, France, and the United States. As harmful as this defeat was in its immediate consequences, it may bode even worse for efforts to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons. Obama still seems not to grasp what motivates Russia and China, just as he apparently cannot

*John Bolton, ambassador to the United Nations during 2005-06, is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.*

comprehend threats like Syria and Iran.

A little history. Before Council Resolution 1973 in 2011 authorized the use of force against Muammar Qaddafi's murderous regime, Russia and China had been fastidious in opposing language that creative minds could stretch into approving military action. In reluctantly supporting economic sanctions against Iran and North Korea, for example, Moscow and Beijing assiduously rejected even indirect authority for striking the rogue states' nuclear programs.

Unaccountably, however, they let their guard down on Libya. Perhaps believing NATO would confine itself

to no-fly zones over threatened cities like Benghazi rather than overthrowing Qaddafi (the only real “humanitarian” solution), they abstained (along with India, Brazil, and Germany) rather than vetoing. Since a permanent member’s abstention is the functional equivalent of voting “yes,” assuming there are nine affirmative votes from others, Resolution 1973 was adopted.

As NATO’s Libya campaign quickly morphed into ousting Qaddafi, however, Russia and China made their dissatisfaction plain. Moscow had not erred so badly since 1950, when the Soviet Union boycotted the Security Council to protest Nationalist China holding Beijing’s seat rather than the Communists, thereby allowing authorization of a U.S.-led military force to repel North Korea’s invasion of the South. Obviously concerned not to make that mistake again, Russia and China were now fully alert to challenges to their client states. Syria proved to be the test case, provoking the double veto.

In addition, the unfolding Syria debacle has also revealed just how feckless the Obama administration’s distress with the Assad family dictatorship really was. From once eagerly seeking ever-closer relations with the Baath party thugs in Damascus, Obama has moved excruciatingly slowly to understanding that Syria is part of the Middle Eastern problem, not part of the solution.

Even when he acted on that long-delayed epiphany, Obama still believed the United Nations could somehow play a key role in bringing sweetness and light to Syria. But what started as a strong draft resolution—imposing significant economic sanctions on Syria, creating a partial weapons embargo, and unambiguously calling for Assad’s ouster—was steadily whittled away by Russian and Chinese contumacy. By the final Security Council vote on February 4, the text was a parody of its former self, and even that remaining hulk was holed and sunk by the disdainful vetoes.

The Obama administration was shocked, shocked that such things could happen. “What more do we need

to know to act decisively in the Security Council?” complained Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, later declaring the council to have been “neutered” and a “travesty.” U.N. ambassador Susan Rice pronounced herself “disgusted.” So much for the U.N. And so much for the highly touted, but now apparently misplaced “reset” of U.S.-Russian relations.

What will emerge from the wreckage of Obama’s Syria policy remains unclear, but Russia and China have demonstrated the U.N. will play no role contrary to their interests. Obama has failed to appreciate the geopolitical linkage between Assad’s regime and Tehran, and the protective ring thrown around both by Russia and China. Most significantly, whatever conclusions one draws about the Arab Spring—good or bad, optimistic or pessimistic—Syria is radically different from its other manifestations because of one central fact: the malign presence of Iran.

As the Syrian civilian death toll mounted while the council dithered, even full Arab League involvement did not sway Russia and China. On Iran, where Arab fears of a nuclear weapon essentially mirror Israel’s, Moscow and Beijing will prove to be equally unimpressed. Unilateral U.S. sanctions aimed at Iran’s central bank, and the EU’s new oil sanctions, have no chance of council endorsement, thus allowing nations like India and Turkey to go their merry, and unhelpful, ways.

Accordingly, there will be no dramatic Security Council action to administer the coup de grâce against Iran: no further U.N. sanctions; nothing that could be used to enforce existing sanctions militarily; and, most emphatically, nothing that even the cleverest wordsmith could argue authorized force to cripple the nuclear program, or to effect regime change in Iran.

And while the administration has been trumpeting Tehran’s increasing economic isolation, the reality is different, as the mullahs continue their three-decade-long quest to achieve a nuclear weapons capability. We now

have no prospect through diplomacy or sanctions of preventing Iran from crossing the finish line essentially at a time of its choosing. In remarkably underreported Senate testimony about Iran’s nuclear program on January 31, the director of national intelligence, James Clapper, stated unambiguously: “The sanctions as imposed so far have not caused them to change their behavior or their policy.” Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has repeatedly said recently that Iran could have a nuclear weapon within a year. (In fact, from publicly available evidence, it could well be before that.)

Incredibly, Panetta also said two weeks ago there was a “strong likelihood” Israel would attack Iran’s nuclear program in the fast-approaching April-June period. Why would Panetta speak so openly about Israel’s potential timing? Because the administration believes that its private pressure on Israel not to act militarily is failing, and that the only option was to go public. Who knows what sensitive information Team Obama will next reveal: Israel’s flight plans to the Iranian targets? Israel’s order of battle?

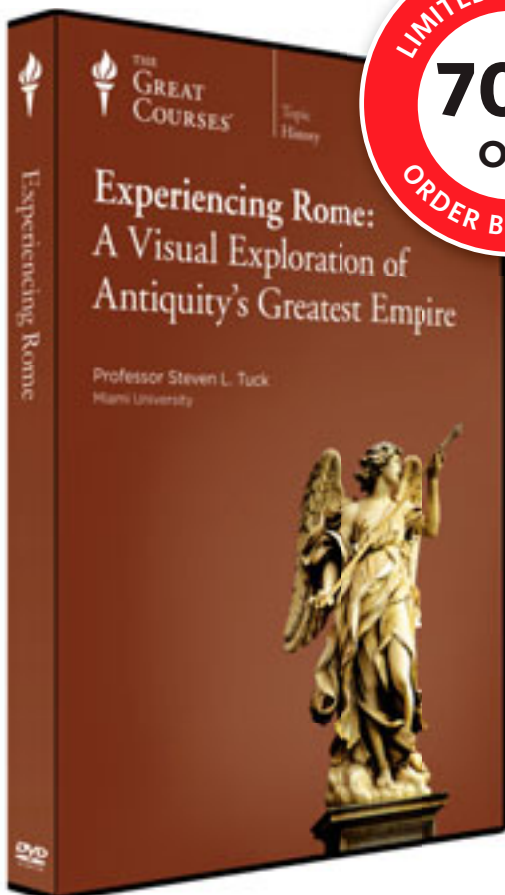
So the double veto signals to Iran that Russia and China have its back in the Security Council, foreclosing more Obama administration play-acting on nuclear proliferation. And with Panetta’s anti-Israel comments, Obama’s mask is off: He fears an Israeli strike more than Tehran’s obtaining nuclear weapons.

This year could thus be critical. Will Iran (and, as a consequence, others in the region) get nuclear weapons, or will someone step forward to take the only possible remaining action to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran from happening: a preemptive military strike?

Since there is almost no chance that Obama will act, the pressure on Israel intensifies. While the spotlight last week was on the Security Council, the real action is increasingly in Israel’s “inner” national security cabinet. It is a dangerous and unpleasant place for Israel to be, but in the absence of American leadership, David needs to decide on his own whether to pick up his slingshot. ♦



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# Antinuclear Assassinations

Who is killing the nuke scientists of Iran?  
Whoever it is should be thanked. **BY JAMES KIRCHICK**

**O**n January 11 in Tehran, two men on a motorcycle attached a magnetic bomb to the car carrying Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan. Seconds later, the car exploded, killing both Roshan and his driver. The murder was the stuff of spy novels, and would have been a spectacular story regardless of the target. But Roshan was not just any victim of a daring hit job: He was an Iranian nuclear scientist, the fourth to be assassinated in the past two years. Far from being an isolated incident, his death was clearly part of a trend.

The head of procurement for the Iranian regime's Natanz uranium enrichment facility, Roshan is but the latest victim of the shadow war between Iran and its adversaries. No country or organization has claimed credit for the killing, though the likely suspects are limited to the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia or some combination of these countries, perhaps acting in concert with an Iran-based opposition group. For its part, the United States disavowed any role in the assassination. "I want to categorically deny any United States involvement in any kind of act of violence inside Iran," said Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. A spokesman for the Israel Defense Forces was characteristically coy. "I have no idea who targeted the Iranian scientist, but I certainly don't shed a tear," he said. Alongside action movie stuntman and lion tamer, it appears that the vocation of Iranian nuclear scientist is one of the most dangerous in the world.

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*James Kirchick is a fellow with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a contributing editor to the New Republic.*

This wouldn't be the case were the Iranian regime transparent about its nuclear intentions. While Tehran says its program has a peaceful purpose, few people believe this, and for good reason. The latest report from the International Atomic Energy Agency, for instance, concludes that Tehran's nuclear program is focused on attaining a bomb so that it will be able to strengthen its hand domestically and act with greater impunity across the region and around the world.

President Barack Obama and a succession of world leaders have spoken out against Iran's obtaining a nuclear weapon; it is, in the president's words, "unacceptable." So one would think that the killing of a handful of nuclear scientists, as part of a broader attempt to slow down if not altogether stop Iran's nuclear program, would be welcomed, particularly by those individuals most opposed to an Israeli strike on Iran, the prospect of which seems greater and greater by the day. Yet rather than embrace these assassinations as a relatively prudent way to prevent the possibility of a regional war, those who claim to want peace have denounced them.

"Iran's nuclear scientists are not being assassinated," declared *New Statesman* senior editor Mehdi Hasan in the *Guardian*. "They are being murdered." If the United States was behind the assassination, asked *Salon*'s Glenn Greenwald, "does that mean President Obama is a Terrorist, a state sponsor of Terrorism or, at the very least, a supporter of Terrorism?" Writing in the *Daily Beast*, Wayne Barrett criticized Newt Gingrich's "applauding the assassination of Iranian scientists" as a "far-out position." Far from being an extreme view, however, applauding

the death of Iranian nuclear scientists is something that everyone who abhors the prospect of a nuclear Iran should be doing. It might be the only thing standing in the way of an all-out regional war.

The logic behind this assassination campaign—and it should be reasonable to assume at this point that the deaths of these scientists are not isolated incidents—is not difficult to understand. Not only does killing Iranian nuclear scientists eliminate precious know-how, it also sends the message that working for the country's nuclear program is dangerous; that, despite the prestige and benefits attached to the position, it is simply not worth the risks. According to Israeli journalist Ronen Bergman's recent cover story in the *New York Times Magazine*, the Israeli Mossad refers to this phenomenon as "white defection," that is, by making examples of prominent nuclear scientists, other researchers will be intimidated and shift to purely civilian projects.

But that's not how some analysts in Washington see it. They believe, in the words of the *Atlantic*'s Robert Wright, that "Israel is trying to start a war with Iran," a war that, given Washington's security commitments to Israel, will engulf America whether it wants any part of it or not. Many pushing this narrative have pointed to a story published last month in *Foreign Policy* by former Palestinian Liberation Organization adviser Mark Perry alleging that Israeli Mossad agents, posing as CIA operatives, had secretly recruited members of the Pakistani-based Sunni terrorist group Jundallah to kill the Iranian scientists. Perry quoted a variety of retired American intelligence officials "sputtering in frustration" that a "false flag" operation would embroil the United States in a war against Iran, should Israel choose to start one.

This analysis, such as it is, inverts reality. It is not Israel that, for three decades, has been threatening to "wipe Iran off the map." It is not Israel that has funded a variety of terrorist groups to shoot rockets into Iranian neighborhoods. Israel has no territorial claims against Iran and had good diplomatic

relations with Tehran prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The genocidal rhetoric coming out of Tehran is not some belated reaction to stalled peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. As far back as 1982, the Iranian Foreign Ministry distributed a publication with, on the cover, “Israel Must Be Destroyed.”

Iran’s behavior, externally aggressive and domestically totalitarian, means little to writers who act as if the motives and actions of the United States and its allies are just as morally suspect as those of the theocrats in Tehran. “The United States was rightly outraged by Iran’s plot to kill the Saudi ambassador in Washington; but what about the targeted assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists?” the *Daily Beast*’s Andrew Sullivan recently asked. “If Iran started assassinating American scientists, would we not make a stink?” In 2007, blogging for the *Washington Monthly*, Kevin Drum asserted, “After all, killing civilian scientists and civilian leaders, even if you do it quietly, is unquestionably terrorism. That’s certainly what *we’d* consider it if Hezbollah fighters tried to kill cabinet undersecretaries and planted bombs at the homes of Los Alamos engineers.” One can imagine a time not long ago when likening the duties of American cabinet undersecretaries to the duties of those working on nuclear projects for an enemy regime would once have struck most people, liberals and conservatives alike, as ludicrous. Now, it’s common fare among an increasingly vocal strain of progressive-realist commentators.

It is this moral equivalence—between the actions of the United States and a regime that pledges to wipe Israel off the map—that has led some to paint Israel as the aggressor. The assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists is “the murder of people who may be involved in nothing more than legitimate scientific research,” writes Daniel Larison of the *American Conservative* (it must be a very special type of “legitimate scientific research” that requires it to be conducted in a James Bond villainesque facility built into the side of

a mountain). “To ascribe genocidal motives to civilian scientists is to look inside a person’s soul and know something we cannot know,” Sullivan laments over the death of Roshan. But one doesn’t have to look into the soul of Iranian nuclear scientists to find potential “genocidal motives.” Roshan was working on a nuclear program, much of it clandestine, on behalf of a regime that has repeatedly expressed its desire to “wipe” another nation “off the map.”

There are no good options in dealing with the Iranian nuclear program. Oil and gas sanctions, which may prove effective in bringing the regime

to its knees, will nonetheless have a painful effect on the Iranian people. Bombing Iranian nuclear facilities could result in massive missile strikes on Israel and American assets in the Persian Gulf, ignite conflict between Israel and Iranian proxies Hamas and Hezbollah, and spur terrorist attacks on Jewish targets around the world. And the prospect of a nuclear weapons-equipped Iran is ghastly to contemplate. Rather than condemn those who killed Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan and other participants in the Iranian nuclear program, anyone who wants peace in the Middle East should be thanking them. ♦

## War Comes to Mali

Al Qaeda advances under cover of tribal conflict.

BY ROGER KAPLAN

*With U.S. forces in Mali*  
Mali Defense Forces abandoned the towns of Ménaka and Léré to Tuareg rebels over the weekend of February 4-5, following two weeks of back-and-forth assaults by both sides that underscored the gravity of the situation in this staunch U.S. ally in West Africa.

Ménaka, in the northeast, Léré in the northwest, and Kidal in the far northeast demarcate the Malian portion of the vast triangle in the southwestern Sahara that the Tuareg call the Azawad, their traditional heartland. The stakes in the recent Tuareg offensive include the security, if not the actual possession, of the important Niger river town of Gao in the east and Timbuktu in the center-north.

Gao, a major commercial port and population center, has not been

reported to be under attack. But conflicting claims by both sides suggest Timbuktu or its suburbs have been the scene of heavy fighting in the past week. Government spokesmen concede the fall of Niafounké, the next major river town (and a county capital) south of Timbuktu. Niafounké is only 125 miles from Mopti, gateway to sub-Saharan Mali and center of a month-long military exercise jointly sponsored by the United States and Mali and involving elements from the U.S. Army and Air Force as well as several of Mali’s neighbors.

American specialists in security and counterterrorism, including Special Forces units, have been visiting Mali for several years as part of a long-term commitment to bolstering the Sahel countries’ abilities to resist attacks by jihadists and assorted gangsters—they sometimes overlap—who use the Sahara as a sanctuary. The U.S. Army’s Africa Command, which has been functional since the

*Roger Kaplan, a longtime contributor, is embedded with the 53rd Airlift Squadron, United States Air Force.*

mid-2000s, trains African militaries in the humanitarian as well as security uses of the skills they are learning from our forces. In a complex environment that is political as well as military, and facing a situation in which refugees are leaving northern Mali for Niger and Mauritania, the Malians and their neighbors are likely to find a humanitarian capability is needed alongside better equipment, training, and motivation.

Meanwhile in Mali's capital, Bamako, which lies on the river about 280 miles southwest of Timbuktu, President Amadou Toumani Touré met with political leaders over the weekend to inform them that his intention remains to step down on schedule in three months following the election of his successor, in conformity with the constitution's two-term limit. At the same time his spokesmen indicated that the government is open to negotiations with the rebels concerning their grievances but not their territorial demands.

Touré, known as "President ATT," remains extremely popular in the predominantly black-African-populated regions of central and southern Mali, and observers note that his refusal to use the emergency in the north to extend his term represents a regard for constitutional government unusual in this part of Africa.

While ATT, in the hope of forestalling the Tuareg rebels from exploiting the political uncertainty in Bamako, is demanding a consensus on security issues among the governing and opposition parties, it has not escaped notice here that the rebels are also banking on the coincidence of presidential politics in the key countries involved in the northern Mali crisis.

Mali's presidential contenders inevitably will be under stress to sharpen their positions if the crisis deepens and pressure mounts to develop a winning, or at least a clear, response to it. Already, there have been demonstrations in Bamako and elsewhere, led by members of military families, calling on the government either to supply the Mali Defense

Forces (MDF) with adequate equipment, including munitions, or to pull the troops out of battleground areas.

But Tuareg strategy is a factor in presidential politics elsewhere as well.

The running issue in Senegal, the key neighbor to the west that provides Mali with an outlet to the sea for its exports, notably cotton, is whether President Abdoulaye Wade will be able to determine his succession or even stay in power beyond the time he had pledged to retire.

France, regularly accused by Malians of covertly supporting the Tuareg cause as a way of destabilizing the Sahel countries and making them more susceptible to French influence,

is in the midst of its own presidential campaign, in



which Nicolas Sarkozy is, not entirely without reason, accused of plotting foreign policy surprises to serve his political ends.

Algeria, the major regional power, is fixated on who will succeed its ailing president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika. And of course the United States is in the early stages of what promises to be a heated presidential contest in which clear thinking about foreign crises will not be a priority among politicians.

Last week's fighting and MDF losses, confirmed by MDF spokesman Capt. Seydou Coulibalay, indicate that the reports concerning the collapse of the Mali-Tuareg peace signed in 1996 are only too accurate. A key question for American military analysts is the extent to which the Tuareg MNLA

(National Liberation Movement of the Azawad), which is claiming credit for the offensive, is, at least tactically, working with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI). The Tuareg are not known for violent religious zealotry, but as a small people with true grievances, they are no strangers to the adage about the enemy of one's enemy.

There is a consensus among observers here that Mali is suffering some of the unintended consequences of NATO's splendid little war in support of Libya's anti-Qaddafi forces last year. They note that the renewal of irredentism among the Tuareg and the resort to arms of several of the new or newly reconstituted "national liberation" movements amongst this nomadic Berber people, culturally distinct from the Mandé-related groups in Mali's south, followed directly on the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime. Tuareg serving in the Libyan armed forces, as well as auxiliaries who fought for the regime during the civil war, returned home, according to military analysts, with huge stocks of modern weaponry and a renewed appreciation of military power as an instrument of political change.

AQMI benefited from the Libyan civil war to the degree it has involved itself in the new Libyan regime but also, perversely, to the degree it has found ways of convincing the Tuareg that they can be helpful in the ancient Saharan conflicts left unresolved—in some ways exacerbated—by the end of colonialism 50 years ago. Although there is no evidence AQMI fighters took part in last month's offensive in the north, an upsurge of their hit-and-run activities has been felt throughout the region. Malian officials insist they are dealing with bandits flying under the false flags of Islam and tribal-ethnic politics.

Keen to protect the "Malian model" of democratic and economic liberalization in Africa, American diplomats and military officials find themselves dealing with a new front in the continuing clash of civilizations. Surely they are prepared for all the complexities that—one may hope—they have learned to expect. ♦

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# Shrinking Senate Hopes

A GOP takeover is looking more difficult.

BY FRED BARNES

A year ago, Republican capture of the Senate in the 2012 election was regarded as close to a sure thing. The political direction of the country had shifted in favor of Republicans. Democrats faced the unenviable task of defending 23 seats, Republicans only 10. And 8 of the GOP seats were safely in Republican hands.

Now Republican prospects are not as rosy. The odds on a Republican Senate are no worse than 50-50, maybe better. But the effort to oust Democrats, who currently control the Senate 53-47, looks more difficult than it did.

What has changed? Most significant may be President Obama's improved chances of reelection. He has enormous liabilities, but he has managed to alter the political environment enough to make Republicans and the rich a live issue in the campaign. Before, his record in the White House, especially on the economy, was the lone issue.

Pollster Scott Rasmussen says how Obama fares will affect Senate races. The relationship is pretty simple. If Obama is reelected, Democrats are likely to hold the Senate. If the Republican nominee wins, Republicans are odds-on to take over the Senate, while retaining the House.

Jennifer Duffy of the Cook Political Report, a savvy analyst of congressional races, says the outcome of four Senate races may depend on Obama's fate: Virginia, Montana, Massachusetts, and Nevada. Notice that two of those states have Republican incumbents, Scott Brown of Massachusetts and Dean Heller of Nevada. Republicans can lose one of those seats and still

take the Senate, but probably not both.

Another impediment to a Republican Senate is Democratic success in recruiting strong candidates. North Dakota was considered a certain GOP takeover for Rick Berg, a House Republican freshman, until Heidi Heitkamp, a former state attorney general, jumped into the race. Democrats are talking up a poll that shows her leading Berg, but Heitkamp has striking vulnerabilities—like her strong support of the president and Obamacare. The betting is still on Berg.

In the open Democratic seat in Virginia, Democrats got their best possible candidate, former governor Tim Kaine. That he was Obama's first Democratic national chairman won't help him, but he is a clever politician and a strong campaigner. Last week, for instance, he sided with the Catholic church in its battle against Obama's Department of Health and Human Services—and made sure his criticism got reported in the press. "I think the White House made a good decision in including a mandate for contraception coverage in the Affordable Care Act insurance policy," Kaine said, "but I think they made a bad decision in not allowing a broad enough religious employer exemption." Republican George Allen, seeking reelection after losing his Senate seat in 2006, will have his hands full (in the likely event he defeats Tea Party candidate Jamie Radtke for the nomination).

Republicans were relieved when former Democratic senator Bob Kerrey declined to run in Nebraska, where Democrat Ben Nelson is retiring. They shouldn't have felt threatened. "Nebraska has changed," Duffy says, since Kerrey left the Senate in 2001.

Nebraska is now a GOP slam dunk.

There's one other obstacle confronting Republicans. They may need a five-seat pickup to be assured of a working majority in the Senate. If Obama is reelected and Republicans win three Senate seats, ties will be broken by Obama's vice president. Result: a Democratic Senate. If they gain four seats in this circumstance but lose one—Scott Brown's, for instance—the veep will also be the decider. The upshot: At least five pickups could be required.

But let's not be gloomy about Republican chances. In Ohio, Republican state treasurer Josh Mandel was languishing in his bid to unseat Democratic senator Sherrod Brown. Mandel, who is 34 but looks younger, is the boy wonder of Ohio politics. Now he's getting traction. In a Rasmussen poll last week, he trailed Brown just 44 percent to 40 percent, with 12 percent undecided.

In New Mexico, former congresswoman Heather Wilson will get a clear shot at the open Democratic seat. Her chief Republican rival, Lieutenant Governor John Sanchez, dropped out of the race last week. Wilson, a moderate, is considered the strongest GOP candidate.

And in Florida, Republican representative Connie Mack IV has emerged as the likely opponent of Democratic senator Bill Nelson. Mack is nearly even with Nelson in at least one poll. A Mack-Nelson race would be competitive. But Mack must first defeat George LeMieux, who served as an appointed senator from 2009 to 2011. LeMieux's ties to ex-governor Charlie Crist have severely weakened his candidacy.

Three other Democratic seats are vulnerable. No state has trended Republican in recent years more than Missouri. John McCain narrowly beat Obama in Missouri in 2008. Roy Blunt won the open Senate seat there in 2010 by 14 percentage points. So it's no surprise that Democratic senator Claire McCaskill is in deep trouble this year. The Republican Senate primary is August 7.

Wisconsin is more Democratic, but it offers Republicans a great opportunity. Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin,

*Fred Barnes is executive editor of*  
THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

the Democratic candidate, is gay, liberal, and a zealous campaigner. Either of the GOP candidates, former governor Tommy Thompson or ex-House member Mark Neumann, could beat her. When Neumann gave up his House seat in 1998 to run (unsuccessfully) for the Senate, by the way, he was replaced by Paul Ryan.

In Hawaii, Democrat Dan Akaka is stepping down after three terms, and there's only one Republican with a realistic chance of winning his seat, former governor Linda Lingle. Fortunately for Republicans, Lingle is running. She didn't have to buck a Democratic tide

in a presidential year when she won the governorship in 2002 and 2006. With Obama, a native of Hawaii, leading the ticket, she'll have to overcome a strong partisan headwind.

Where does this leave us? Duffy projects a Republican gain of three to six seats. The Rothenberg Report says two to five. A year ago, I'd have said four to seven. Today, three to six seems about right, with emphasis on the three. But my rule of politics is that the future is never a straight line projection of the present. In November, Republican prospects may look better—or worse. ♦

against the wall, these are not the sort of figures who will be fighting it out to the end. Rather, they will seek refuge among the many foreign friends they've made over the years—the journalists, businessmen, and politicians who solicited their assistance in arranging an audience with President Assad.

For what is most interesting about these emails is the picture they paint of a sick and grasping Western elite, the top echelon of an open society, that came on bended knee to curry favor with a dictatorship. Journalists from the three major U.S. networks vied for exclusive interviews with Bashar, even as the slaughter of unarmed Syrian civilians was under way. Other emails, requests, and meetings preceded the uprising that has cost more than 7,000 Syrians their lives. But even then Assad's reputation was well known. He probably ordered the assassination of Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri. He turned Damascus International Airport into a hub for foreign fighters seeking passage into Iraq to kill U.S. troops. This was the world leader that American political figures wanted to cozy up to.

The emails show that former Fannie Mae CEO and Obama bundler James A. Johnson and his wife Maxine Isaacs dined out with Assad's advisers. And former U.S. ambassador to Israel and Clinton White House official Martin Indyk tried to broker a meeting between his old boss and Assad.

The regime's gatekeeper is Bouthaina Shaaban, a 58-year-old media adviser to Assad. Anyone from Western media or political circles who wants to call on the dictator comes through her. With a Ph.D. in English literature from Warwick University (she's published on Shelley), she started her political career as Hafez al-Assad's translator. In August 2011, the former Fulbright scholar, who spent her research year at Duke, was sanctioned by the Treasury Department as one of the "senior Assad regime officials who are principal defenders of the regime's activities."

Shaaban's email cache shows her fine-tuned sense of status. When she's invited to speak at a panel in Ankara,

# Assad@axisofevil.com . . .

Leaked emails show Westerners truckling to the Syrian regime. BY LEE SMITH

In the fall of 2007 Israel reportedly hacked into Syria's air defense systems and disabled them, as a prelude to bombing a nuclear facility in the Syrian desert. This vaunted cyber exploit, it turns out, might not merit its spectacular reputation. Last week, the shadowy online activist group known as Anonymous penetrated 78 email accounts from Syria's ministry of presidential affairs and posted their contents online. The hackers found that many of the accounts, including that of the allegedly computer-savvy Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, used one of the world's weakest passwords: 12345. So much for Syrian cybersecurity.

The hacked emails are a downscale version of the WikiLeaks cables. There is little diplomatic sophistication. In the fashion of third-world Arab nationalist bureaucracies, everyone addresses everyone else as Your Excellency. One Excellency kept a stash of porn in his

email account, another Excellency seems to have sexually harassed an attractive Her Excellency. Not surprisingly, many of the Excellencies are fixated on Israel, and any story or—more often—image that reinforces their negative feelings is cc'd to a long list of similarly obsessed Excellencies.

The Mossad was responsible for 9/11, writes Fawaz Akhras, the father of Syrian first lady Asma al-Assad, and a London physician. He emails a presidential adviser to say that he has heard his suspicions verified on BBC. The unlucky recipient has to humor him; yes, old man, for the better part of a decade Syria has been telling anyone who would listen that it was the Jews.

There are also few surprises regarding the workings of the presidential palace in Damascus. The place is run by petty bureaucrats whose power rests entirely on the willingness of others to commit acts of terrorism—against either Syria's neighbors or their fellow Syrians—on their behalf. When the Assad regime at last finds its back

*Lee Smith is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

her assistant requests two seats for her since the flight offers neither first-class nor business. When she finds out she's not scheduled to deliver the keynote address, she directs her assistant to cancel her appearance. Former CBS anchor Dan Rather requests an interview with Assad in October 2010 for his new HDNet show, but Shaaban tells the Syrian ambassador to the United States Imad Moustapha to decline. "You mentioned in your letter that the HDNet station has a limited number of audience and therefore we kindly ask you to apologize."

Those journalists to whom Shaaban granted access were best friends forever. One exchange features Shaaban and Alix Van Buren—who conducted an interview with Assad for *La Repubblica*—blowing cyber kisses to each other across the Mediterranean. Who knows what journalistic ethics are like in Rome, but Van Buren's editors may be surprised to find that Van Buren considers the interview a joint effort to get the Syrian president's message out to the masses. "Did you notice that Charlie Rose practically copied our interview from top to bottom," Van Buren writes in an ingratiating email from May 2010. She thanks Shaaban ("you and I, what a team!") for the lovely presents—Valentino perfume, a jewelry box—and spares nothing in the way of flattery. And yet eventually Van Buren pushes her luck a little too far. She writes Shaaban to request privileged access for a colleague, Gad Lerner, who is planning a trip to Damascus. Lerner, as it turns out, is Jewish. Van Buren furiously pleads his case—he is "independent (i.e., doesn't belong to any lobby)," he has signed petitions against Netanyahu, and Shabaan should ignore the fact his signature is next to that of Bernard-Henri Lévy—but the Syrian apparatchik has to reject her dear friend's request. "Many of those signatories," Shaaban writes, "have indeed a history of strong support for Israel, and their long term aim is to serve the true interests of Israel."

American journalists flattered the regime as well, but with less luck. In November 2011, more than half a year into the uprising, Brian Williams's

producer at NBC wrote to request an interview, as did Scott Pelley's producer at CBS's *Evening News* a few weeks later. With deaths mounting by the hour, it was quite a feeding frenzy last fall. Bob Simon's producer at *60 Minutes* sought an advantage. He reminded his Syrian correspondent that "*60 Minutes* interviewed President Hafez al-Assad back in the 1970s." After a few paragraphs of boilerplate PR for his show ("For the last 43 years, it has featured stories on the most important newsmakers of our time . . ."), the producer signs off, "We would be most honored to have President al Assad on our program." God only knows what Barbara Walters's staff wrote to actually get her prized interview with Assad in December—those missives weren't leaked.

The hacked emails show how Assad's advisers sought to prep him for the Walters interview. Sheherazad Jaafari, a press attaché at the Syrian mission to the United Nations, and daughter of Syria's U.N. ambassador, Dr. Bashar Jaafari, boasted of her research into American media. Her advice was to turn any accusations directed at Assad back on American policymakers. For instance, when asked about torturing civilians, Assad should remind the viewing audience about Abu Ghraib, and explain that "Syria doesn't have a policy to torture people, unlike the USA, where there are courses and schools that specialize in teaching policemen and officers how to torture." She contends that "the American Psyche can be easily manipulated."

In fact, only a small number of Americans are susceptible to the Syrian regime's hamfisted propaganda, but on the evidence of the emails, they never needed to be manipulated.

"Dear Bouthaina, I hope this finds you well," writes Martin Indyk in May 2010.

Some close friends of mine will be visiting Damascus from May 25-29, for tourism. However, they are influential people in Washington and I think that you and Walid [presumably Walid Moullem, Syrian foreign minister] would benefit from meeting them and they would certainly benefit from

meeting both of you. Jim was Chief of Staff to Vice President Walter Mondale in the Carter Administration. He has also served as Chairman of the Brookings Institution. I have appended his resume so that you will get a fuller picture. Put simply, he is very influential in the Obama White House and in the Democratic Party.

Jim, or James A. Johnson, was an Obama bundler who was also part of the vetting committee for Obama's vice president. The Wikipedia entry appended to the email explained that Johnson withdrew "when it was reported that he had received loans directly from Angelo Mozilo, the CEO of Countrywide Financial, a company implicated in the U.S. subprime mortgage crisis." The entry also shows that Johnson was the CEO of Fannie Mae when it "improperly deferred \$200 million in expenses. This enabled top executives, including Johnson . . . to receive substantial bonuses in 1998." Who knows why Indyk included a record of Johnson's misdeeds. Maybe he was just trying to put Shaaban at ease—Johnson wasn't one of these self-righteous Washington crusaders, but someone with plenty of political enemies of his own, just like the regime in Damascus.

It was Johnson's wife, Maxine Isaacs, who later thanked Shaaban for the hospitality in Damascus:

Dear Bouthaina,

I can't thank you enough for the fun, interesting and most memorable dinner last night. We had a wonderful time and are most grateful to you for taking time from your incredibly busy schedule to spend it with us. We loved the restaurant and will never forget the magnificent [sic] view of your magnificent city. We all hope one day to have the privilege of returning your hospitality in Washington and Los Angeles. Again, with thanks . . .

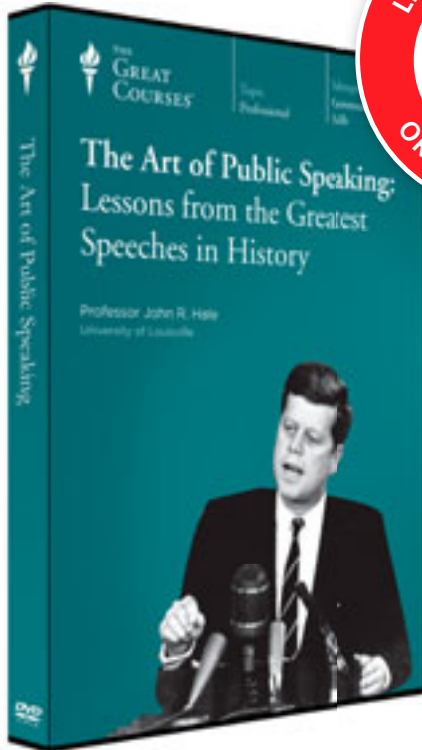
Sincerely, Maxine Isaacs,  
Lecturer on Government,  
Associate, Shorenstein Center on  
the Press, Politics and Public Policy,  
Harvard University

Shaaban replies in kind to the Harvard lecturer:

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place for every one. We have been trying, and I am now even more inspired to continue. Please stay in touch and come back again for a longer vacation.

Indyk's efforts to get President Clinton to visit Damascus in November 2009 came up empty. He wrote Shaaban about a delegation of U.S. officials that he was taking to Jerusalem for the annual Saban Forum of the Brookings Institution, where Indyk is the director of the foreign policy program, and he proposed a stop in Damascus along the way: "I'm sure you will agree that first hand exposure to the views of President Assad—especially before they hear the views of the Israeli leadership—would do much to enhance their understanding of Syria's approach to strategic issues in the region at a critical moment."

Not surprisingly, Shaaban was receptive, as was her boss. "I am glad to let you know that President Assad also welcomed the idea of receiving [sic] President William Clinton and the accompanying delegation."

A month later, Indyk explains to Shaaban that Clinton has decided not to go to Damascus. Shaaban then takes her revenge. She writes that Indyk's delegation will not meet with Assad; nor will they even enjoy the privilege of meeting with Shaaban or Foreign Minister Walid Mouallem. It's not clear if Clinton backed out—perhaps sensing that a meeting with Assad, after he'd already met with North Korea's Kim Jong Il, was a fasttrack to Jimmy Carterdom—or if Indyk had invoked the possibility of the former president's participation to get access for the rest of the group.

In any case, among all the Americans who wanted comity with the Syrian regime, it would be unfair to single out Indyk for censure. He has long been an advocate of the Syria-Israel track of the peace process. And yet he was sensible enough to back off in the aftermath of the Hariri assassination, when the Bush administration, along with France and Saudi Arabia, isolated Assad. In attempting to set up a meeting between Clinton and the Syrian president, he was probably responding to the new dynamic put in place by

the Obama administration. The White House wanted to engage the Syrians, and Indyk wanted a piece of the action.

The fact remains that long before Bashar al-Assad turned his army, security services, and paramilitary gangs against Syrian civilians, long before the death toll climbed into the thousands, the blood on his hands was there for anyone with eyes to see. Damascus supported Hezbollah and Hamas, which committed terrorism

against Israel; it waged a campaign of assassinations and bombings against Lebanon's beleaguered democrats; it supported insurgents in Iraq who targeted American troops.

In spite of all that, Americans who should have known better petitioned this bloody regime for favors and friendship. With its policy of engaging Assad, the Obama White House set the tone: It is small wonder the administration has no policy to get rid of him. ♦

## Polarization and the Independents

An ever smaller number of swing voters will decide the presidential election. BY JAY COST

Late last month, Gallup published a summary of President Obama's job approval ratings for 2011. The pollster's findings were stunning: Eighty percent of Democrats approved of the president's performance through 2011, as did just 12 percent of Republicans. The difference between these two numbers—Gallup calls it the "party gap"—was a whopping 68 points.

This is not a novel development. Of the 10 largest party gaps in the poll's storied history, 8 have occurred during the Obama and George W. Bush presidencies. Indeed, we have seen a very strong party gap in recent presidential elections as well. Obama won 89 percent of Democrats and 9 percent of Republicans in 2008, for a party gap of 80 points; the party gap for Bush in 2004 was 82 points. This is a stark shift from relatively recent political history. Richard Nixon's party gap in 1972 was 54 points; Jimmy Carter's in 1976 was 69 points; Ronald Reagan's in 1984 was 67 points; and even Bill Clinton's in 1996 was 71 points.

How do we account for this increasing polarization? Much of it has deep roots. From roughly the time of the Civil War to the Great Depression, the two parties were strictly regional coalitions built not on grand ideological divisions but on old antipathies from the battlefield. The Democrats usually won the South and the big Northern cities, while the Republicans typically won most everything else. This meant that both parties had liberals and conservatives in their ranks. Consider, for instance, the tumultuous decade of the 1910s. The Democrats had in their coalition conservative Tammany Hall and the borderline radical William Jennings Bryan; the Republicans had Nelson Aldrich, the machine boss of Rhode Island, and Robert La Follette, the premier progressive of Wisconsin.

This all began to change in the 1930s, when FDR worked to rebuild the Democratic party as a progressive coalition. Roosevelt destroyed Tammany Hall in favor of Fiorello LaGuardia, a nominal Republican and strong progressive. However, FDR could not complete the ideological realignment he began, failing to curb the power of the Southern conservatives within his

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*Jay Cost is a staff writer at*  
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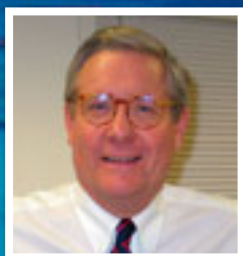
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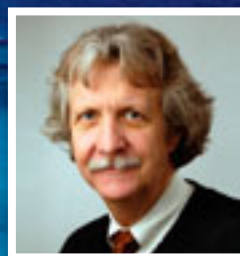
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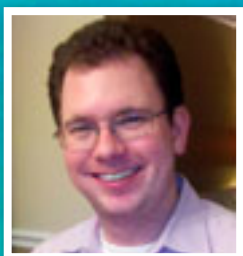
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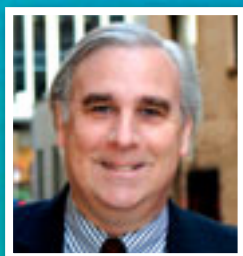
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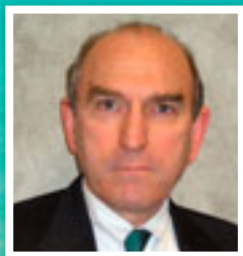


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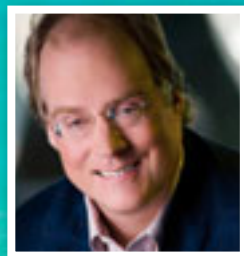


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own party. Liberal Republicans like Nelson Rockefeller and conservative Democrats like Richard Russell would prove to be surprisingly durable over the next half-century, yet their numbers would dwindle as party conflict became less a battle between North and South and more a battle between liberals and conservatives.

The Reagan presidency sped this process. By the time Reagan took office, the two party coalitions were in shambles. The GOP was badly damaged after the Watergate scandal, while Jimmy Carter's failures had splintered the Democrats. Reagan's presidency helped reenergize Republicans under a distinctly conservative banner, and it also helped heal the wounds on the Democratic side, as most could agree that, whatever their disagreements during the 1970s, they disliked Reagan.

Yet slow-moving trends don't account for the dramatic spike in political polarization over the last decade, with Bush and Obama. What else is happening?

A lot. Since 2000, we have seen the relatively stable foreign and domestic policy equilibriums of the postwar era collapse, forcing presidents—and the public—to pick one side or the other.

On the foreign policy side, Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower deserve credit for establishing the postwar settlement. Both parties adopted anti-Communist and internationalist postures. As the New Politics of the 1960s emerged, however, this consensus started to break down. The Vietnam-era antiwar left would come to power in the Democratic party, and the end of the Cold War would only enhance its position. While George H.W. Bush was able to build a bipartisan coalition to execute the relatively quick first Gulf war, his son struggled to do the same with the prolonged global war on terror. Indeed, Republicans (heirs of the anti-Communist internationalist consensus) were strongly supportive of his efforts, while Democrats (the descendants of the New Politics left) were strongly opposed.

As for domestic policy, the shift in the economic context is crucial. Between the end of World War II and

the turn of the century, the American economy averaged 3.5 percent real growth per year. This extraordinary performance enabled both sides to have their cake and eat it, too: Democrats could expand the social welfare state, Republicans could keep taxes low, military spending could grow, and all the while the federal budget deficit stayed within reasonable bounds. Indeed, both sides could dabble in policy realms usually considered the domain of the opposition: JFK proposed across-the-board tax cuts in 1963, while Richard Nixon adopted a sweeping expansion of Social Security in 1972.

Yet the great American growth machine began to sputter around the year 2000. The recession at the beginning of the decade was relatively shallow, but recovery from it was weak, with economic growth averaging just 2.6 percent from 2002 to 2007. The most recent recovery has been even weaker, with growth of just 2.5 percent in the last two years, and this after a much more precipitous decline.

It appears that the period of guns, butter, and low taxes is finished. Policymakers cannot promote ever greater domestic and military spending while simultaneously keeping taxes low and the deficit within reasonable limits. Hard choices must be made. And while President Obama will never admit it, he has chosen the path of least resistance for a liberal Democrat: a social welfare state that continues to expand, paid for by higher taxes. Indeed, Obamacare is the symbol of this approach. While the president and his congressional allies tried to shoehorn a \$3 trillion program into a \$1 trillion package, the public understood that they were massively expanding the welfare state now, with talk of paying for it through unspecified new taxes down the road. When faced with a choice between slowing the growth of the welfare state and raising taxes, Democrats chose the latter without hesitation.

It should come as no surprise, then, that President Obama has been so polarizing. For decades, Democrats have preferred greater social welfare to low taxes, so they are pleased with his policies. Republicans have preferred

the opposite, so they are horrified. And the GOP nominee for 2012, whoever that may be, will undoubtedly promise to undo the Obama innovations, cutting back on the welfare state to keep taxes in line with their historical averages. Accordingly, he will have strong support from Republican voters, while Democrats will view him as the devil incarnate. Without economic growth, there is no middle ground for the two sides to occupy together, so polarization is probably the new normal.

Two points are particularly salient with respect to 2012. First, this year is not going to be like 1980: Even though the economy is extremely weak, Obama will have the near-unanimous support of the Democratic party, while Carter suffered substantial defections. This suggests that the base vote for President Obama in November is probably somewhere around 45 to 47 percent, which has been the floor performance for the Democratic party over the last quarter-century.

Second, the independent vote will be determinative. Roughly 7 to 10 percent of the public in the dead center of the electorate is not anchored by strong partisan or ideological sentiment; these are the only true swing voters left in the country. According to the latest reading from Gallup, these "pure independents" give President Obama an approval rating of just 35 percent; their lack of strong roots in either party tradition, however, suggests that neither side should take their votes for granted.

Thus, the ideal Republican nominee is a candidate who can articulate the party's conservative worldview in a way that attracts the sliver of the electorate that is actually up for grabs. By the same token, a nominee who alienates the center is a danger in an electoral battle that will unify the Democrats around Obama. With a base vote of about 46 percent, Obama needs only to split the pure independents to be favored for a second term. As the battle for the Republican nomination continues, one question primary voters will have to ask themselves is: Which candidate can best articulate conservative principles and policies to attract, not repel, these independents? ♦

# The Coming Attack on Iran

*When an irresistible force meets an immovable object, something's gotta give.*

A Zelzal missile launched outside Qom, Iran, June 2011

BY TOD LINDBERG

**T**he United States and Iran have been on a collision course since the Iranian revolution in 1979, when elements of the newly proclaimed Islamic Republic took U.S. diplomats and Tehran embassy personnel hostage. U.S. relations with Iran have been bad ever since. The focus in recent years has been the Iranian program to develop a nuclear weapon, but the backdrop is Iran as a growing regional threat, not only to Israel and to U.S. and allied interests in the Persian Gulf region, but also to the many Sunni governments of the Gulf, which fear an increasingly powerful Shiite government in Tehran.

Meanwhile, Iran props up the Assad dictatorship in Syria, meddles in Lebanon through the Hezbollah militia,

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*Tod Lindberg, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and editor of Policy Review, is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

supports the radical Hamas regime in Gaza, and seeks to expand its divisive clout in neighboring Iraq, a task made easier by the decision of the Obama administration to end the deployment of U.S. combat forces there. The picture that emerges is of an Iran that is not so much *a* problem but *the* problem of the broader Middle East, eclipsing even the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

The Iranian nuclear program is now variously estimated to be less than a year to three years away from a bomb, notwithstanding the U.N. Security Council-approved sanctions on Tehran, as well as tougher sanctions the United States and Europe have imposed. Iran also has a robust missile program underway. The Israeli vice prime minister recently disclosed that Tehran is working on a missile with a range of 6,200 miles, enough to reach the United States. Israel and other potential Middle East targets are already within range of Iranian missiles, as is Europe: The potential threat from Iran has served as a mainstay in the case for the deployment of a missile defense system in Europe, as well as Israel's system. Add a murky plot

AP PHOTO / FARIS NEWS AGENCY / MOHAMMAD HASANZADEH

disclosed last year to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the United States by blowing up a Georgetown restaurant—a terrorist attack on American soil that would have killed many Americans—and you have a serious problem that is quickly growing worse.

What will the United States do in response? The situation in which the United States finds itself vis-à-vis Iran has acquired a logic of its own. And that logic points to U.S. military action against Iran within the next 12 months. It's not that attacking Iran is a good option; it's that all the other options are worse. Policymakers and commentators who think we will have other, pacific approaches are in my view mistaken. The only real hope is that the current much-expanded debate in the United States, Israel, and Europe over a military move against Iran—a marked change from just a few months ago, when even well-informed observers mostly dismissed the idea of a U.S. attack—will finally succeed in deterring Iran from pursuing its nuclear weapons program. The chances are slim.

Iranian persistence in pursuit of a nuclear weapon is the heart of the problem. Senior Obama administration officials arrived in 2009 thinking that a major part of the Iran problem was the lack of diplomacy in the George W. Bush administration. Obama's predecessor steadfastly rejected any opening toward Iran in the absence of evidence that Tehran was abandoning its nuclear weapons ambitions and complying with its obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions. The Obama administration accordingly reached out to Iran. The implicit terms of the bargain were that, in exchange for compliance, Iran could look forward to an end to its international isolation and the milder sanctions then in place, renewal of diplomatic relations with the United States, and an opportunity for integration into the world economy and the investment (particularly for development of its oil resources) such a reopening would bring.

The assumptions underlying this policy change present a view of the world and an attendant approach to policymaking that characterize the Obama administration. The first element is the conviction that U.S. hostility can produce only hostility in return. Whatever may have justified American hostility in the first place, the result over time could only be a vicious circle. As George Mason's Colin Dueck has noted, a consistent theme of Obama's foreign

policy has been accommodation—a gesture on the part of the United States toward its erstwhile adversaries in the hope of reciprocation and the emergence of a way out of the snare of mutual hostility.

A second element is the view of Iran as a rational actor. Put aside talk of “rogue states,” let alone the old “axis of evil”: The Iranian government would respond, in this view, to incentives positive and negative—carrots and sticks. If the cost of continuing its nuclear program is elevated and promises to keep mounting the longer Iran persists, and if the benefit from abandoning the program would be considerable in terms of reintegration into the world economy, one could reasonably expect Iran to give up its program.

The Obama administration's early overture to Iran was worth a try (though not to the point of turning its back on the Iranian “Green Revolution” movement that took to the streets following fraudulent elections in summer 2009). But Iran has not budged in the face of tightening sanctions, nor does it appear to value reentry into the world community as highly as the security gains it believes a nuclear weapon would provide. This does not necessarily make Iran “irrational”; it may simply mean that Iran's rulers calculate costs and benefits differently from Americans and Europeans.

In this context, the Western rumors of war in early 2012 could be construed in part as the last peaceable attempt to persuade Iran to change course. It appears to be failing. The Iranians want a nuke and appear to be pressing ahead as fast as they can.

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**Iran has not budged in the face of tightening sanctions, nor does it appear to value reentry into the world community as highly as the security gains it believes a nuclear weapon would provide. The Iranians want a nuke and appear to be pressing ahead as fast as they can.**

**T**he United States and its allies have said repeatedly that an Iranian nuclear weapon is “unacceptable.” One must ask: Why? There are two responses to this question. The first is that the Iranian regime is so dangerous, internally unstable, and ideologically inflamed that it might use a nuclear weapon if it had one, specifically against Israel. If not a missile, then a suitcase. If not directly, then indirectly through surrogates closer at hand.

What, then, about Israel's undeclared but widely acknowledged nuclear arsenal, which would surely be unleashed in reprisal? Perhaps there are those in Iran who would be prepared to pay such a price for the destruction of the Jewish state. Surely the rhetoric of the Holocaust-denying Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, calling for the annihilation of Israel is not reassuring. Iran

might well be deterred from using a nuclear weapon against Israel by the prospect of nuclear retaliation. But what are the chances that it won't be? Is one chance in five over the next 20 years an acceptable risk? Precise calculation of such a risk is impossible. Yet it may be worthwhile, even at considerable cost, to attempt to reduce the likelihood of a low-probability, high-impact event to zero at least for some period of time. This view is understandably more prevalent in Israel than among Americans—though if it's a suitcase that concerns you, Tel Aviv is not the only place about which you might be concerned.

A more common worry among American analysts is the possibility that if Iran gets the bomb, Saudi Arabia will want one as a deterrent. Perhaps Iran's neighbor Turkey will as well. From there, who knows? The fear is that Iran is the tipping point to a so-called polynuclear Middle East, which might easily extend into Central Asia. The stability of such a situation is highly open to question. If one state in the region goes on nuclear alert, all the other states will follow suit (as, likely, would the United States, Russia, and China). The regional nuclear arsenals in question will likely not be large, and each state will feel a certain "use 'em or lose 'em" pressure in fear of being attacked first. The chance of such fears leading to catastrophe—well, once again, it is incalculable, but it is not zero. Deterrence theory, even on the assumption that all of the states involved seek only to deter the others from attack, is not at all reassuring in such a scenario.

A polynuclear Middle East would be a potential second-order effect of an Iranian bomb. One could address it by trying to dissuade other states in the region from going nuclear through the extension of security guarantees. How credible they would be is another question. Would Saudi Arabia feel reassured under an American nuclear umbrella? A Pakistani nuclear umbrella? Would such an exercise in "extended deterrence" make sense to Americans?

Another undesirable second-order effect would be a nuclear-armed Iran's throwing its weight around regionally. The Iranian government's pernicious influence already extends well beyond its own people. An Iran that

feels more secure, indeed immune from attack, would likely increase its demands on its neighbors. During the Cold War, the term "Finlandization" described a nominally independent state's devolution under pressure to a near-satrapy of the Soviet Union. How well would the Gulf states bear up under pressure from a nuclear-armed Iran? In 2010, certainly in response to the Iranian threat, the United States began to double the size of its naval base in tiny Bahrain, home to the 5th Fleet. How welcome a presence will the United States be if Iran has the bomb and "uses" it to coerce other states in the region?

The United States (and Israel) could still, presumably, try to deter Iran both from the actual use of a nuclear weapon and from its use as an instrument of coercive diplomacy. Articles and study groups have explored the possibility of living with a nuclear Iran. Unfortunately, they generally flow from the premise that the United States must seem strong and resolute to Iran. Exactly how strong and resolute the United States and its allies will seem once Iran, in defiance of the top foreign policy priority of the United States and its allies, has tested a nuclear



*The USS Comstock and USS Green Bay in the Strait of Hormuz*

weapon is a question that answers itself. There is already a broad perception in the Middle East, shared by Israel and its Sunni neighbors—whose intelligence services and senior officials seem to get along rather well on matters in their mutual interest—that U.S. influence in the region is declining. They suspect this is a matter of deliberate U.S. policy. Of course, not only in the Middle East now but also in other places at other times, U.S. influence has appeared to many to be on the wane until the United States has acted emphatically to demonstrate otherwise. The United States could do so now by preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. But without question, Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapon would mark the effective end of U.S. credibility in the region (at least until the United States did something even more dramatic to reassert it).

As recently as a year ago, Israelis usually framed their concern about a nuclear Iran in terms of these two second-order effects: a neighborhood full of nukes and an emboldened Iran. It seemed to me then that there was a sense of hesitation on their part, almost embarrassment, about

bringing up what was really foremost in their minds, which is the existential threat they believe an Iranian nuclear weapon poses to them. This was problematic, as I'm not sure a war over second-order effects is worth risking if the immediate danger of an Iranian nuclear weapon isn't self-evident.

By now, however, Israelis have found the—is it courage? forthrightness?—to speak up about the existential danger they personally perceive. I don't think an Iranian nuclear weapon poses an existential danger to the United States or most of the rest of our allies. Iran is not Nazi Germany. But one can hardly fault Israelis for taking Iran personally. And the fact that an Iranian nuclear weapon is more dangerous to Israel than to any other American ally does not mean Iran is or should be exclusively an Israeli problem. Iran, at this moment, may in fact be relatively weak, not strong, as the former head of Mossad, Efraim Halevy, contends. If the Iran-backed Assad regime in Syria collapses, it will be a serious blow to Iran's position. But an Iranian nuclear weapon would represent a substantial increase in the power of a dangerous regime. That's a matter the United States and its allies around the world cannot ignore and must not acquiesce in.

If you say something is unacceptable, you are either bluffing or are obliged to do what you can to stop it. Increasingly tight sanctions have not worked, nor blandishments. Western capitals have come round to interpreting Iranian offers to talk further on the subject, as Iran recently proposed, as playing for time while the weapons program enters a decisive stage. In fact, the recent experience of India and Pakistan going nuclear may suggest to Tehran that the quickest way out from under sanctions is nothing other than a nuclear test: Iran will be more powerful, and the world will have to adjust. What happens, then, when sanctions have not worked as time is running out?

Both the United States and Israel believe they have viable military options against Iran. Neither promises to be capable of destroying the Iranian nuclear program altogether. Degrading the program substantially, however, and delaying it potentially for years are within the realm of practical achievability. Obviously, the United States has vastly more military resources it could bring to bear on the task than does Israel. But Israel needs nothing material from the United States in order to attack Iran, nor does it need the permission of the United States.

Of course, the United States may be able to punish Israel for striking Iran against the wishes of the United States. We could, potentially, reduce military assistance to Israel, deny access to parts for weapons systems, scale back

military and intelligence cooperation, or cease to protect Israel at the United Nations Security Council as the inevitable resolution condemning the attack comes forward. We could also, in advance, threaten Israel with any and all of these and other consequences. It would be surprising if the United States were not currently engaged in a policy of dual containment or "pivotal deterrence": We promise Israel that we will dissuade Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon while threatening Israel with abandonment if it acts on its own. Israel would have to be prepared to pay a price for taking military action, and it might be high.

But if Israel perceives a truly existential threat from the Iranian nuclear program, as it appears it does, then Israel may be willing to pay a very high price indeed and at the moment of truth, tell the United States as much. (Our subject here is not U.S. domestic politics, so we will bracket and set aside the question of the viability of the U.S. making good on its threat to punish Israel.) At some point—perhaps sooner, but at the latest as Israel's F-16s are, so to speak, revving on the tarmac—the United States must confront a very basic question: If someone is going to strike Iran, who should that be?

Sheerly from the point of view of military effectiveness, the answer must involve the United States. The Israelis know this. Our allies know this. We know it. And they know that we know, etc. Iran, once struck, will certainly want to respond. But even if the strike comes solely from Israel, will Iran confine its response to action against Israel? If not, then we are likely to find at a minimum our vital interests placed at risk. We would have to respond militarily to any attempt to, for example, shut down the Strait of Hormuz, to say nothing of an attack on a U.S. warship.

These considerations militate in favor of a U.S. decision to attack Iran should sanctions fail to dissuade the Iranians from further pursuit of a nuclear weapon. So does the fact that we already seem to have edged into a state of covert bellicosity with the Iranian government: dead scientists, mysterious explosions, Stuxnet. So does the regrettable fact that the threat of military force has entered our diplomacy only very recently; this has permitted the Iranians to dismiss the credibility of a military option, paradoxically increasing the likelihood of its necessity if we mean what we say when we say "unacceptable."

Of course Israel would rather see the United States attack Iran than do so on its own, and not only for reasons of military effectiveness. But if an unattacked Iran is a nuclear-armed Iran, the latter would amount to a crippling failure of U.S. policy (always an option, I suppose). If an attack takes place and the United States is uninvolved, we are nevertheless unlikely to avoid involvement in the ensuing conflict. Our collision with Iran is imminent. ♦

# Affirmative Disaster

*A Duke study documents the harm racial preferences in college admissions can do to the intended beneficiaries.*

BY HEATHER MAC DONALD

**A** growing body of empirical evidence is undermining the claim that racial preferences in college benefit their recipients. Students who are admitted to schools for which they are inadequately prepared in fact learn less than they would in a student body that matches their own academic level. As an ongoing controversy at Duke University demonstrates, however, such pesky details may have no effect on the longevity of the preference regime.

Duke admits black students with SAT scores on average over one standard deviation below those of whites and Asians (blacks' combined math and verbal SATs are 1275; whites' are 1416, and Asians', 1457). Not surprisingly, blacks' grades in their first semester are significantly lower than those of other ethnic groups, but by senior year, the difference between black and white students' grades has shrunk almost 50 percent. This convergence in GPA might seem to validate preferential admissions by suggesting that Duke identifies minority students with untapped academic potential who will narrow the gap with their white and Asian peers over their college careers.

Now three Duke researchers have demonstrated that such catching-up is illusory. Blacks improve their GPAs because they switch disproportionately out of more demanding science and economics majors into the

humanities and soft social sciences, which grade much more liberally and require less work. If black students stayed in the sciences at the same rate as whites, there would be no convergence in GPAs. And even after their exodus from the sciences, blacks don't improve their class standing in their four years of college.

This study, by economics professor Peter Arcidiacono, sociology professor Ken Spenner, and economics graduate student Esteban Aucejo,

has major implications for the nationwide effort to increase the number of minority scientists. The federal government alone has spent billions of dollars of taxpayers' money trying to boost minority participation in science; racial preferences play a key role in almost all college science initiatives. The Arcidiacono paper suggests that admitting aspiring minority scientists to schools where they are less prepared than their peers is counterproductive.

The most surprising finding of the study is that, of incoming students who reported a major, more than 76 percent of black male freshmen at Duke intended to

major in the hard sciences or economics, higher even than the percentage of white male freshmen who anticipated such majors. But more than half of those would-be black science majors switched track in the course of their studies, while less than 8 percent of white males did, so that by senior year, only 35 percent of black males graduated with a science or economics degree, while more than 63 percent of white males did. Had those minority students who gave up their science aspirations taken Introductory Chemistry among students with similar levels of academic preparation, they would more likely have continued with their



*Washington Duke*

*Heather Mac Donald is a contributing editor to the Manhattan Institute's City Journal.*

original course of study, as the unmatched record of historically black colleges in graduating science majors suggests. Instead, finding themselves in classrooms pitched at a more advanced level of math or science than they have yet mastered, preference recipients may conclude that they are not cut out for quantitative fields—or, equally likely, that the classroom “climate” is racist—whereas the problem may just be that they have not yet laid the foundations for more advanced work.

Attrition from a hard science major was wholly accounted for in the paper’s statistical models by a freshman’s level of academic qualifications; race was irrelevant. While science majors had SATs that were 50 points higher than students in the humanities in general, students who had started out in science and then switched had SATs that were 70 points lower than those of science majors. Any student in a class that assumes knowledge of advanced calculus is likely to drop out if he has not yet mastered basic calculus.

**T**he Duke paper, whose methodology is watertight, deserves widespread attention among educators and policymakers. An amicus brief seeking Supreme Court review of racial preferences at the University of Texas (in a case called *Fisher v. Texas*) has brought the paper to the Court’s attention. Predictably, however, a number of black students, alumni, and professors have portrayed the research as a personal assault. Members of Duke’s Black Student Alliance held a silent vigil outside the school’s Martin Luther King Day celebration in protest of the paper and handed out fliers titled “Duke: A Hostile Environment for Its Black Students?” In an email to the state NAACP, the BSA called the paper “hurtful and alienating” and accused its authors of lacking “a genuine concern for proactively furthering the well-being of the black community.”

Naturally, the BSA has leveraged its protest into demands on the Duke administration for more black faculty and administrators and for more funding of black-themed programs. A Duke professor of English, women’s studies, and law, Karla Holloway, tweeted that the study “lacks academic rigor”—this women’s studies professor neglected to specify which of its algorithms she found flawed—and that it “re-opens old racial wounds.” A senior research scholar, Tim Tyson, wrote in an op-ed that the paper was a “political tract disguised as scholarly inquiry,” representing a “crusade to reduce the numbers of black students at

elite institutions.” (Both Tyson and Holloway were active in the witch hunt against the three Duke lacrosse players who were falsely accused in 2006 of raping a black stripper.) A group of recent black Duke graduates called on the study’s authors to “stop their attack on students of color.”

To the extent that these critics tried to address the paper’s arguments, they missed its gist entirely. The Duke alumni alleged that black students “shy away” from “so-called ‘difficult’ majors” because they’ve been told all their lives that they are “inferior”—overlooking the fact that Duke’s black students “shied away” from the sciences only *after* starting out in those fields. Tyson claimed that black students choose the humanities over the sciences because they “come from cultural and intellectual traditions different than—not less than—most white students at Duke”—again, ignoring the fact that black students overwhelmingly intend to major in the sciences when they arrive at Duke. An essay by a professor of critical culture, gender, and race studies at Washington State University faulted the researchers for not exploring the “countless” ways in which “racism” denies black high school students equal access to SAT prep and Advanced Placement courses. But the focus of the major-

switching paper was on what happened to minority students *after* they arrived at Duke, not before. Moreover, the paper did note that the racial difference in academic preparation is “not surprising, given disparities in resources between black and white families.”

The study’s critics also asserted that the intellectual demands of humanities and science majors are indistinguishable. Applying Ferdinand de Saussure (a 19th-century Swiss linguist invoked today only in literature classes) to *The Matrix*, it was claimed, is as challenging as mastering the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. Here, too, the protesters ignored the paper’s empirical evidence: Seniors in the hard sciences have lower grades than *freshmen* in humanities and social sciences, even though the SATs of science majors are on average higher than those of humanities majors. For blacks, the disparity in grading is even greater. Black freshmen get higher grades in the humanities and social sciences than freshmen of all races get in the hard sciences, though black students’ test scores and overall grades are significantly lower than other students’. As for the coursework demands in the various fields, it is students themselves who report spending 50 percent more time studying for the hard

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**Duke’s top bureaucrats left the authors twisting in the wind. In an open letter to the campus, provost Peter Lange declared: ‘We understand how the conclusions of the research paper can be interpreted in ways that reinforce negative stereotypes.’**

sciences, and who rate those courses as more difficult than the humanities and the social sciences.

In a different world, the Duke administration might have tried to dispel some of the distortions of the Arcidiacono paper, given the authors' patent lack of invidious intent and the rigor of their work. Instead, Duke's top bureaucrats left the authors twisting in the wind. In an open letter to the campus, provost Peter Lange and a passel of deanlings declared: "We understand how the conclusions of the research paper can be interpreted in ways that reinforce negative stereotypes." It is hard to imagine a more hypocritical utterance. To the extent that the paper reinforces "negative stereotypes," it does so by describing the effects of Duke's policy of admitting black students with lower academic qualifications than whites and Asians. It is Duke's predilection for treating black students as a group whose race trumps their individual academic records that constitutes "stereotyping," not the authors' analysis of the consequences of that group thinking. (Campus spokesman Michael Schoenfeld ignored a request to specify the "negative stereotypes" that the paper might reinforce.)

But perhaps a concession to black anger had to be made to clear some space for a defense of the Arcidiacono paper? Not a chance. The deanlets and provosts followed their

invocation of "negative stereotypes" with an anodyne generalization about academic freedom: "At the same time, our goal of academic success for all should not inhibit research and discussion to clarify important issues of academic choice and achievement." In other words, don't blame us for what these wacky professors might say.

The bureaucrats went on to explain the origins of the student database which the professors had used for their study, as if the very gathering of information had been called into question by the paper. (The Duke data repository was a response to William Bowen and Derek Bok's 1999 study of college affirmative action, *The Shape of the River*, which had exposed the low grades of preference beneficiaries nationwide; the Duke data project was intended to identify and help resolve similar problems of underachievement locally. In other words, the Arcidiacono paper was squarely within the mandate of the Duke student database.) Duke has worked to create an "empowering, safe, and stigma-free environment" for students to get help in science, the administrators added, implicitly acknowledging that the administration has known for years about minority students' struggles with science. (As for the nauseating women's studies' rhetoric about the need for "safe spaces" on campus, the idea that Duke is anything other than the

## Rebuild Our Infrastructure to Jump-Start Our Economy

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

This year we've got a fighting chance to get our economy moving, get Americans working, and tackle long-overdue projects to modernize crumbling infrastructure. Nearly everyone agrees that making fiscally responsible investments in our transportation and infrastructure is a legitimate function of government—and that it can pave the way for stronger economic growth and job creation. Congress must push through the gridlock that has contributed to our idling economy and move on core transportation bills—now.

Though belated, we're off to a good start. After more than four years of delays and 23 stopgap measures, Congress finally passed a long-term reauthorization for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). At last, the FAA will have the resources to modernize our air traffic control system and repair America's airports. This will ease

delays, conserve fuel, improve the flow of commerce, create jobs, and save lives.

Lawmakers must also pass legislation to maintain investment in our roads, bridges, and transit systems. SAFETEA-LU, the law that sets surface transportation policies and funding, expired more than two years ago. To bridge the gaps, Congress has passed eight short-term extensions, perpetuating a cycle of uncertainty that has been a major drag on our economy.

The federal government contributes 45% of highway and transportation investments around the country, and public and private funding at the local level makes up the balance. States and communities are justifiably hesitant to put up the cash for new projects without assurance that the federal government will kick in its share for more than 90 days. So projects have stopped. Workers have been laid off. Economic output has sputtered. All the while, our roads and bridges fall further into disrepair, and our transit fleets and systems continue to age.

Congress can break that cycle by

passing a multiyear reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU—and with the latest short-term extension set to run out in March, lawmakers have got to move quickly. The bill should consolidate programs, eliminate mandates, and cut red tape and bureaucracy. It should maintain current funding levels, while prioritizing resources for critical projects and shrewdly leveraging public funds to attract private investment.

By making smart infrastructure investments, we could achieve nearly \$1 trillion in unrealized economic potential and create millions of jobs. As long-term transportation legislation is debated in the House and Senate, the U.S. Chamber urges lawmakers to set aside politics, resolve differences, pass legislation, and send it to the president for his signature—and fast. We've got an economy to jump-start.



100 Years Standing Up for American Enterprise  
**U.S. Chamber of Commerce**

cushiest, most supportive, most compassionate environment ever experienced by late adolescents is preposterous. The often-observed self-segregation of minority students at elite campuses into “safe,” race-themed “spaces” results, in large part, from preferential admissions and the resulting disparities in academic skills.)

Finally, as is de rigueur in all such flaps over “diversity,” the administration pledged to try even harder to be sensitive to Duke’s black students. “We welcome the call to action. Many people have been working for a long time to create a positive climate for African-American students. We look forward to ongoing conversations with BSA and others about ways that we can improve,” Schoenfeld penitently announced. Of course, as Schoenfeld meekly hints, Duke has been engaged in color-coded programming and funding for decades, pouring money into, to name just a few endeavors, a black student center, a black student recruiting weekend, and such bureaucratic sinecures as a vice provost for faculty diversity and faculty development and an associate vice provost for academic diversity, who, along with the faculty diversity task force and faculty diversity standing committee, ride herd over departmental hiring and monitor the progress of the 2003 10-point Faculty Diversity Initiative, which followed upon the previous 10-year Black Faculty Strategic Initiative. But no college administration in recent history has ever said to whining students of *any* race or gender: “Are you joking? We’ve kowtowed to your demands long enough, now go study!” And why should the burgeoning student services bureaucracy indulge in such honesty, for it depends on just such melodramatic displays of grievance for its very existence.

**T**he BSA may have misunderstood the paper’s argument, but it was right about one thing: The Duke administration had completely ducked the substance of the study. Referring to the bureaucrats’ open letter, the BSA’s executive vice president told the campus newspaper: “They didn’t mention the words ‘race,’ ‘black’ or the phrase ‘affirmative action’ in their response, and we feel that this was a deliberate attempt to avoid directly addressing the issues at hand.” No kidding. The Duke hierarchy uttered not a word on the question whether the school’s black students were dropping out of the sciences because of their relative lack of preparation. It was as if Arcidiacono, Spenner, and Aucejo had committed a social transgression so embarrassing that the only polite thing to do was to ignore it.

The uproar over the major-switching paper has had its intended effect: Lead author Arcidiacono may be browbeaten out of affirmative action research. “Honestly,

I’m not sure how much further I want to go with this line of inquiry,” he says. “I may have been naïve to think I could do this work.” Arcidiacono’s other scholarly focus, applied econometrics, has the distinct advantage that “no one gets upset” with you, he says. Moreover, economists understand the concept of distribution—to talk about average black academic preparation, for example, does not mean that there are no black students superbly qualified to study engineering and chemistry.

A handful of scholars have been documenting the negative consequences of so-called “academic mismatch,” but the scourging of Arcidiacono and his fellow authors cannot encourage many others to enter the fray. Nevertheless, the evidence is already strong that preferences are contributing to the undereducation of minorities. In 2005, UCLA law professor Richard Sander demonstrated that blacks admitted to law schools because of their race end up overwhelmingly in the lowest quarter of their class and have much greater difficulties passing the bar than students admitted on their merits. A working paper by Sander and UCLA statistician Roger Bolus extends the Arcidiacono analysis of students at Duke to a comparative setting: Science students with credentials more than one standard deviation below their peers’ are half as likely to graduate with science degrees as students with similar qualifications attending schools where their academic preparation matches their peers’.

As such findings mount, the conclusion will become inescapable: College leaders who continue to embrace affirmative action do so simply to flatter their own egos, so that they can gaze upon their “diverse” realm and bask in their noblesse oblige. Faced with the Arcidiacono analysis and other research like it, the responsible thing for Duke administrators to do would be to admit all students on the same basis, so that all would stand an equal chance of success in the most challenging majors. Getting rid of racial preferences would reduce Duke’s black population, now 10 percent of the student body, by half, but the half that remained would be fully competitive with their peers. Admittedly, such a drop in the black student census would trigger charges that Duke was hostile to minorities. And unless other schools reformed their own admissions policies, the students whom Duke would have admitted through racial preference would simply go to other elite institutions, where they would be just as handicapped by deficiencies in their academic preparation. All the more imperative, then, to air the mismatch research as widely as possible. But until it becomes possible to discuss the effects of preferences without being accused of racial animus, it may be impossible to dislodge academic affirmative action, no matter how discredited its purported justifications. ♦

# Authoritarian Chic

*The Chinese economic model is nothing for Westerners to envy—or emulate. Its successes have come from emulating the West.*

BY YING MA

‘W’ e have no plan” and “we are unable to act” have become common refrains among influential Americans who grumble about the decline of U.S. power in the 21st century. On both fronts, they lament, China is doing better. From President Barack Obama to *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman to trade union leader Andy Stern, prominent figures who favor a bigger government in America not only envy China’s state-directed grand plans and its one-party system’s ability to make quick decisions, they also accuse small-government adherents of blindly worshipping the free market, contributing to political polarization, and rejecting the reforms necessary to meet the grave challenges that America faces.

But many U.S. observers in the grip of Chinese authoritarian chic forget that China’s vast economic expansion resulted from the introduction of more economic freedom, not less. They also fail to understand that even after decades of reform, endemic state intervention continues to impose massive inefficiencies on the Chinese economy and prevent the realization of the market’s full potential. In short, China’s experience, both past and present, does not provide support for those who clamor for a more expansive government in the United States.

More than 30 years ago, when China began to dismantle its command economy, liberalization introduced market prices, allowed a return to household farming from collectivization, created Special Economic Zones in coastal areas that attracted foreign investment and promoted exports,

*Ying Ma is a policy adviser at the Heartland Institute and the author of Chinese Girl in the Ghetto.*

exposed state-owned factory production to profit incentives, and opened up the market to private firms and entities.

Throughout the 1980s, Chinese citizens began to engage in the most basic economic activities, long prohibited. For the first time, many could buy food on the open market rather than using government-rationed food stamps; set up enterprises rather than stay permanently confined to the dreariness of government-assigned employment; and bask in the new goods, knowledge, and influences flowing in

from the outside world rather than stare glumly at empty shelves in department stores.

These changes took place not because the Chinese leadership decreed them, but because reformers within the government fought for them, and because even when Beijing repeatedly sought to reimpose state control, a freer marketplace asserted its logic and delivered better results.

As economist Barry Naughton wrote in *Growing Out of the Plan: Chinese*

*Economic Reform, 1978-1993*, the overall pattern of Chinese economic reform in the early years “emerged from the interaction between government policy and the often unforeseen consequences of economic change.”

Through periods of reform and retrenchment, China fitfully opened up its economy domestically and to the world. In the 1990s, the country abolished or further liberalized price controls for a wide range of products, embarked on the privatization of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and implemented banking reform. In December 2001, after 15 years of painful negotiations and solemn commitments to further liberalization, China acceded to the World Trade Organization. For that effort, the *Economist* recounted 10 years later, China “had to relax over 7,000 tariffs, quotas, and other trade barriers.”

The results of China’s epic march toward a freer market have been sweeping. Over the past 30-plus years,



*Police arrest workers protesting ‘bullying’ bosses in Shenzhen.*

China's economy has grown at an annual average of nearly 10 percent. More than 500 million Chinese citizens have been lifted out of poverty. In 2010, the country surpassed Japan as the second-largest economy in the world, and it is expected by the International Monetary Fund to overtake the U.S. economy as the world's largest in 2016.

China's groupies in the West like to attribute this astounding economic success to the Chinese leadership and frequently describe Beijing's economic guidance as "astute." Often, they marvel—and gripe in the same breath—that Beijing is planning for long-term national greatness while Washington bickers over temporary fixes. In truth, though Chinese rulers deserve credit for overseeing their country's economic miracle, the heavy hand of the state that they wield remains a serious hindrance to continued reform.

**A**fter three decades of economic reform, the state sector in China has shrunk but continues to maintain a major presence in the marketplace. The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC), a congressional commission, noted in its 2011 annual report that SOEs and entities directly or indirectly controlled by the state still accounted for approximately 50 percent of China's GDP.

The prominence of the state reflects Chinese leaders' keen interest in pursuing economic growth without relinquishing the levers of economic control. In particular, although Beijing allowed most of the country's small and medium SOEs to privatize or close, it has retained the large companies, especially in industries it considers vital. These include the "strategic" industries that the state seeks to own or wholly control, such as national defense, electric power generation and grids, petroleum and petrochemicals, telecommunications, coal, civil aviation, and shipping; "pillar" industries in which the state must maintain a strong position, such as equipment manufacturing, autos, information technology, construction, iron and steel, nonferrous metals, chemicals, and surveying and design; and other industries such as banking and insurance.

As a result of the consolidation process, China is now home to mammoth state firms that exert breathtaking market power and boast staggering wealth. In 2011, 57 Chinese mainland companies made the Fortune Global 500 list, and of those, only 6 were less than 50 percent state-owned. As of June 2011, state-owned firms made up 80 percent of China's domestic stock market capitalization. To date, the state-owned Agricultural Bank of China holds the world title for the largest initial public offering

in history with its \$22.1 billion dual listing in Hong Kong and Shanghai in 2010. The Industrial & Commercial Bank of China, another state bank, comes in a close second with a \$21.9 billion IPO in 2006.

Not surprisingly, corporate wealth and state power are closely intertwined in this story. China's largest SOEs benefit from a wide range of government preferences, including preferred access to bank capital, heavy tax subsidies, cash injections in times of financial trouble, and more favorable treatment by regulators than their nonstate competitors. Although many of China's largest SOEs have been converted into corporations, can respond readily to market forces, and are publicly listed on domestic and foreign stock exchanges, they remain political entities subject to political control. In this context, SOEs are given political ranks

reflecting their size and importance. For instance, the largest and most powerful central SOEs carry the rank of ministries and do not need to take orders from political entities of lesser rank, such as city governments. In addition, though top executives of state conglomerates jockey for power by demonstrating corporate success, they owe their appointments and promotions to the Communist party apparatus.

State backing, however, is not necessarily an indication of success. Over the past three decades, the private sector has emerged as

the most vibrant part of China's economy, and serves as the largest source of growth for the country's export sector. The state sector is far less efficient. According to a report issued by the Congressional Research Service in December 2009, by some estimates, over half of China's SOEs lose money and must be propped up by subsidies that flow mainly from state banks. Though various centrally owned SOE behemoths rake in impressive profits, in part because of the monopoly status and handouts granted to them by the state, thousands of smaller SOEs that are locally or provincially owned are plagued by poor performance, bad management, cronyism, and corruption enabled by unseemly ties to government officials in their respective regions.

When the global financial crisis hit in 2008, the state roared back into the Chinese economy. The government aggressively intervened in economic activities, favored state firms over private companies, and expanded into the private sector.

To battle the financial crisis, China pushed out a massive \$586 billion stimulus package (12.5 percent

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**China's groupies in the West like to attribute its astounding economic success to the political leadership and frequently describe Beijing's economic guidance as 'astute.' In truth, the heavy hand of the state remains a serious hindrance.**

of China's 2008 GDP) that was heavily dedicated to infrastructure projects, and unleashed a torrent of \$2.7 trillion in new loans through its state banks in 2009 and 2010. Many Westerners were impressed by how quickly China acted to confront a worldwide crisis. The noted economist Andy Xie has written, however, that the "growth in the past three years has packed too much fat, dependent as it was on a property bubble and excessively expensive government projects. Throwing money around to create GDP is just not sustainable."

Additionally, the government's stimulus funds and bank loans significantly benefited SOEs over the private sector. According to the Chinese state media, of the \$1.4 trillion in bank loans issued in 2009 alone, 85 percent went to SOEs.

Meanwhile, SOEs, taking advantage of their size and government largesse, have made a dramatic push into the private sector. Notably, in 2009, state-owned China National Cereals Group invested in Mengniu Dairy, a private company, in the largest-ever deal in the Chinese food industry. An essay on the website of the government organ that oversees centrally owned SOEs has described the transaction as an example of "the big helping the small" and "free love" between the two companies involved. To critics fearful of the unfair advantages enjoyed by the state sector, the transaction appeared more like an example of "the big eating the small" and of the state advancing at the cost of the private sector.

Many Chinese citizens—from investigative journalists who care about clean government, to small and medium enterprises squeezed for credit, to liberal economists concerned about long-term growth—have loudly criticized the outsized role of the state and its encroachments on the economy. Technically, the expanding wealth of large state firms in China belongs to the people, but no Chinese citizen would mistake the high-flying valuations of these companies for their personal financial portfolio. As prominent Americans use the China example to call for higher U.S. government spending or more swift government action, Chinese citizens have offered a distinctly different view.

For instance, Caixin Media, a premier source of financial and business news, has repeatedly zeroed in on

the inefficiencies, corruption, and injustice of the state's power and interference in the economy. Most notably, Caixin has tirelessly covered the debacles that plague China's high-speed rail system, once the very emblem of the authoritarian regime's ability to plan long-term and act quickly. Yet even before two high-speed trains shattered that myth by colliding last July, killing 40 passengers and injuring 191, Caixin reporters were busy exposing the Railway Ministry's cost overruns, astronomical debt, railcar quality issues, corruption among top officials, and opaque practices for contract bidding and tendering. Early last year, Caixin reported that government spending on high-speed rail grew from \$33 billion in 2007 to more than \$111 billion in just four years. Yet with all that money sloshing around, the Railway Ministry in 2010 oversaw the awarding of up

to 80 percent of all high-speed rail projects to just two state-owned contractors.

Wang Shuo, managing editor of Caixin, remarked at a recent panel discussion that he was a bit baffled by Americans' eagerness to trash their own model of market capitalism to admire a much more state-centric approach. After all, Wang later added, state capitalism is merely a step on the way to crony capitalism.

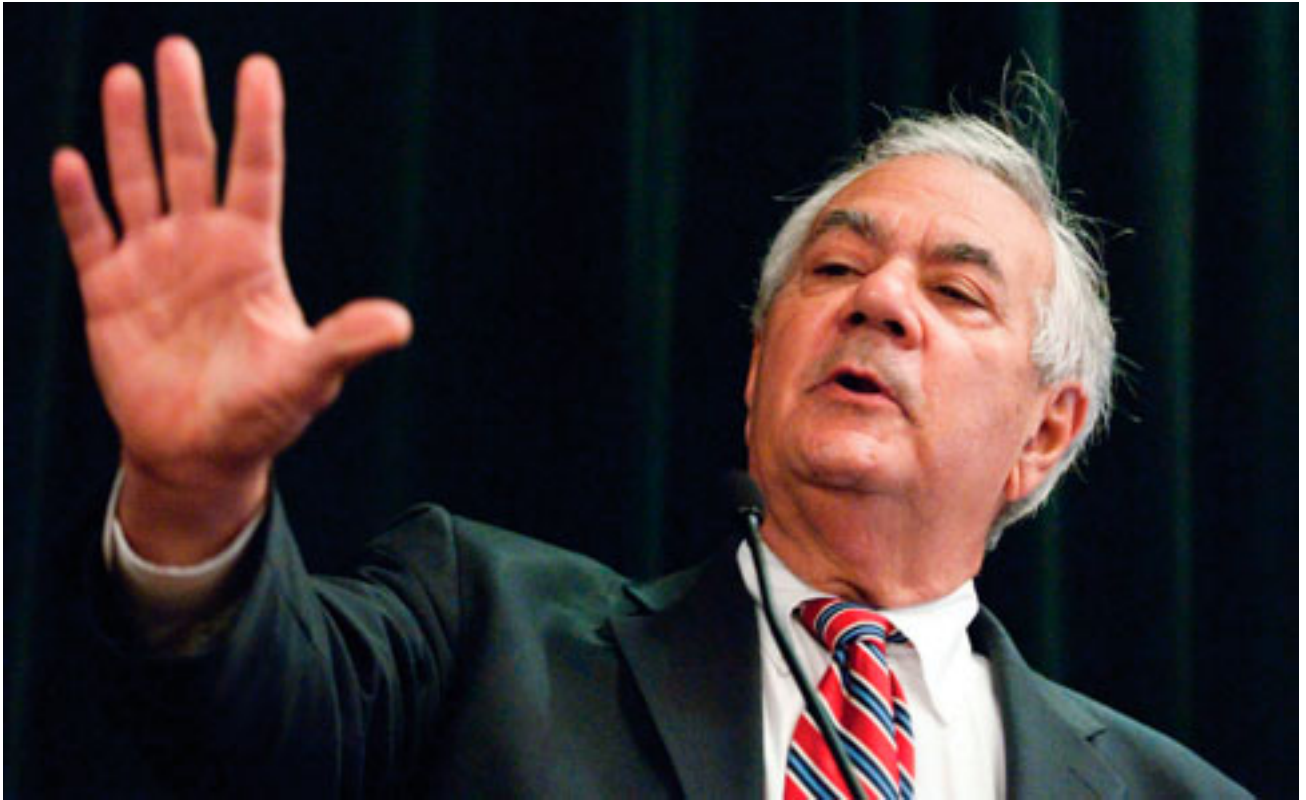
Wang might be right, but the Chinese state isn't about to relinquish its control of

the state sector. As a Shanghai-based economics professor explained, the levers of economic control are fundamentally tied to the Communist party's political control. Even in the economic realm, which has become much more freewheeling than the political realm, the prominence of the state reflects the party's excessive concentration of power and imposes severe costs, undermines public welfare, and prevents further liberalization.

By contrast, the free market has delivered breathtaking success to China's economy, and the battle for its continued expansion rages on. China's admirers in America can continue to envy—and panic about—China's rise while complaining that the United States has no plan and cannot act quickly, but they should remember that the U.S. political process, playing out this year in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Florida, and the rest, offers a ready solution of its own: Make Barack Obama a one-term president and replace him with a pro-growth, free-market believer in November 2012. Most likely, big-government types would rather rail against political gridlock than support this plan. ♦



Villagers rally against government corruption in south China.



Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), September 20, 2011

# Another Fine Mess

*The economic costs of ignorance* BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

Defending himself against charges of corrupting the youth of Athens, Socrates told a story. Chaerephon, one of Socrates' friends, once visited the Oracle at Delphi and asked, "Is anyone wiser than Socrates?" The reply was unequivocal: "There is none." The philosopher was puzzled. All he knew for sure was that his knowledge was limited. How, then, could he be judged the wisest man alive? What Socrates concluded was that it was his very understanding of his own ignorance which made him wiser than most men.

"In my investigation in the service of the god I found that those who had

**Engineering the Financial Crisis**  
*Systemic Risk and the Failure of Regulation*  
by Jeffrey Friedman & Wladimir Kraus  
Pennsylvania, 224 pp., \$45

the highest reputation were nearly the most deficient," Socrates said at his trial, "while those who were thought to be inferior were more knowledgeable." The truly wise man, Socrates was saying, knows just how shallow and worthless his wisdom is.

Human beings expend a tremendous amount of energy papering over the inconvenient fact of our ignorance. Since there is no way to run a controlled experiment with history—it only happens once—we have no certain grasp of socioeconomic causation. Nor do we have any way of knowing what

will happen in the future. If we did, we would not be so consistently surprised. We are left, instead, with endlessly divergent interpretations of reality and differing theories of how to preserve or improve it. And each time we act, we set into motion a series of events that we can neither control nor predict.

Consider the financial crisis that paralyzed the world economy in the fall of 2008. Every economist has his own idea of what caused the crisis, why the recession has been so deep, and what ought to be done to solve the problem. Every one of these ideas is informed by a particular economist's cultural and political biases, which is why the notion that the crisis was a consequence of "market fundamentalism" is so widespread.

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Matthew Continetti is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD and editor in chief of the Washington Free Beacon.

Here come Jeffrey Friedman, a lecturer in political theory at the University of Texas, and Wladimir Kraus, a doctoral candidate in economics at the Université d'Aix-Marseille, to correct that misimpression. Their book is a bucket of ice water thrown in the faces of those professional economists who ascribe the crisis to market failure. They remind the reader that, contrary to what Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman may say, the pre-crisis banking sector and trade in mortgage-backed securities was far from "deregulated."

Banks are governed by the capital-adequacy standards contained in the international Basel Accords. Securities receive grades from a legally protected oligopoly of credit rating firms. Mark-to-market accounting standards can inspire bank runs and reduced lending when the prices of investments suddenly plunge. All of these rules, and many others, interact in a complex and ceaseless manner with economic and governmental agents. *Laissez-faire* it ain't.

When a liberal economist blames "deregulation" for the crisis, he is really saying that the crisis could have been prevented if only we had followed the policies he is now recommending in hindsight. One of the pleasures of this book is the directness with which Friedman and Kraus debunk such myths. Were executive bonuses and greed behind the meltdown? "A banker trying to maximize his or her revenue, heedless of risk, so as to maximize his or her performance compensation, *never* would have purchased agency bonds or triple-A bonds instead of bonds with higher coupons due to lower ratings. Yet that is what commercial bankers did."

What about the shadow banking system of hedge funds and unregulated derivatives? Investment banks alone, the authors point out, could not have been responsible for a panic in commercial banking. Nor was it the derivatives themselves that shocked the system, but defaults in the sub-prime mortgages those derivatives were meant to insure.

Too big to fail? Well, moral hazard may cause trouble down the road. But

remember, prior to the TARP bailout, there was no explicit guarantee that the government would rescue collapsing financial institutions. Bankers had to live with the possibility that they might suffer the fate of Lehman Brothers. Which is why they invested so heavily in highly rated securities.

Another fashion in economics is to attribute behavior to "irrationality," as though we are all nutjobs trucking and bartering aluminum foil hats. Friedman and Kraus won't stand for it:

Only if we conflate rationality with the possession of perfect information, and then conflate the possession of perfect information with perfect reasoning abilities, does a rejection of the perfect-information assumption appear to entail "irrationality" as the alternative.

A much simpler, more charitable, and, dare one say, more reasonable explanation for private and public failure is mistaken assumptions grounded in human ignorance.

**I**t was such ignorance about the future that led regulators in 1988 and 2005 to impose international banking standards which required banks to hold more capital for commercial loans than mortgages; the 2001 Recourse Rule that led banks to load their balance sheets with AA- and AAA-rated mortgage-backed securities; the 1975 rule that securities could receive ratings from only Moody's, S&P, or Fitch; and the 1993 "fair-value" accounting standard that spread panic when the ratings oligopoly turned out to be mistaken and the banks became saddled with bad debt. No one possibly could have known how these various laws would interact, first encouraging the housing bubble and later pressuring it to pop. Nor does anyone have the faintest clue about the other time bombs lurking in the 150,000-page Code of Federal Regulations and three-million-page Federal Register.

Friedman and Kraus's examination of the 2008 financial crisis ends with a broader critique of economic policy in the administrative state. The role of government in the early

21st century is to acknowledge and "solve" the problems identified by public opinion and mass media. But since the world is infinitely complex, the people and their representatives delegate authority to experts in the civil service, whose business at places like the Federal Reserve, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, Environmental Protection Agency, and elsewhere is to simplify problems and implement rules. In the final analysis, however, the experts are just as ignorant of the future as the rest of us, and each new rule has unintended consequences that may interact with the other rules in dangerous and unknown ways.

Most of us never look at the role ignorance and regulation play in financial panics because we hold capitalism to a standard of utter perfection. Every deviation from this standard becomes a reason for further policies that set into motion the cycle of rule-making and unintended consequences. And so the latest round of Basel Accords encourages purchases of sovereign debt—look how that's working out—and the Dodd-Frank finance bill instructs regulators to write 70 studies and make 240 rules. Meanwhile, President Obama circumvented the Senate and the Constitution so that the former attorney general of Ohio can muck around in the consumer financial product sector. Despite all this, I believe I can safely predict that, when the next panic arrives, it will be blamed on unregulated markets and rapacious capitalism.

*Engineering the Financial Crisis* is not an easy read. It is technical and contains too many acronyms and *italicized words*. But it is also the most important book on the 2008 crisis that I have encountered. Has any other title proposed such an original and compelling interpretation of the events of 2007 and 2008? Is there any other book that courageously raises the problem of human ignorance for democratic policymaking?

As the oracle might say, "There is none." ♦

# Northern Exposure

*The long, bloody road to U.S.-Canadian amity.*

BY JOEL SCHWARTZ

The strategic thinker Eliot Cohen begins this impressive book with a passage that (as he seemingly recognizes) will at first glance strike contemporary readers as laughable, if not ludicrous: “This book . . . deals with America’s most durable, and in many ways most effective and important enemy of all. Canada.”

But as Cohen explains, historically Canada really did deserve that designation:

For well over a century, from the colonial period through American independence, the military struggle with what is now Canada was America’s central strategic fact. For at least a half century beyond that war between the United States and British-ruled Canada was a very real possibility.

Borrowing an American-Indian term, Cohen focuses in particular on battles that were fought on and about “the Great Warpath, the great water route between New York City and Montreal, along the Hudson and most particularly along Lakes George and Champlain . . . the most bitterly contested piece of land in the world.”

As his title suggests, Cohen’s interest in this substantial slice of military history stems particularly from the ways in which these early battles shaped American military practice and military culture. For example, the first battle that Cohen discusses helped lay the basis for the American preference for winning wars through the enemy’s unconditional surrender: “complete, crushing, and definitive victory.”

Joel Schwartz is an adjunct senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

## Conquered into Liberty

*Two Centuries of Battles Along the Great Warpath That Made the American Way of War*  
by Eliot A. Cohen  
Free Press, 432 pp., \$30

Cohen also sees in these battles the roots of what he calls the ambivalence of the American way of war: its penchant for “adhering to international conventions in both the legal and customary sense” on the one hand, and for “resorting to ruthless means when that appeared necessary” on the other. As a contemporary example of a ruthless means adopted by someone ostensibly devoted

to international conventions, Cohen points to President Obama’s decision to order raiders into Pakistan—a supposed ally—to kill rather than capture Osama bin Laden.

Cohen alludes to a third legacy of the battles on the Great Warpath of the book’s title, which is taken from a 1774 message from the First Continental Congress to the people of Canada, informing them that a successful American invasion would result in their being “conquered into liberty.” His judgment on this failed American military initiative—and its echoes in subsequent American history—is instructive:

The abortive invasion of Canada combined, in a distinctively American way, idealism and calculating *realpolitik*. The invaders sincerely advocated representative government and individual liberty, while manipulating local beliefs, brazenly attacking a neighbor in order to secure the fundamental and perilous decision for independence. In years to come, Americans in many other places—from Mexico to the Philippines, Vietnam to Iraq—would behave similarly, waging wars for liberty and interest, conquering others into freedom, and as in Canada, with mixed motives and uncertain outcomes.

Battles along the Great Warpath (specifically during the War of 1812)

yielded an additional lesson—one that is admittedly irrelevant to America’s all-volunteer armed forces today, though it was immensely important during much of the 20th century. These battles testified to “the ability of a small cadre of professional officers . . . to train and lead a large body of citizen-soldiers,” pointing to “the country’s capacity for rapid and effective mobilization should the need arise.”

These teachings and others emerge from Cohen’s chronological account of selected battles along the Great Warpath. Four chapters are devoted to battles between British and French colonists in the 17th and 18th centuries, culminating in the French and Indian War; four chapters recount battles in the Revolutionary War; one examines the War of 1812; and a final chapter looks at several near-misses—disputes that might have instigated renewed warfare on America’s northern border between 1815 and 1871—mostly stemming from the Civil War.

Overall, *Conquered into Liberty* excels in its demonstration of the ways in which important components of the American military tradition emerged embryonically in the sometimes obscure battles that it describes. Perhaps this is a quibble on my part, but I suspect that at least some of the lessons that Cohen develops would have emerged even if Canada had never existed—that is to say, if the northern border of the United States had also been the northern border of North America. In other words, I suspect that Canada’s existence was only a sufficient, but not a necessary, cause of the emergence of important aspects of the American military tradition.

In the counterfactual world that I am now imagining, American Indians would still have existed and American settlers would still have fought against them. And those battles would still have impressed upon the American settlers the desirability of total victory in warfare, and (a lesson of Cohen’s that I omitted above) the value of “raiding warfare,” involving skirmishes between irregular forces.

Unconditional surrender as a strategic goal, and irregular raiding warfare as a preferred tactic, are logical responses

to terrorist warfare. Not to put too fine a point on it, much of the Indian military response to the American settlers was what we would now call terrorist—aimed not at soldiers but at women, children, and other defenseless civilians.

Cohen himself makes this point, beginning his book by describing a 1690 raid against Schenectady, in which Indians (bolstered by French and Canadian forces) traveled to the frontier of English settlement “not to hold ground, destroy fortified outposts, or defeat enemy forces but to burn settlements, take captives, and kill civilians.” Perhaps the book could have placed a greater emphasis on the ways in which a central question confronting American military policy today—how best to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks—was ironically and surprisingly central to American military policy from the very outset. In this context, it’s worth noting that the Navy SEALs’ decision to use “Geronimo” as the code name with which to report the killing of Osama bin Laden—while politically incorrect and predictably controversial—had at least some historical justification.

Be that as it may, the stories that Cohen recounts are valuable not only instrumentally—as keys to the origins of the American way of war—but also intrinsically. Simply put, the book contains much interesting American (and Canadian and American-Indian) history that is likely to be unfamiliar to most readers. Particularly worth highlighting are the book’s revisionist depictions of Benedict Arnold and George Washington.

Cohen’s Arnold can arguably be described as a man more sinned against than sinning. He was a remarkable and remarkably successful soldier and sailor who dominated many of the early “points of decision” of the Revolutionary War, a man with a “staggering” combination of skills: “He led on land and on the water, in siege and in the field, he

had the talents to build a fleet and then fight it to the death. His men followed him willingly, indeed eagerly.”

Why, then, did he become a traitor? He came to be disgusted by the “con-ning, profiteering, and low politics” that he encountered; he was a “proud, prickly, passionate man” whose combat experiences left him utterly exhausted and with “two debilitating wounds in the same leg,” one of which crippled him for life; he had been “abused, traduced, and mistreated by colleagues, subordinates, and Congress.” Thus, Cohen concludes,

Given all that he suffered and endured, in leading his men, in fighting the enemy and above all from his own side, given his exposure to



Oliver Hazard Perry at the Battle of Lake Erie, 1812

hardball politics, incessant accusations of misconduct partly justified and mostly not, given his dismay at the protracted failures of Congress and democratic politicians, it should not be entirely surprising that Arnold’s character snapped under the strain.

As for Washington, Cohen hails his “icily unsentimental good judgment and restrained but real ruthlessness.” This is his final assessment:

Far more remote, in some ways, than Abraham Lincoln, the only figure in American history with whom he is to be reasonably compared, [Washington] is often portrayed as a figure of unshakable rectitude, patriotism, and integrity, if occasionally uncertain military judgment. True, by and large. But along the Great Warpath he also demonstrated deep suspicion of his allies, manipulativeness toward

an adoring protégé [Lafayette], and ruthlessness toward his own side. . . . It says something about the nature of war along the Great Warpath . . . that, in that context at least, those were indispensable virtues.

In closing, I should say a word about one of Cohen’s sources. He reports at the outset that he first began to be interested in the Great Warpath as a schoolboy, when he read Francis Parkman’s classic account of the battles between France and Britain in North America. (Not surprisingly, some of these battles are discussed in the first half of Cohen’s book.) In lieu of a bibliography, Cohen concludes with a guide to sources that readers might consult to expand their knowledge of the Great Warpath. Prom-

inent among those sources is Parkman’s history, which chronicles “the climactic struggle for North America between the two European great powers with rare literary skill. Parkman was intoxicated with the landscape of the Great Warpath, which he visited repeatedly and described with care.”

Cohen offers a measured judgment of Francis Parkman (1823-1893) and his massive historical output:

Parkman is much despised today by some historians who find him bigoted, reactionary, and too literary. He was, to some extent, all these things, although a more charitable reading suggests that he had a dark view of most human beings, including the elite of the Boston of his day. And no matter what one thinks of his interpretations, his literary skill remains a marvel—which is why he, unlike many of his late-twentieth-century critics, remains in print.

That is very well said. *Conquered into Liberty* deserves a wide readership that should certainly include anyone interested in American history or military history. If some of Cohen’s readers are induced by him to read Parkman (author of what I suspect is the least-read American great book), that would be an added bonus. He will have served these readers well, and they in turn will be well served by Francis Parkman. ♦

# On the Brink

*A haunted vision of a people in extremis.*

BY SUSANNE KLINGENSTEIN

The great tragedy of Yiddish literature is that, at the very moment when it was blossoming into modernity in all genres, its writers, audience, and cultural matrix were completely destroyed by the double knockout punch of German and Soviet anti-Semitism.

One of the most extraordinary Yiddish writers was Pinhas Kaganovitch (1884-1950), better known under his pseudonym Der Nister (the hidden one). On the cusp of destruction he produced works of stunning psychological, stylistic, and metaphorical complexity. His one full-length novel, *The Family Mashber* (1939/48), masterfully translated into English by Leonard Wolf, was reissued four years ago to great critical acclaim and created interest in Der Nister's work. Hence it is with gratitude and pleasure that one welcomes Erik Butler's scrupulous and caring (if not always felicitous) translation of *Vidervuks*, rendered as *Regrowth*, a volume of very late stories, published in Moscow in 1969 almost two decades after Der Nister's death.

The subtitle, "Seven Tales of Jewish Life Before, During, and After the Nazi Occupation," indicates the slice of history in which these stories are located. Two of the stories, written in 1942 and set in Poland as the Germans were implementing the Final Solution, had already appeared in Moscow in 1943 in a small three-story booklet, entitled *Korbones* (*Victims*).

The remaining five stories, written between 1944 and 1946, were not published during the author's lifetime, perhaps because they were so

*Susanne Klingenstein is a lecturer in the Harvard/MIT Division of Health Sciences and Technology.*

## Regrowth

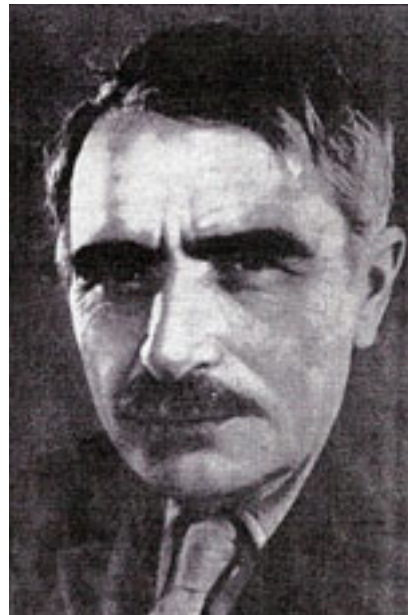
*Seven Tales of Jewish Life Before, During, and After Nazi Occupation*

by Der Nister

translated by Erik Butler

Northwestern, 308 pp., \$17.95

unapologetically Jewish. They made clear that the Germans had singled out the Jews in particular for total



*Pinhas Kaganovitch*

destruction (Soviet propaganda played down the fate of the Jews during World War II), and they urged survivors and Soviet-assimilated Jews to rededicate themselves to the community of Jews. This is most notably the case in the title story, in which two highly educated and assimilated Soviet Jews each adopt a Jewish orphan. Through children's retelling of their fates during the destruction of their communities, the adoptive parents reconnect to the Yiddish language and to repressed

memories of Jewish communal life that they now long to regain.

But just what such a regained Jewish life would actually entail, the stories do not flesh out. And it cannot be inferred from the pre-1939 Jewish communal life depicted in the stories, because that communal life appears to be barely functioning. We do not see the hustle and bustle of mercantile, cultural, or religious life; rather, we are thrown into a world that appears arrested, static, airless, in decline. It is populated by a gallery of highly idiosyncratic characters: introverted, studious, totally unproductive and socially isolated, and yet exquisitely sensitive to what they ought to do. It is a world so close-knit, so in sync with what it is to be a human being, that tiny gestures can take the place of talk. In their ethical refinement, Der Nister's loony characters are so utterly compelling that one must admire them.

Rive Yosl Buntsies refuses to remarry after her empty but studious husband flickers out. She becomes an eccentric who raises orphan girls and sees to it that the poorest bodies are buried with proper ritual. When she is deported with a slew of women she unites them in a last welcoming of the Sabbath ceremony on the brink of the ditch into which their slain bodies will fall in a jumble.

Meylekh Magnus is scarred by two unlucky love affairs and becomes a studious recluse, a scholar of Yiddish linguistics. He finally marries, but his wife dies in childbirth, leaving a son, whom Meylekh raises with great care. When the Nazis arrive, Meylekh and his son are herded into the ghetto. The son joins the resistance and is killed; Meylekh insists on accompanying his son's body to its burial place outside the ghetto. The scene when Meylekh, disguised as a gravedigger, accompanies the hearse in which his son's body lies (without a coffin) on the long ride to the cemetery is one of the most moving in all of Yiddish literature. Meylekh's pain gets the better of him and he climbs into the hearse: "And what the driver had never seen the livelong day—or any other day—he now saw: the father lying down next to his son, as if he were still alive."

Kaganovitch wrote at the end of a long line of literary self-criticism.

No literature was as merciless toward its own people as Yiddish literature, beginning with the satires of Sholem Yankev Abramovitch (aka Mendele Moykher Sforim), which faulted the Jews for being backward, self-satisfied, hypocritical, unproductive, exploitative *shnorrers*, all the way to the novels of Isaac Bashevis Singer, which fault the Jews for self-indulgent sensuality. It's a literature of relentless self-examination because it was clear to all that, by the 1880s, the traditional world of Eastern European Jewry was falling apart. Under the dual impact of violent anti-Semitism and huge economic stress, religion lost its grip on the Jews. The young moved toward Zionism, nationalism, socialism, communism; those not given to idealism moved to America.

Der Nister was in the thick of it all. Born in Berdichev, where his brother fell in with the Bratslaver Hasidim, he became a writer of mystical Hebrew poems and symbolist Yiddish stories. He lived in Kiev during the Russian Revolution and subsequent civil war, in Moscow during the famine, and in Berlin during the Roaring Twenties, producing refined poems, stories, and works for children. In 1926 he moved back to the Soviet Union, because that is where his readers lived.

In 1929, the party began to exert pressure on all writers. Socialist Realism was the order of the day, and Jewish particularism was no longer tolerated. Der Nister's fantastic symbolism and literary aestheticism were damned as bourgeois decadence. In response, he developed a highly idiosyncratic style, fully displayed in his epic *The Family Mashber*, in which he hid his metaphysical thoughts that required symbolist modes of expression behind the realistic façade of a story, in the style of *Buddenbrooks*, about a family's decline.

The stories in *Regrowth*, written while Kaganovitch was at work on his epic, are cast in the same pseudo-realist style that conceals Jewish metaphysical depths for those who can unravel the clues. One of the easier ones is "Meyer Landshaft." When the Germans invade Meyer's home and line up its inhabitants, men

on one side, women on the other, a contest ensues between the father and his youngest daughter over who gets to sacrifice himself for the other. At the core of the story is Meyer's sharpening of knives, which the Germans interpret as a threatening act but for Meyer recalls Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. In due course the story reveals itself as a symbol of Meyer's masculinity, which he feels is dulled when his daughter saves him by using her blossoming sexual allure. The story turns out to be a King Lear tale about a father's inability to release his daughter into freedom because he knows it's a freedom that will kill her.

On the surface, Der Nister's stories here depict the defeat of a tired, worn-out super-refined ethical culture by a horde of brutes. The destruction of the

Jews is child's play for the brawny Germans. But underneath the surface of the setting, where the author explores the Jews' relation to each other, and the cultural resources they can draw on in their response to destruction, Der Nister assesses the ethical and intellectual legacy that has been bequeathed to him as a writer at the end of a long line of Jewish thought. The upshot is simply expressed at the end of the title story: "to be mindful of the commandment of growth and regeneration. [And] then he resolved to appear with clear words and . . . to pronounce what until now he has half concealed."

For his commitment to the Jews expressed in his fiction, Pinhas Kaganovitch was jailed in 1949 and died in a Soviet prison hospital in 1950. ♦



## Let's Misbehave

*Sometimes it's a Good Thing to be bad.*

BY JOHN SIMON

Let's start with a kind of syllogism. Philosophers write books of philosophy. Emrys Westacott teaches philosophy at Alfred University. Therefore his book, *The Virtues of Our Vices*, is a book of philosophy. And so, worse luck, it is.

When I say "worse luck," I speak as a layman. I am not now, nor ever have been, a philosopher, professor of philosophy, or even a mere philosophy major in college. I did take a couple of courses in philosophy at Harvard, but without achieving any distinction. Let me further confess that I took on the assignment to review Professor Westacott's opus under a misapprehension. I was told that the subtitle was "A modest defense of gossip, rudeness,

and other bad habits" and so thought that this was a book of history. Sort of how the Battle of Wherever was won by General Whosit thanks to his aggressive rudeness. Or that a Spartan matron's gossiping with her Athenian girlfriend induced Athens to levy a large enough army to defeat the attacking Spartans.

The other vices in Westacott's book are captioned "On Snobbery: Is It Sinful to Feel Superior?" and "That's not funny—that's sick!" and "Why Should I Respect Your Stupid Opinion?" where the vices, besides snobbish snottiness, would seem to be bad taste and benightedness. Or perhaps arrogance, finickiness, and condescension, ignoring the potential good in the apparent bad. My hope may have been to learn that the reason Napoleon won so many battles was his

**The Virtues of Our Vices**  
*A modest defense of gossip, rudeness, and other bad habits*  
by Emrys Westacott  
Princeton, 304 pp., \$26.95

*John Simon, author and critic, lives in New York.*

willingness to heed the advice of his lowborn officers, or that, unknown to previous researchers, Rasputin was an addict of disgusting jokes, which should not, however, have led to his eventual assassination.

Vain hope! *The Virtues of Our Vices* is a book of philosophy, not history. And philosophy, in my view, is in a bad way today, and has been so for some time. Back in antiquity it flourished. When Socrates went about debating the Sophists and taught that knowing thyself was the real thing, he was daringly original, even revolutionary, and philosophically accepted his death sentence. Or take Aristotle. No one before him had thought of pronouncing on how to write tragedies and postulate rules for what, as *Poetics*, became a bestseller for centuries. This despite its having come down to us in what appear to be only lecture notes.

And for centuries thereafter every hot new topic or snappy catchphrase (“I think, therefore I am”) served philosophers well enough for a comparatively easy time of it. But nowadays? Tell me that Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* makes an indispensable contribution to our thinking. Nietzsche at least scored points with the death of God, and Santayana could squeeze literature out of the last puritan.

But where does that leave Professor Westacott? With an unassuming defense of five bad habits proclaimed by a subtitle deprived even of capital letters. But it unerringly takes us to the back alleys of thought that today’s modest philosopher is driven to haunt in search of something new.

Now I readily concede to him on his subject an article in a philosophical journal, of the sort that he has already been publishing, which might extend to 25 or 30 pages. But over 60 pages on snobbery alone, and over 50 under the rubric “That’s not funny—that’s sick!”—is that not overkill? Or overdefensiveness?

There is no disputing the book’s ingenuity. It has different kinds of

print for headings, subheadings, and numbered examples. It is written in a highly civilized, exemplarily accessible style. It is patently not the work of someone inhabiting an ivory tower, what with references to Michael Jackson and Lady Gaga, to Rush Limbaugh and Bill O’Reilly, to Harry Potter and Broadway’s *The Producers*. There are also uncredited literary allusions, allowing the person who recognizes their source justifiable self-satisfaction.

And apropos “a person,” this individual usually rates the masculine third person singular, “he.” Westacott, however, scrupulously alternates between he and she, forestalling possible feminist accusations of male chauvinism.



Peter Cook bedevils Dudley Moore (*Bedazzled*, 1967)

Best of all, he provides diagrams, attesting to a scientific modernity.

On page after page, the author adduces every conceivable example of, say, rudeness or snobbery, showing it inexcusable in some cases (followed by examples of five possible circumstances) or justified or partly justified under several other conditions. Each of those numbered circumstances elicits elaborate explanations, along with further subcategories labeled a), b), c), or more.

These heuristic and propaedeutic examples are profusely propagated and meticulously evaluated. An unfriendly critic might even call it hair-splitting, pettifogging, or (heaven forbid!) casuistry. Take the eight “polar situations” of rudeness, each reproduced herewith, though without all the illustrative examples

Westacott helpfully appends to them:

1. You don’t know the convention but ought to.
2. You don’t know the convention and cannot reasonably be expected to know it.
3. You know the convention, are not aware of violating it, but ought to be.
4. You know the convention, are not aware of violating it, but your lack of awareness is excusable.
5. You know the convention, are aware you are violating it, but are not purposely being rude (that is, being rude is not part of your intention); however the violation is inexcusable.

6. You know the convention, are aware you are violating it, but are not purposely being rude; and the violation is excusable.

7. You know the convention, are aware of violating it, and are purposely but inexcusably being rude.

8. You know the convention, are aware of violating it, and are purposely but justifiably being rude.

Now let me give a sample of the examples, specifically those under possibility 6. They are “Slapping a hysteric; opening someone else’s mail to prevent a crime.” To which our philosopher parenthetically

adds, “We might note here that one especially common moral dilemma concerning rudeness arises when one has to decide whether or not to say or do something that might be criticized as an instance of failing to ‘mind your own business’; for example, telling parents that they are being over-indulgent or excessively strict with their children.”

This paragraph goes on, including references to “Dear Abby” and Randy Cohen’s “Ethicist” column in the *New York Times Magazine*, but this will do. Incidentally, I wonder whether slapping a hysteric qualifies as any sort of rudeness under any heading, rather than as therapy or, in extreme cases, self-defense.

Still, in the interest of fairness, I give one more example of Westacott’s thinking and style:

One obvious indicator [of snobbery] is a discrepancy between a person's expressed opinions and her actions [note the pro-feminist, politically correct feminine pronoun] or between two sides of her behavior. I sneer at cheap tools, making a point of purchasing only professional quality, oil-quenched, chrome-vanadium wrenches made in Germany. Yet when my car needs fixing, I take it to a garage and pay others to do the work. Every morning I buy the *New York Times*, haughtily rejecting any substitute on the days when it is not available; yet I only ever read the sports pages. In such instances, the motive for what I do seems to be a desire to belong to, or to be seen as belonging to, or to see myself as belonging to a certain group, even though objectively my claim to membership is dubious. Here snobbery and self-deception prop each other up quite effectively.

Nevertheless, a couple of paragraphs later, Westacott does allow how

sometimes a person's rationale for her [that feminine again!] preferences is quite plausible. Hondas are statistically more reliable than Yugos; the *New York Times* really does offer better coverage of international affairs than does the *New York Post*. Often, though, we cannot determine precisely to what extent a preference is genuine and reasonable and to what extent it is motivated by snobbery.

As you can see, the style is breezy, and even if it does not convey great novelty or profound insight, the book is pleasantly readable.

The chapter on humor, however, is genuinely satisfying. Not so much for the distinctions it draws between wholesome and sick or unsound humor as for its basing its arguments on some truly funny jokes. One wonders whether Westacott might not be more profitably engaged in compiling humor anthologies. For example: "What do you call a hundred lawyers at the bottom of the sea? A good start." Some of the humor has the additional virtue (not derived from a vice) of laughing at oneself. So we read of a detachment that "could prove beneficial to certain subgroups, particularly that select band who make a living from teaching philosophy."

In fact, what I like best about *The Virtues of Our Vices* are incidental

felicities, like, "If I tell you that I believe my goldfish is a reincarnation of Winston Churchill, you will assume I'm joking. If I manage to convince you that I'm serious, you will probably conclude that I'm one slice short of a loaf." Or the information: "According to some reports even some college professors are less pompous than in the past."

Yet there are also infelicities, like the repeated incorrect use of "parameters" or the redundant "general consensus," the redundant though common-enough

"mutual acquaintances," the faulty "disinterested [for uninterested] attitude," and the solecistic singular verb in "one of the things that matters."

If nothing else, though, this book is proof of how marginalized, how nugatory, philosophy has become in the modern world. And it may, if you read the liminal note about the author, enlighten you that there actually is in New York State a town called Alfred, where you find Alfred University, where Professor Westacott plies his gallantly quixotic trade. ♦



# Austen-Powered Mystery

*A modern master salutes a predecessor.*

BY ELIZABETH KANTOR

There are only two things wrong with Jane Austen's novels. There aren't enough of them. And they're too short.

If Dickens is your thing, you can easily spend 12 months immersed in one after another of his novels, great in size as well as in quality: *David Copperfield* alone is 1,024 pages in the Penguin Classics edition. If you have a passion for P.G. Wodehouse, you can entertain yourself year round with the master's extensive body of work, nearly a hundred books altogether. By the time *Right Ho, Jeeves* rolls around again, you'll have forgotten whether it's the one with Gussie Fink-Nottle giving the prizes at Market Snodsbury Grammar School lit up on spiked orange juice, or the one where he gets arrested for hunting newts in his evening clothes in the Trafalgar Square fountain.

Elizabeth Kantor is the author of the forthcoming Jane Austen Guide to Happily Ever After.

But there are only six finished Jane Austen novels. Janeites find ourselves running through them all in a few short weeks. Then it takes no time to get through *Lady Susan* and the two tantalizing unfinished novels. Finally the desperate Jane Austen addict can resort to Anthony Trollope as a kind of methadone to take the edge off the craving: There's a plentiful supply, but Trollope doesn't provide the genuine Austen high.

It's no wonder that there's an enormous appetite for Jane Austen sequels. But whether the authors play it straight, or introduce vampires and zombies, Austen imitations inevitably disappoint. Still, hope springs eternal in the Janeite breast, and the announcement that P.D. James was writing a murder mystery sequel to *Pride and Prejudice* created eager anticipation—especially among Jane Austen lovers who are also fans of the reigning queen of crime.

On the one hand, P.D. James is head and shoulders above the average Jane Austen imitator as a writer. There's the mouth-watering prospect that she

**Death Comes to Pemberley**  
by P.D. James  
Knopf, 304 pp., \$25.95

might be able to get close enough to Austen's inimitable style to make us believe we're really at Pemberley again. On the other hand, the world James writes about—grisly murders, the nitty-gritty of police procedure, the incurable loneliness of men and women stranded by the dislocations of modern life—is most definitely not Austen's scene.

James actually begins with an author's note apologizing for involving Elizabeth Bennet in "odious subjects" that Jane Austen wouldn't write about. The prologue that follows, though, is a *tour de force* of Austen imitation. Almost any writer can put a new spin on the famous it-is-a-truth-universally-acknowledged opening of *Pride and Prejudice*; James starts that way, too. But she goes on in the same rich vein, lifting the structure of one after another authentic Austen sentence from the novels and turning it to her own purpose—which, at first, is to recap *Pride and Prejudice* from the point of view of the Bennets' cynical neighbors.

The love story looks very different from the outside. Everyone is sure that Elizabeth must have been after Darcy's money all along. The recasting is clever—as are the ways James manages to bring characters from Austen's other novels on for cameo appearances. Wickham's checkered career turns out to have included a stint as Sir Walter Elliot's private secretary (naturally, Miss Elliot found him charming) and a Mr. and Mrs. Robert Martin figure in the future of an illegitimate child whose presence on the Pemberley estate is important to the murder plot.

James takes care to avoid anachronisms, and details of early-19th-century legal procedure and forensic medicine add interest to the mystery that unfolds from the moment Lydia is driven up to Pemberley at breakneck speed screaming, "Wickham's dead!" (Apparently in criminal trials the accused, not his counsel, made the speech for the defense, and there was no appeal from a jury verdict except to the Crown's pardon power.) Still, the murder investigation definitely feels more Adam Dalgliesh than Darcy and Elizabeth. Were Regency-era murder victims' bodies really taken away in

mortuary vans? Did English ladies and gentlemen think of the authorities who brought criminals to justice as "the police" before the post-Peterloo reforms in law enforcement?

The great disappointment of the book, though, isn't in the details. There's something about James's outlook that is fundamentally at odds with Austen's, a concatenation of modern cynicism, self-doubt, and determinism that saps Elizabeth and Darcy of their froth and sparkle—*Death Comes to Pemberley*, indeed. It's not only the Meryton gossips who think Elizabeth has married Darcy for his money. Elizabeth herself wonders whether she would have chosen him without it and



P.D. James

thinks of being "on the verge of love, that enchanting period of mutual discovery," as something "she had never known." After all, the two of them were only alone for about half-an-hour between Darcy's two proposals.

Meanwhile, James's Wickham is not so much a callous rake as a wounded soul ruined by class resentment and lack of parental love. His appalling career is the "natural result of exposing a young man to a lifestyle he could never hope to achieve by his own efforts, and companions of a class to which he could never aspire to belong." Wickham is one more of James's isolated unknowable modern selves, looking vainly for a way to connect.

Jane Austen is about people finding each other: Darcy and Elizabeth

conquer their pride and prejudice to achieve bliss together. Edward and Elinor overcome his mother's selfish arrogance and Lucy Steele's greedy scheming to arrive at the happy domesticity they both crave. Emma suddenly realizes "with the speed of an arrow" that the man she really wants has been right beside her all along.

P.D. James, on the other hand, is all about people missing each other. Think of Kate Miskin's unrequited yearning for Adam Dalgliesh, which comes out in her fierce loyalty to her boss and her jealous suspicions that Emma Lavenham may be stringing him along. The quintessential James scene is Amy Camm's death in *Devices and Desires*. Amy, who learned from watching her mother take abuse to sleep only with men who want her more than she wants them, lives with Neil Pascoe, whose love for her is hopeless because she can't open her heart to him. In her last moments of terror she realizes how utterly alone she is, and always has been. She's thinking of Neil as she goes numb in the freezing water. He'll never know.

Jane Austen was no more sentimental than P.D. James. Even the teenaged Austen, Virginia Woolf noticed, "had few illusions about other people and none about herself." But she believed men and women were capable of great things—including happy love. Jane Austen didn't make her characters the hapless victims of their class, parentage, or circumstances. She saw with remarkable clarity all the ways people deceive themselves and disappoint each other, but she thought they could fight against their own "folly and vice" and watch out for other people's. And she believed a woman with a small fortune really could marry a rich man for love.

P.D. James *has* intruded alien horrors into the sacred precincts of Pemberley. Not violence and murder so much as modern cynicism, self-doubting angst, and hopeless self-pity. The cure? Turn to the book that really comes after *Pride and Prejudice*—Austen's own *Mansfield Park*—to read about what men and women animated by "the consciousness of being born to struggle and endure" can accomplish, in life and in love. ♦

NEWS.COM

# Magic Screen

*From CinemaScope to CGI, the play's the thing.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

There are moments in *Chronicle*, a male version of the 1976 horror movie *Carrie*, that actually manage to evoke the wonder of cinema more surprisingly than any film since the awe-inducing moment in 1991's *Terminator 2* when the bad terminator reconstituted himself before our eyes as he rose from the institutional black-and-white tiles of an insane asylum.

That haunting, beautiful, and terrifying scene was the first truly inspired use of computer-generated imagery (CGI) on film—but in the 21 years since, the CGI that followed *Terminator 2* has all but lost its capacity to make your jaw drop. CGI both revolutionized special effects and destroyed their impact. Now directors can depict everything they can imagine in the most literal terms, and the result is not an oh-wow cinema but a literal cinema. A car turns into a robot—big deal. By now, moviegoers know that they can be shown almost anything, and that what they're seeing isn't happening anyway, so what's the point?

The point was, and always has been, to *amuse*. The special effect is nothing more than a magic trick, a way to make it appear as though something that violates the basic rules of science or gravity or reality or logic is happening before your eyes. *Chronicle*, the first film of a 26-year-old director named Josh Trank, brings back the amusement value, and the spirit of trickery.

*Chronicle* is designed as a “found footage” movie in the manner of

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD's movie critic.

**Chronicle**  
Directed by Josh Trank



*The Blair Witch Project*, *Paranormal Activity*, and *Cloverfield*—three enormously successful (and two of them



*'The disturbing Dane DeHaan'*

low-budget) movies in which characters in the movie are filming things and what they are filming is what the audience sees. What we watch in *Chronicle* is the videography of a character named Andrew (the disturbing Dane DeHaan), who is making a moment-by-moment diary of his life in part to capture the cruelty to which he is subjected by his drunken, out-of-work father.

He and two friends enter a crater one night, find a mysterious lit room that looks like an alien craft, and the next thing you know, they have telekinetic powers. From there the plot gets uninteresting and dumb—Andrew goes crazy and the others have to stop him before he destroys Seattle, while the source of their powers and the world's discovery of them go entirely unexplained.

No, the real glory of this seemingly unassuming movie is the middle section, as the boys play with their new abilities.

Trank, working from a script by Max Landis, has a keen eye for what will make the supernatural appear utterly natural, and what a teenage boy would be likely to do with such talents. Andrew and his friends send Pringles potato chips from the tube into their mouths in a smooth arc; they build Lego *Star Wars* ships; they throw baseballs at each other's heads to see who can deflect them. Trank shoots these deliberately offhand, with talk and actorly business in the foreground and the effects taking place off to the side or behind the performers, never in the center of the screen and never in closeup.

He even has Andrew the outcast perform a magic show during a talent contest at his high school that turns him into a local hero. Here Trank plays an exceptional double trick: We see exactly what the audience in the high-school auditorium sees, but we know that Andrew is doing it with his mind. At the same time, we are seeing the tricks happen in real time exactly like a magic show, and just as at a magic show, we can't figure out how on earth it's being done.

The effects gradually get more ambitious as the movie goes on—and as Andrew's burgeoning abilities make it possible for him to manipulate the camera so that it can shoot at different angles and in different locations. The problem is that as they get more ambitious, the movie becomes duller and more conventional. A telekinetic fight to the death in downtown Seattle concludes the movie, and there isn't a moment in it that has the impact of a stunning scene in which an increasingly psychopathic Andrew manipulates a spider before killing it in a gasp-inducing way.

Still, *Chronicle* is an instructive piece of filmmaking because it is a reminder that when someone who knows what he's doing makes a real go of it, a movie can still blow your mind, even if only a little bit. ♦

# IVIORNN

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## Pawlenty Escapes Romney Captivity

*Minnesotan hammers way out of basement after forced robocall, media stunts*

**By Adam Tabor**

**Boston**—Former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty made a daring escape from Mitt Romney's campaign headquarters in the North End late Tuesday night while guards were distracted by the Colorado caucus returns.

Haggard and barefoot, Governor Pawlenty made his way to an Italian restaurant near Haymarket, where he was given sanctuary and eventually smuggled out of the Bay State and back to Minnesota.

Speaking from his St. Paul home on Wednesday, an exhausted, nervous-looking Pawlenty told of his harrowing ordeal. "It started when I agreed to endorse Governor Romney," Pawlenty said. "At first it was just little things he wanted me to do—appearances at rallies, getting pizza for Christie. But then his demands became more unusual." Pawlenty said he was instructed not just to praise Romney, but to attack Romney's rivals, often in questionable terms.

"They'd book me on Fox & Friends and tell me to badmouth Herman Cain or Rick Perry or whoever the flavor was that month. Immigration stuff, ethics charges, debt-ceiling votes. And that was too much. I said, 'Look, no one cared about the debt-ceiling stuff



**Pawlenty shows facial cramping caused by long days of making forced robocalls.**

in 2000. None of us were against it. That's when I was taken."

Pawlenty said that during a visit to Romney's Boston headquarters, interns from Bain Capital led him to a sub-basement and locked him in the campaign brig. It was from this cell that he participated—against his will, he now says—in campaign conference calls trashing Romney's main rivals, Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum.

"The conference calls started after they tried making me do a satellite remote for MSNBC," he said. "I was blinking in Morse code, begging for help. But Scarborough didn't notice and since it was on MSNBC there was nobody . . ."

Here the governor's voice trailed off. "After that, they only used me on the phone."

"I had to record 30 robocalls a day," Pawlenty said, "with the most ridiculous stuff. Like 'Rick Santorum isn't a real conservative.' I mean, Rick Santorum! That guy makes Genghis Khan look like a hippie."

Asked why he went along with the campaign, Pawlenty claimed, "If I was difficult, they punished me." He then described instances in which he was forced not to record scripts, but actually call voters, individually, in person.

After declining to use a particular line of attack which he found patently absurd, Pawlenty said, he was forced by Romney spokesman Eric Fehrstrom to call 700 Florida voters in a single night. "Every time one of them hung up on me, Eric would just dial another number," Pawlenty recounted quietly.

On the evening of his escape, Pawlenty utilized a rock hammer smuggled to him by another prominent Romney supporter being housed in the campaign's basement/dungeon. He was unsure if this woman was also being held against her will. Pawlenty snuck past two guard towers, dodged the roving klieg lights, and noticed that Andrea Saul was

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