the weekly
Standard

A TREASONOUS VICE PRESIDENT
J. HARVIE WILKINSON III

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A GATHERING STORM

ELLIOTT ABRAMS on the Middle East

Israeli soldiers prepare armored personnel carriers near the border with the Gaza Strip, November 16, 2012

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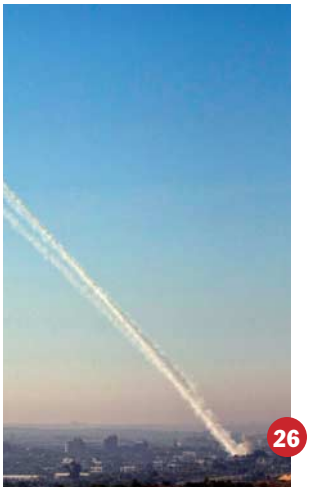

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COVER: NEWSCOM

They're Back

The Scrapbook was just getting pleasantly accustomed to a Congress without Kennedys—our personal favorite, Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy (D-R.I.), announced his retirement in 2009—but on the morning after Election Day, we discovered they're back. (Or baaack, depending on your point of view.) The new Kennedy in town is 32-year-old Joseph Kennedy III, who in turn is the son of former congressman Joseph Kennedy II, best known for his marital misadventures and frequent temper tantrums on the House floor.

The freshman Kennedy will be representing Barney Frank's old district in a southeastern segment of Massachusetts. In the family tradition, young Kennedy moved into the Fourth Congressional District, immediately filed to run—and, we concede, is not entirely unqualified: He is a graduate of Stanford and Harvard Law School, and was an assistant district attorney in Middlesex County. On the other hand, his Republican opponent, Sean Bielat, was a successful high-tech executive and Marine Reserve major, a graduate of Georgetown with an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and a master's degree in public policy from Harvard's Kennedy (!) School of Government. But of course, this is Massachusetts.

What intrigued The Scrapbook, however, was not this specimen of standard Kennedy behavior—unearned sense of entitlement endorsed by voters—so much as what we might call the hereditary principle.

He'll grow into the job.

There was a time, a very long time ago, when the "next generation" of Kennedys was expected to overwhelm American politics and, at the least, recapture the White House for old times' sake. But only a handful of them actually scraped into office—the aforementioned Patrick and Joe, Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend of Maryland, one or two others—and quite apart from the sex scandals, drug overdoses, and periodic scrapes with the law, the "next generation" turned out to be something of a bust. (For dynastic reasons we are not including former governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.)

Which is why we so much enjoyed the *Boston Globe*'s endorsement of Kennedy. The Scrapbook had no illusions that the *Globe* might embrace his opponent, who is after all a Republican. But after praising Bielat's disposition, superior experience, impressive campaign, and persuasive opinions, the *Globe* urged readers (who probably really didn't need urging) to "take a chance on Kennedy. He has natural political gifts that make up for his inexperience, and voters can feel confident that he will grow into an effective advocate for the district."

Better yet, said the *Globe*, Joseph Kennedy III's "commitment to building a more just society is practically in his DNA." Which, coming from the leading newspaper in the city that invented the Tea Party as a symbol of resistance to royalty, is saying a mouthful. But not to worry: The *Boston Globe* guarantees that Kennedy's genes will make up for his callowness, and success is assured.

It's in the blood. ♦

The Hate Crime that Wasn't

Remember Shaima Alawadi? Shortly after the shooting of Trayvon Martin in Florida last March, the 32-year-old mother of five, an immigrant from Iraq in the 1990s, was found murdered. There was a note next to her bludgeoned body that read, "Go back to your country, you terrorist." With liberal America already in paroxysms over the alleged racial motivations behind Martin's shooting by a "white Hispanic" neighborhood-watch volunteer, Alawadi's death added fuel to the fire of those insisting that America is a hotbed of violent racism. A meme was born: "Hijabs and hoodies," a reference to the two victims' respective attire, became shorthand for those demanding an end to Islamophobia and racism. Weekly Standard contributor Michael Moynihan's column in *Tablet* magazine last week reminded us of the degree to which people came unglued over the alleged motive behind Alawadi's murder:

> The story provoked a torrent of outrage: It was, the *New York Times* reported, the "most-discussed topic worldwide" on Twitter. . . . While the local police urged media restraint, the Alawadi family's lawyer speculated that because they lived in El Cajon,

AP / BIZUAYEHU TESFAYE

Calif., a suburb of the "military town" of San Diego, it was possible that the murder was committed by an Islamophobic veteran. The blogger Ferrari Sheppard told his 16,000 Twitter followers, "All politicians who sold that false Iraq war, slaughter has [sic] Shaima Alawad's [sic] blood on their hands." Writing on CNN's religion blog, Linda Sarsour, the director of the Arab American Association of New York, wondered why more people weren't jumping to conclusions: "[W]ith only initial evidence—a dead black teenager, an iced tea, a pack of Skittles, a neighborhood watchman—many of us have presumed the Martin killing is an unfortunate result of racism in America. . . . Why not the same for Alawadi?"

There are many good reasons that we don't leap to assume motives when someone is killed. As it happens, though it registered as barely a blip in national news coverage, police arrested Alawadi's husband for her murder last week, and he's being held without bail. Detectives found documents in Alawadi's car indicating that she wanted a divorce. An affidavit also revealed Alawadi's 17-year-old daughter was distraught and rebelling against an arranged marriage to her cousin in Iraq.

Further, The Scrapbook noticed this interesting detail in the tenth paragraph of a CBS News report on the charges against Alawadi's husband: "Alhimidi's arrest last week occurred only days after the sentencing of an Iraqi mother who was charged in Phoenix with beating her daughter because she refused to go along with an arranged marriage." According to other reports, 19-year-old Aiya Altameemi was secured to her bed with a rope and a padlock overnight, and her mouth was taped shut. She was beaten with a shoe so severely she had to go to the hospital, burned on her face and chest with a hot spoon, and her father cut a one-and-a-half-inch wound on her neck. Her mother and father were given two years' probation.

The beating of Altameemi and the murder of Alawadi make a compelling argument that those who leapt to conclusions about Alawadi's death were half-right: There should be outrage over how Muslim women are treated in this country. But since the real problem of violence against Muslim women is unrelated to racism or Islamophobia, don't expect it to become a topic of national discussion anytime soon. ♦

Everyone's a Winner

Marathon runners are cheaters. Not all of them, or even most of them, mind you. But of all the major endurance sports—bicycling, running, swimming—the men and women hoofing it at the 26.2-mile distance are the ones most prone not just to doping and steroids and other chemical/mechanical shenanigans, but outright cheating.

The most famous case is Rosie Ruiz who, in 1980, won the Boston Marathon in the astonishing time of 2:31:56. People were suspicious about Miss Ruiz from the start, or rather the finish. She didn't seem particularly tired when she crossed the line and her musculature was not—how to put this delicately—typical of the long-distance runner. Then there was the strange fact that none of the other runners remembered seeing her until the end of the race. And that she appeared in none of the thousands of photographs of runners taken during the event. It turned out that Ruiz didn't just cheat in Boston (she hid in

the crowd a half-mile from the finish and then jumped onto the course when no one was looking). She had cheated at the New York Marathon a few months earlier in order to qualify for Boston (she started the race, hopped off the course, took the subway to the finish, then feigned injury, then slipped out of the injury tent where volunteers cluelessly marked her as a finisher). And for good measure, a couple years later she was jailed for embezzlement.

Ruiz is just the most famous member of a long line of marathon cheats. At the first modern Olympic marathon event, the Greek runner Spyridon Belokas took the bronze medal—until it was discovered that he'd taken a carriage to cut out the middle section of the race. At the 1904 Olympics, American Frederick Lorz quietly withdrew at mile nine. And then drove to the end, slipped back onto the course, and finished a gaudy 16 minutes ahead of the rest of the field. And over the last few years a Michigan dentist named Kip Litton may have taken the marathon cheat further than anyone else by serially cheating his way through a series of marathons across the country, barely even pausing each time he was disqualified after his hoax was discovered by race officials.

But the greatest marathon cheat in history occurred last week when the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the New York Road Runners' club—the body which organizes the New York Marathon—has been handing out medals en masse from this year's canceled event. Runners—or anyone else who wanted one of the medals usually reserved for finishers—simply began showing up at the club's office, writing down their names, and walking away with the awards. They didn't have to provide ID—or even proof that they had been registered for the race.

You've reached the reductio ad absurdum of marathon chicanery when you don't even have to pretend to be a runner to cheat your way to a finisher's medal. Only in New York, kids. Only in New York. ♦

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Turkey in the Straw

They squabble, scrabble, and squawk. They peck at the last windfalls, out under the fruit trees, until they're—I don't know, drunk maybe on the hard cider of the apple mash or rendered hyperactive by some mad avian sugar rush, and then they strut through the yard, chests puffed out, spoiling for a fight. Lords of creation, proud as peacocks. Vain as blue jays. Stupid as chickens.

I can't say why the wild turkeys claimed our yard this fall, out here in our South Dakota town. But once the temperature dropped, they came down from the forests of the Black Hills to camp beneath our leafless lilacs and browning cedars—killing the grass in a large circle on the north lawn. Maybe they thought the roots were tasty, or maybe they simply wanted a dust bath where they could lounge in the morning sun, nursing their hangovers and resting up for the day's fights. Either way, I look out the window to see them most days: anywhere from five to a dozen turkeys, roosting in the yard.

Some afternoons a second group comes down the street to challenge them. This is prime real estate, apparently, in the dim reaches of the turkey mind. But the local flock—covey? brood? street gang?—soon drives the interlopers out. Along with any stray deer, neighborhood cat, or small child foolish enough to approach them.

That's not what I wanted to talk about, however. I sat down to write today intending to use those turkeys as a metaphor: an elaborate figure for government, and the reelection of President Obama, and maybe the whole of political theory from Plato's *Republic* to Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*.

But I just can't do it. With stacks of unopened political mailings still on the kitchen counter (8 pro-Obama, 17 pro-Romney), I don't have the heart. Or the mind. After months of seeing yard signs for the presidential campaign and our local congressional seat and even the county coroner's office—after endless hours of polls and op-eds and debates—I can't bring myself to work up the idea. Politics is dead to me. For at least another week.

DARREN GYGI

Which leaves . . . where was I? Ah, yes, turkeys. Proud as peacocks. Stupid as chickens. God (runs an old line often ascribed to Otto von Bismarck) looks out for children, drunkards, and the United States of America. Turkeys, too, I imagine. If ever a species existed solely to undermine Darwin's survival of the fittest, this is it. The nonextinction of anything so ungainly almost has to be proof of providence. Perhaps that's why Benjamin Franklin once suggested the turkey, rather than the eagle, should be our national symbol.

Of course, he probably also had in mind the process of American elections. I mean, a symbol has to symbolize *something*. Anyway, I don't remember wild turkeys hanging out on street corners when I was young. Giant commercial turkeys, sure: hard, 10- or 15-pound frozen things, like bowling balls with drumsticks, down at the grocery store before Thanksgiving. But not the wild ones half flying, half stumbling across the yard. Everyone we knew had ring-necked pheasants in the freezer, from either their own hunting or a neighbor's. Ducks, some gamey Canadian geese, a haunch of venison. But hunted turkeys were rare to the point of exoticism.

Perhaps their return these days is due to the decline of local predators. Or the decline, anyway, of predatory instincts in the locals. My grandfather would have looked at them and thought "lunch." Of course, he would also have listened to the sad sunrise moan of the mourning doves and wondered how they'd taste roasted in butter and served on toast. I'm not sure even the squirrels were safe, and I know the deer and rabbits were in danger.

But these days, I think hardly anyone would poach a turkey or a deer in town just to stock a larder. Not me, anyway—although the one time I tasted wild turkey at a friend's house, it was awfully good: the game birds thinner but much more flavorful than domestic birds. Maybe it is all the fallen apples they eat.

The point, however, is that I'm not my grandfather. I lack that predator's eye. I assume I can rely on civilization to fill the grocery stores. I can watch the deer claim the east yard and the turkeys the north, early in the mornings here at the end of autumn in a small mountain town, and *not* reach for my .22. There's a political-theory metaphor there somewhere, maybe—but not today. Not till we've recovered from the election and burned all the political mailings in the Franklin stove against the winter chill.

Until then, I swear, I'm going to look out at the turkeys and just see turkeys.

Joseph Bottum

the weekly Standard

Operation Push Back

In their obsession with stressing the economy and jobs in the 2012 campaign, Mitt Romney and Republicans ignored or downplayed an array of compelling issues. This was a foolish mistake. They failed to exploit unpopular policies of President Obama's first term and left unanswered charges that proved harmful to Romney and other Republican candidates. Now they can make up for their blunder, partially anyway. They need an Operation Push Back.

The starting point is Obamacare. It turns out there weren't only two bites to that apple: the Supreme Court and the chance for a Republican Senate and White House. Those potential threats to the health care law fizzled. But now there's a possible third bite, or maybe a half-bite. It belongs to state governors, 30 of whom are Republicans.

Governors can't repeal Obamacare. But they can confound the Obama administration's plan for implementing it fully in 2014. If governors do so, they may force the president to negotiate on scaling back the program. That's the best-case scenario. Short of that, they could make a powerful political point, capitalizing on the public's abiding dislike of Obamacare. That might at least keep the issue alive—for future action.

For the moment, Obamacare is a cross the president continues to bear. Indeed, the election exit poll found that 49 percent of voters favor repealing all or some of it, while only 44 percent would expand it or keep it intact.

Governors have unusual leverage here because the health care law incentivizes them to set up exchanges at which millions would purchase insurance. If governors balk, the federal government must create its own exchanges. But federal exchanges would be different. The law says subsidies for those who can't afford health insurance are available only through state exchanges.

The IRS, no doubt following orders from administration higher-ups, has ruled the federal exchanges could also deliver subsidies. But this has been challenged in federal court, and the IRS stands a good chance of losing. After all, there was a clear reason to channel the subsidies via governors. It was to encourage states to establish exchanges.

Since many governors have delayed a decision, the administration has extended the deadline for compliance. Some, like Nikki Haley of South Carolina, have decided against setting up a state exchange. And Governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin announced last week he won't. "Operating a state exchange would not provide the flexibility to meet our state's unique needs or to protect our state's taxpayers," he said in a letter to HHS secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

Obamacare's expansion of Medicaid also gives governors an opportunity to put pressure on the administration. They can refuse to accept funds to increase the Medicaid rolls. Conservative governors may "propose a deal of sorts with the Obama administration: an expansion of coverage … in exchange for vastly more flexibility … even up to a full block grant of the program," wrote Ben Domenech of the Heartland Institute. That's a long shot, but worth pursuing by bold governors.

Besides Obamacare, there are many other programs ripe for pushback. The explosion of food stamps is one. The 83 separate (and overlapping) federal welfare programs cry out for spending cuts. According to Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama, the ranking Republican on the Senate Budget Committee, they cost $1.03 trillion a year.

Speaking of costs, Romney and Republicans paid dearly for their near-silence in response to a Democratic onslaught on abortion and same-sex marriage. Acting as if a truce had been reached on social issues—at the very time Democrats insisted Republicans were waging a "war on women"—was an unforced error with dire consequences.

True, Republicans were put in an awkward position by two Senate candidates who talked stupidly about rape and abortion. But saying as little as possible in response to an issue trumpeted by the media didn't work. Republicans failed to proclaim what the pro-life position really involves—that is, saving the lives of unborn children, not dismissing rape. The best Romney offered was a timid TV ad insisting he favors permitting abortion for rape victims.

Republicans allowed Democrats to frame the debate.

ELEPHANT: BIG STOCK PHOTO

GOP candidates were accused of opposing contraception, blocking women's access to health care, and keeping women from regular cancer screenings. These preposterous charges were widely broadcast, yet went largely unanswered by Republicans, who gave up on an issue—abortion—from which they'd always benefited in elections.

On same-sex marriage, Republicans went into hiding, at their own expense. In the four states with gay marriage referendums, Romney averaged 41 percent of the vote. Opposition to same-sex marriage averaged 48 percent.

The upshot was that Romney and Republicans refused to identify themselves with an issue that would have helped them. And not just any issue, but one that reflects the laws of 30 states upholding traditional marriage. Meanwhile, gays voted overwhelmingly for Obama and Democrats in the belief Republicans opposed gay marriage even if they didn't say so.

After the election, liberals claimed the culture war is over and they've won. This isn't true, but it will become so if Republicans remain silent. It's time to push back.

—Fred Barnes

Susan Rice's Talking Points

At his first press conference after being elected to a second term, President Barack Obama did everything he could to avoid directly answering the difficult questions on the growing scandal about his administration's handling of the terrorist attacks in Benghazi. But in so doing, the president inadvertently told us quite a bit.

At one point he said: "And we're after an election now. I think it is important for us to find out exactly what happened in Benghazi, and I'm happy to cooperate in any ways that Congress wants." It was, of course, just as important to find out what happened in Benghazi before the election, but we should be grateful to the president for giving us this inadvertent glimpse into the role politics played in his thinking about Benghazi before he was reelected.

The president, perhaps realizing he had made a revealing slip of the tongue, went on to insist that he'd been providing information all along. But in response to a question about criticism of U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice from Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham, the president slipped again. "For them to go after the U.N. ambassador, who had nothing to do with Benghazi, and was simply making a presentation based on intelligence that she had received, and to besmirch her reputation, is outrageous."

If Susan Rice "had nothing to do with Benghazi," why then was she sent out to represent the administration in multiple television interviews five days after the attacks?

The charitable view: The White House wanted to see her in a high-profile position as something of a tryout for her possible appointment as secretary of state in a second term.

The less charitable view: Because Rice had no independent knowledge of what happened, she could be counted on to do nothing more than recite administration talking points. And because Rice had nothing to do with Benghazi, there was no risk that she would disclose just how much of the intelligence pointed to a coordinated, planned al Qaeda attack on the U.S. facilities in Benghazi. Instead, Rice's misleading talking points suggested that the deaths of four Americans in Libya came as a result of a political protest run amok—a narrative that was almost as thoroughly discredited when she delivered it as it is today.

Those talking points were misleading not only because of what they included but because of what they left out. As The Weekly Standard first reported last month, the unclassified version of those talking points excluded the key fact that the U.S. intelligence community knew that the attacks had been conducted by terrorists affiliated with al Qaeda.

Here's how we reported this on October 20:

> One thing that has troubled both intelligence officials and those on Capitol Hill as they have evaluated the administration's early response to the attacks is what appears to be an effort to write al Qaeda out of the story. For example, the [Obama administration's] talking points . . . include this sentence: "There are indications that extremists participated in the violent demonstrations." But according to several officials familiar with the original assessment from which the talking points were derived, the U.S. intelligence community had reported the fact that these were extremists with ties to al Qaeda. That key part was omitted.

NEWSCOM

Why was that language dropped from the talking points distributed to Congress and Obama administration officials? Did anyone at the White House or the National Security Council have any role in drafting them?

Those questions remain. And there are others. The basis for the administration's claims about demonstrations in Benghazi was a phone call between al Qaeda-linked terrorists. The administration built its unclassified talking points around a detail from that call, but stripped out of the memo any indication of affiliation with "extremists."

And why was this crucial detail of an al Qadea link taken out? It's not that it wasn't relevant. Indeed, if one were trying to provide an accurate picture of what happened in Benghazi on September 11, it's hard to imagine a detail more relevant to the story.

And that might be the problem. Obama administration officials were not trying to provide an accurate picture of what happened in Benghazi on September 11. They were trying to obscure it. Notwithstanding the president's claims to the contrary, it appears as if the goal of the White House in those early days was to hide the truth from the American people. That's why you send out a spokesman who "had nothing to do with Benghazi." It's why you give her talking points that include a debunked story about a protest that never took place.

Is it why the crucial details about al Qaeda involvement were removed? That's a good question.

In sworn testimony before closed hearings of congressional intelligence committees last week, the director of national intelligence, James Clapper, acting CIA director Mike Morrell, and former CIA director David Petraeus all pleaded ignorance about who made the changes to the intelligence community's draft talking points.

Petraeus spoke about the discrepancies in his testimony November 16. According to the Associated Press: "Petraeus testified that the CIA draft written in response to the raid referred to militant groups Ansar al Sharia and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) but those names were replaced with the word 'extremist' in the final draft, according to a congressional staffer. The staffer said Petraeus testified that he allowed other agencies to alter the talking points as they saw fit without asking for final review, to get them out quickly."

We are left with more questions. Who manipulated the CIA's talking points? And why don't Clapper, Morrell, and Petraeus know? Who decided to send an official who had "nothing to do with Benghazi" to make the administration's case to the country? And when will the White House begin to provide answers?

As the president said, "We're after an election now."

—Stephen F. Hayes

Homage to an Administration

The gratitude of every home in our island, in our Empire, and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen who, undaunted by odds, unwearied in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of the world war by their prowess and by their devotion. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.

—Winston Churchill, tribute to the Royal Air Force, House of Commons, August 20, 1940

NEWSCOM

The Royal Air Force turned the tide of war in 1940. American soldiers and Marines turned the tide of war in Iraq in 2007-08, and in Afghanistan in 2010-11. They deserve tributes similar in spirit, if not quite in grandeur, to that paid by Churchill to the British airmen of 1940. But we Americans, who sleep peacefully in our beds at night, are not inclined to give too much thought, let alone pay too much tribute, to those who stand ready to fight on our behalf. Instead, the moment we can tell ourselves the threat is less urgent or the mission too difficult, we cut their budgets and reduce their ranks. And when the greatest general of our generation is caught in an indiscretion, even if it occurs after he had completed 37 years of service in the military that were beyond reproach, and when another fine general with a spotless record is subject to third-hand claims of allegedly "inappropriate" statements in emails, we chortle and decide that the military is no better than our other institutions.

Soldiers turning the tide of war? That kind of thing doesn't matter any more, we tell ourselves. What matters is top marginal tax rates, if you're a Republican, or free contraception, if you're a Democrat. Afghanistan, where 68,000 Americans serve? The Obama administration figures out how to head for the exits, and the Republican challenger pretends it doesn't exist. The use of force to stop a nuclear Iran, or to affect the outcome in Syria—or to rescue Americans under assault in Benghazi? Too difficult to discuss. The intelligence assessments haven't been completed.

And so all serious people agree the fiscal cliff matters. The defense cliff, not so much. And the fact that the world is going over a cliff, in the absence of a conviction in the United States that might must be allied with right? Barely worthy of comment.

After all, the whole notion of turning the tide of history through the use of military force is so retrograde. Today, we believe, as President Obama repeatedly insists, that "the tide of war is receding." It's true that if we withdraw from wars, the tide of war may seem to recede. If we abandon Iraq, we will have no casualties—for a while. If we draw down in Afghanistan, we'll have fewer casualties—for a while.

But tides that go out come in again. We can pretend that the tide of war ebbs and flows according to our wishes and convenience. But we know better. Douglas MacArthur was right when he said, a half century ago, "the soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war. But always in our ears ring the ominous words of Plato, that wisest of all philosophers: 'Only the dead have seen the end of war.'"

Our failure isn't really one of understanding. It's one of courage. We say the tide of war is ebbing as an excuse for not facing up to our duties. And so, as our allies in Israel fight their war, and as our soldiers and Marines in Afghanistan fight ours, we turn away, and wish it needn't be so, and pretend it needn't be so.

Less than 30 years after Churchill's tribute to Britain's airmen, Philip Larkin commented on the new Britain in which he found himself. One hopes Larkin isn't also describing the new America in which we find ourselves:

Homage to a Government

Next year we are to bring all the soldiers home
For lack of money, and it is all right.
Places they guarded, or kept orderly,
We want the money for ourselves at home
Instead of working. And this is all right.

It's hard to say who wanted it to happen,
But now it's been decided nobody minds.
The places are a long way off, not here,
Which is all right, and from what we hear
The soldiers there only made trouble happen.
Next year we shall be easier in our minds.

Next year we shall be living in a country
That brought its soldiers home for lack of money.
The statues will be standing in the same
Tree-muffled squares, and look nearly the same.
Our children will not know it's a different country.
All we can hope to leave them now is money.

—William Kristol

Fiscal Cliff Diving

The deficit showdown ahead.

BY JOHN MCCORMACK

Under current law, the U.S. economy will tumble over the so-called fiscal cliff at the start of the new year, when roughly $500 billion in across-the-board tax hikes and $100 billion in spending cuts are scheduled to take effect. Numerous economists predict the automatic tax increases, the result of expiring Bush tax cuts and other tax laws, will cause another recession. Pentagon officials say the spending cuts, part of the 2011 debt ceiling deal, will "hollow out" the military.

President Obama and congressional leaders declare they're committed to striking a deal to avert a fiscal fall. But Obama also says he wants to raise income tax rates on individuals and small businesses making more than $250,000, and Republicans say that's a deal-breaker.

"A tax rate increase should be completely off the table," insists Pennsylvania Republican senator Pat Toomey. "There is no need for that. It is economically destructive to do that." According to the Congressional Budget Office, letting the top tax rate rise from 35 percent to 39.6 percent would mean 200,000 fewer jobs. Another study, conducted by Ernst & Young for pro-business groups, says it would cost 700,000 jobs.

Republican leaders are willing to compromise on tax revenue by limiting tax deductions. For example, capping deductions at $50,000 would yield $749 billion in tax revenue over 10 years, about the same amount as letting the Bush tax rates expire for high earners, according to the Tax Policy Center. Republicans also believe that any deficit deal must include structural entitlement reform. "In six weeks, you can't do a complete transformation of entitlement programs, which is what we really need, but you could make changes that are conceptually simple and legislatively very doable that would result in substantial savings over time," says Toomey.

Although Republicans and Obama publicly disagree about tax reform,

GARY LOCKE

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sources say that at a November 16 White House meeting with congressional Republicans, the president privately accepted a broad entitlement and tax reform framework that would *lower* tax rates while eliminating and reducing some tax deductions.

"They discussed a down payment of sorts and then setting up tax and entitlement reform next year," reports a source familiar with the talks. Obama "agreed to a tax reform structure that would lower rates and broaden the base. He also agreed that structural entitlement reform would have to be part of any agreement."

"I don't think anyone left the White House thinking we're heading over the cliff," another source familiar with the meeting says. "That's not to say we won't. We might trip off the cliff unintentionally."

What reason is there to think that President Obama will actually compromise with Republicans on taxes and entitlements? Obama just won reelection, and congressional Democrats, who picked up seats in the House and Senate, are opposed to entitlement reform. Senate majority leader Harry "Reid and others have spoken out that they are not going to touch any of the entitlements, so I think that that gives you some indication of the likelihood of something like that happening," House minority leader Nancy Pelosi said at a November 15 press conference.

Some Democrats, like Washington senator Patty Murray, are openly calling for heading over the January cliff, at which point they'll be able to beat down the opposition. "We will reach a point at the end of this year where all the tax cuts expire, and we will start over next year and whatever we do will be a tax cut for whatever package we put together. That may be the way to get past this," Murray said on ABC's *This Week*. Other Democrats, such as Howard Dean, say they're more than happy with going over the cliff, not as a negotiating strategy, but because they prefer a policy of massive tax hikes and defense cuts—recession and all—to reforming entitlement programs.

But Republicans on Capitol Hill say it wouldn't be to Obama's advantage to push the GOP to the brink and the country over the cliff. In addition to the real pain another recession would inflict, "it's not in the president's interest to make the lame duck toxic," says a House Republican aide. "If he wants to have a successful second term, if he wants to try to get anything done on other priorities, including immigration . . . it's in his own interest to have a productive lame duck [session] where we come to a reasonable compromise on this issue."

"He's got every reason to strike a deal," says James Capretta of the Ethics and Public Policy Center. "He'd go down as a hero if he were the guy to solve our budget problems and put us on a sustainable path."

Whether Obama really wants to reform entitlements and the tax code—and whether he's capable of bringing along enough congressional Democrats to do so—is anyone's guess. A deal right now is only in its earliest stages, and could fall apart for any number of reasons. It's always possible that Obama will pull the rug out from underneath Boehner's feet, as he did during the 2011 negotiations for a "grand bargain."

And a revolt on the right is always possible. But even some of the staunchest conservatives recognize the reality that the expiration of the tax cuts January 1 puts them in a very difficult position. They seem resigned to a less than ideal outcome.

"It's not hopeful from our standpoint," says former congressman Chris Chocola, president of the conservative Club for Growth. "A difficult thing for some Republicans to resist would be a new bracket on whatever the level is, millionaires, $500,000, whatever it is."

"Even though I may not vote for whatever the deal is, I think there will be enough votes in the conference to keep [Boehner] on solid ground," says Rep. Tim Scott of South Carolina, a member of the House leadership team. "What we have to do is see what the deal is first." ♦

Disappointing Friends and Allies

For Syria, Obama's reelection promises little change and less hope. BY LEE SMITH

For almost a year, America's allies in the Middle East and Western Europe have believed it was only Obama's reelection campaign that held the president back from employing more forceful means to topple Bashar al-Assad. After all, ending the bloodshed that has killed over 40,000 people has been the Obama administration's stated objective since the American president demanded that the Syrian dictator step down in August 2011.

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It could only be domestic politics, thought our allies, that prevented Washington from taking the lead on Syria. Surely the Nobel Peace laureate in the White House felt the depths of the humanitarian tragedy unfolding in the heart of the Levant and recognized the strategic opportunity of eliminating Iran's key Arab ally. Things will change, our allies assumed, after that first week in November. But those allies, to say nothing of the Syrian opposition that Assad has bled for nearly two years, are likely to be disappointed.

The reality is that from the beginning of the Syrian revolution in March 2011 until the present the White House has been consistent in its message: The United States is not going to lead on Syria, and that won't change after elections. By some accounts, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has been arguing for a more forward-leaning policy on Syria, but she is on her way out. The next secretary of state is likely to be Susan Rice, who has so far distinguished herself on Syria by pouting at the U.N. that the Russians, one of Assad's lifelines, are protecting their ally. The other candidate for the top job at Foggy Bottom is longtime Assad advocate Sen. John Kerry.

Don't get your hopes up.

Outside of senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham, and Joe Lieberman, retiring in January, there has been little enthusiasm on Capitol Hill for moving more forcefully against Assad. Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney hardly made it an issue. Presumably, this is because everyone consults the same polls that show the electorate has little taste for any sort of foreign adventure, especially in the Middle East. Obama will therefore be the president of extrication from the region, lowering America's profile, rather than advancing vital U.S. interests.

For almost two years, allies have mistaken the White House's excuses, believing that alibis for inaction were advice. The administration complained that the opposition was too divided. But last week when the fractious Syrian National Council gave way to a unified National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, there was no change in U.S. policy. The State Department promised "nonlethal" assistance, just as it had with previous opposition groups, including the Free Syrian Army.

The White House explains that it is loath to provide the rebels with weapons because of the presence of Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist units among the armed opposition. But that is an outcome the administration could have anticipated when it disdained arming the Free Syrian Army and left the task to our Gulf allies instead. Qatar has backed Muslim Brotherhood figures everywhere throughout the Arab Spring, and Salafists, including al Qaeda and al Qaeda affiliates, have served as Saudi assets for the last 40 years. The lesson couldn't be clearer: The absence of American leadership leaves a vacuum that is filled by those whose actions are often inimical to American interests.

Last week British prime minister David Cameron tried to spur on the White House by suggesting he might be willing to arm the rebels. As he surely knows, and as the NATO-led coalition in Libya to bring down Qaddafi made clear, Europe is incapable, even if willing, of doing the heavy lifting. Cameron wants the Americans in front, but if he's not careful he'll only manage to drag himself into the middle of a firefight with the Syrians, Iranians, and Russians lined up against him.

Cameron might well consult with the Turks, an ally that has paid a steep price for misreading the White House. Early in the uprising, Obama farmed his Syria policy out to Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and thereby hung an albatross around the neck of the world leader to whom he is reportedly closest. Erdogan walked point for the administration, hosting Syrian refugees, including fighters, and calling out Assad at every turn. And yet when the Syrians shot down a Turkish jet, the White House backed Damascus's story, not Ankara's. Assad's artillery fire across the border merely underlined the fact that without American support, Erdogan was nothing but talk.

But perhaps it wasn't until last week that the horror fully hit home for Erdogan. Some observers wondered if the Patriot missile battery that Turkey and NATO discussed employing on the Turkish border was to create the no-fly zone for which Ankara has long lobbied. No, explained a State Department spokesman, it is to protect the Turks in the event that Assad turns his chemical weapons arsenal against them.

The Syrian uprising has left hundreds of thousands looking for refuge in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, further destabilizing the Hashemite kingdom, an American ally facing its own domestic strife. Last week, there was an exchange on Syria's Golan Heights border with Israel, a strange move given that Assad surely understands Israel is not Turkey. If he or the Iranians want to find out whether the Obama administration will restrain the Israelis, Jerusalem's campaign against Hamas, Operation Pillar of Defense, has shown otherwise. Perhaps

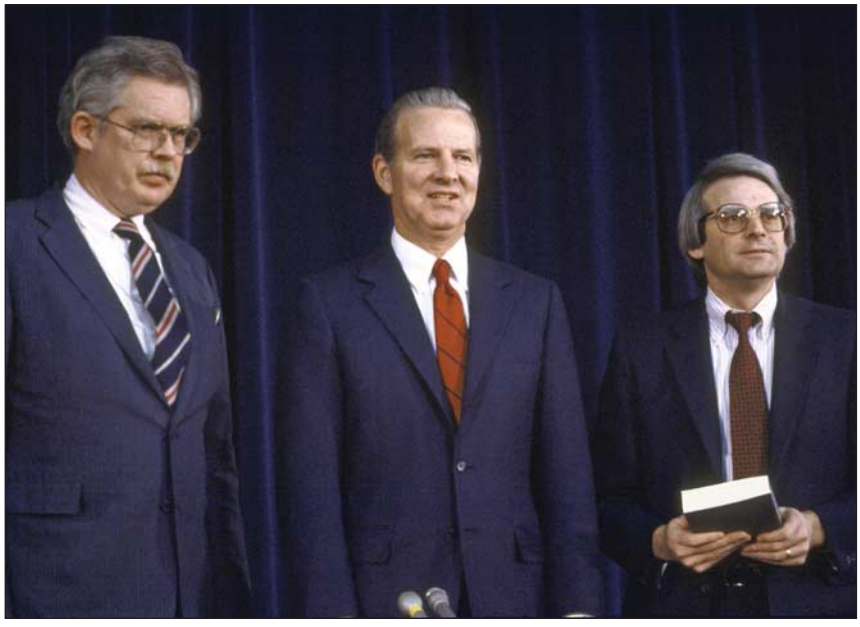
NEWSCOM

Assad was testing to see whether he might change the conversation from his sectarian slaughter to the Arab-Israel conflict, but it is probably too late for that. He has killed tens of thousands of Sunnis, which is to say even were he to enter what might well be a suicidal war with Israel, he could hardly count on the same sort of Arab (i.e., Sunni) support he might have had before the uprising against him started. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan all want him gone.

The most dispiriting news from the Middle East last week may be how many political officials and activists throughout the region have accused Israel of throwing a lifeline to Assad with the campaign against Hamas. According to former Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri, now living in exile, "The occurrence of the attack simultaneously with the ongoing Syrian revolution poses questions over its timing and is a sign of the clear intentions to thwart the revolt as much as possible."

A more rational understanding of Israel's campaign would recognize that the Israelis and the Syrian rebels, as well as Lebanon's pro-democracy movement, share the same adversaries—Iran and its allies and proxies, Syria, Hamas, and Hezbollah. Instead, Hariri and others continue to see Israel's conflict in the narrow focus that the Syrian regime and other Arab despots have designed in order to repress their own internal conflicts for decades. Never mind what we're doing to you: The suppression of human rights, the torture, rape, and murder of you and your loved ones, is all meant to protect the nation from the Zionists and their American masters. Fellow Arabs who wish the Syrian uprising well should understand that the goal must be for Syrians to have what Israelis have: a government that protects, and is accountable to, its citizens.

And yet Hariri and the rest might be forgiven if the world seems upside down right now. For all of our allies are groping to understand the unfathomable prospect that the White House really is out of the picture. ♦



William Niskanen, left, with James Baker and David Stockman in 1985

Gorging the Beast

Tax cuts didn't starve big government.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

A dedicated libertarian, William Niskanen was also a dedicated pot-stirrer. For him the two vocations—pressing the case for small government and, at least intellectually, making trouble—were inseparable. He was best known as an original member of Ronald Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers, one of a principled band of Reaganites who followed their man into the White House and then drifted away as Reagan succumbed to political compromise and ideological deviationism. For the rest of his professional life (he died last year) he worked as chairman of the Cato Institute, the country's sanest libertarian institution.

Beginning in 2002, Niskanen published a series of papers and op-eds about tax cuts and spending increases that turned conventional conservative wisdom on its head. Since both taxes and spending are much in the news, his critique is worth another visit.

If we wanted a smaller government, he said, we would have to raise taxes.

Most people who work in politics and government in Washington have heard the phrase "starve the beast"; many normal people are familiar with it too. According to the historian Bruce Bartlett, a former Republican aide and now a bestselling author, the phrase was first publicly applied to tax and spending matters in 1985.

Lamenting the failure of the Reagan administration to cut the federal budget, an unnamed official told a *Wall Street Journal* reporter: "We didn't starve the beast." He meant

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TERRY ASHE / TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

the administration had been unable or unwilling to shrink the size of the federal government by depriving it of revenue through tax cuts. The revenue-deprivation part worked fine; the Reagan tax cuts of 1981 were mostly still in effect in 1985. But there had been no shrinkage. The beast was fatter than ever.

The concept of starving the beast was older than the phrase. An earlier metaphor involved unruly children. In a 1980 presidential debate, Reagan scoffed at the idea that Congress would have to cut federal spending before it cut taxes.

"If you've got a kid that's extravagant, you can lecture him all you want about his extravagance," said Reagan. "Or you can cut his allowance and achieve the same result much quicker."

Milton Friedman liked the metaphor too.

"How can we ever cut government down to size?" he wrote. "I believe there is one and only one way: the way parents control spendthrift children, by cutting their allowance. For government this means cutting taxes. Resulting deficits will be . . . the only effective restraint on the spending propensities of the executive branch and the legislature."

With such bona fides—Alan Greenspan, passing through one of his conservative phases, had advocated starving the beast too—Republicans seldom questioned the theory of STB, using it over the last three decades as an ironclad argument for low taxes.

And then Niskanen, looking over 25 years of budget data, noticed something about STB: It didn't work. In fact, attempts to starve the beast by tax cuts seemed to lead to increased federal spending.

Niskanen looked at both spending and taxes as a percentage of GDP. On average, he found, if federal revenues declined by 1 percent, federal spending increased by 0.15 percent. When revenues rose, on the other hand, relative spending decreased. A further study in 2009 by another Cato economist, Michael New, came to the same conclusion after the gluttonous administration of George W. Bush. Under Bush and his mostly Republican Congress, new benefits like subsidized Medicare drugs and increased federal education spending followed on the heels of large tax cuts.

Niskanen's explanation for the failure of STB was straightforward, a conjecture based on standard economics: When you cut the price of something, demand for it will increase. Lowering taxes without lowering benefits meant that taxpayers were getting the benefits at a discount. The government made up the true cost with borrowed dollars that future taxpayers would have to repay. There was a big difference, Niskanen said, between a kid on an allowance and the federal government: The government has a credit card with no debt limit.

Republicans seldom questioned 'starving the beast,' using it over the last three decades as an ironclad argument for low taxes. Then Niskanen, looking over 25 years of budget data, noticed something about 'STB': It didn't work. In fact, attempts to starve the beast by tax cuts seemed to lead to increased federal spending.

A study by a pair of liberal economists in 2004 showed how thoroughly the desire to cut taxes had been made compatible with the desire to spend money and expand the government's power. Among congressmen who had signed a pledge never to raise taxes, presumably on starve-the-beast grounds, more than 80 percent nevertheless voted for the mostly unfunded Medicare prescription drug benefit in 2003. More than 70 percent of them voted for the lard-packed farm and transportation bills in Bush's first term.

Reagan, Friedman, and other early advocates of STB had counted on something that never materialized. They had assumed that as the debt piled up to finance annual budget deficits caused by free-flowing benefits, public outrage would force politicians to restrain spending without raising taxes. Yet we've had the deficits and the borrowing, in amounts that would have left Friedman and Reagan agog; what's been missing is the outrage.

As compelling as Niskanen's critique is, he was less persuasive in explaining the flip side of his findings. Why do tax increases lead to decreased spending? "Demand by current voters for federal spending," he explained, "declines with the amount of this spending that is financed by current taxes." When you make them pay for government benefits out of their own pockets, in other words, voters will want fewer of them. The journalist Jonathan Rauch put Niskanen's point more pithily: "Voters will not shrink Big Government until they feel the pinch of its true cost."

For that reason, the great libertarian pot-stirrer said that spending would never decrease—that government would never get smaller—until federal revenues increased from 15.8 percent of GDP, where they are today, to higher than 19 percent of GDP: an amount totaling in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

This part of Niskanen's argument follows economic logic too—raise the price of something and people will want less of it—but it's still conjectural. He had no way to measure whether demand for federal benefits was rising or falling among voters at any point in time. Most likely, it's always doing both, depending on the voter and the benefit. Niskanen's explanation assumes that there is a unitary demand for government services, and a unitary population of taxpayers who bear the cost.

Yet not all voters are taxpayers, at least not to the same degree. A progressive tax code like ours is meant to redistribute wealth, so that people

with less of it get more of it, in the form of government benefits. Under such a system, an increase in taxes—say, on the upper 2 percent of taxpayers—won't reduce demand for government services, because the demand isn't coming from the people who will "feel the pinch."

Of course, the cost of government comes not only through positive benefits, the checks that government writes. The government also confers benefits by forgoing revenue through tax exemptions for mortgage interest, charitable contributions, and thousands of other activities. The mortgage interest exemption, for example, allows homeowners to pay fewer taxes than their fellow citizens who make the same annual income that they do. Repealing this exemption would also force homeowners at last to bear the "true cost" of government.

And yet in the current discussions our government officials aren't calling for eliminating the deduction for the vast majority of homeowners—only those with high incomes and expensive homes. America's homeowners won't feel the pinch of this kind of tax increase either. So why should they want to demand fewer benefits and shrink Big Government?

The only system that would sustain Niskanen's logic—raise taxes to reduce demand for government benefits—is one in which everyone pays the same percentage of their income in taxes. When taxes were increased to pay for government, everyone would feel the pinch. Such a system is called the flat tax. Good luck with that.

So we're right back where we started.

Reagan never showed a sign that his "starve the beast" strategy was failing, had failed. "Raising taxes won't balance the budget," he said in his 1982 State of the Union address, as revenues fell and spending rose. "It will encourage more government spending. . . ."

We know now Reagan was wrong. But that doesn't mean Niskanen was right. There may be reasons to raise taxes—if you give me a couple years I might come up with some—but the failure of "starve the beast" isn't one of them. ♦

Declining Kingdom, Waning Power

The *Washington Post* changes editors, world yawns.

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

Last week was an eventful one in Washington, but one piece of news came and went with surprising swiftness. The executive editor of the *Washington Post*, Marcus Brauchli, was fired by the *Post*'s publisher, Katharine Weymouth—and hardly anyone paused to notice.

If something of this media magnitude had occurred when Weymouth's grandmother, Katharine Graham, was in charge, it would have brought the chin-stroking set to a full stop: Days and weeks of analysis, perhaps a *Newsweek* cover story, two *Charlie Rose* installments, talk of a movie, certainly a Ken Auletta essay in the *New Yorker*. I say this not to praise the late Mrs. Graham, who was lucky to be at the helm when it mattered, but to emphasize the old biblical admonition: How the mighty have fallen!

The rise and fall of *Washington Post* editors is of lesser consequence today because, in this brave new world, media institutions like the *Washington Post* are of lesser consequence. You need only pick up a copy of the Brauchli-era *Post* (its weight will reveal the secret) to see how much news space, how much advertising, how many writers and editors have been lost, probably never to be replenished.

Whether this is a Good Thing or Bad Thing—and we should be thankful for the journalism of cyberspace and cable television—I leave to others to judge. But it certainly opens an instructive window on the modern media culture.

First, there was Katharine Weymouth's carefully worded letter to staffers, which said everything—"Marcus Brauchli will . . . assume a new role as Vice President . . . working closely with Don Graham to review and evaluate new media opportunities"—and nothing: "Today, [the *Post*'s] digital operations, including washingtonpost.com, mobile platforms and an expanded digital-video unit, are consistently recognized as among the most innovative mainstream news sites." Can anyone imagine, say, the late Turner Catledge of the *New York Times* claiming something like "mobile platforms and an expanded digital-video unit" as his legacy?

Then there was reporter Paul Farhi's very carefully worded story in (where else?) the Style section—"Facing growing business pressures, the *Washington Post* shook up its newsroom on Tuesday . . ."—which made the fascinating statistical claim that Brauchli's successor, Martin Baron of the *Boston Globe*, is "only the fourth journalist appointed to the job in the past 44 years." Interesting, yes—so long as you discount the fact that the job was held by two journalists (Benjamin Bradlee, Leonard Downie) for 40 of those 44 years. The *Post* editor's chair—like the leadership of any number of once-mighty metropolitan dailies—has entered its revolving phase.

In that regard, the appointment of Marty Baron makes eminent sense. Baron can boast the usual number of Pulitzer Prizes and admiring profiles and Editor of the Year awards in his 11-year tenure at the *Globe*. But like all his contemporaries in the executive-editing game, Baron has primarily been managing the *Globe*'s steady deterioration in quality, size, and financial value during the last decade.

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(The New York Times Company purchased the *Boston Globe* for $1.1 billion in 1993 and stopped trying to sell it last year when it couldn't get offers as low as $35 million.)

Indeed, Baron, who is a perfectly capable man, has been on an upward path, regardless of outcome, since his days at the *Miami Herald*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New York Times*. That is because he has long since joined the kind of golden circle among senior media types, who swap well-compensated sinecures the way celebrities churn through spouses. If this *Post* vacancy had occurred two decades ago, it would've been filled by such usual suspects as Gene Roberts, Geneva Overholser, or the late Michael Gartner.

Like the 51-year-old Marcus Brauchli, who earned lifetime tenure (and his *Post* job) in 2008 by being elbowed aside at the *Wall Street Journal* by Rupert Murdoch, Baron, 58, is probably good for one more editorship after this—succeeding Jill Abramson at the *New York Times*?—before graduating to ombudsman status, or better yet, the Newseum board of directors, or an endowed chair at a journalism school in a nice location.

Still, there is a tension and uncertainty here that reflects the ambiguous future of daily newspapers. On the day his demotion was announced, Marcus Brauchli's wife took to her Facebook page to pay tribute to her husband in the usual terms—"the courage to stand up for his ideals . . . dedication to superior journalism as an essential part of our democracy," etc., etc. —but then added this petulant note: "Has the *Washington Post* of Watergate fame become the place where you can't speak truth to power?"

Somebody, probably the person who will soon be "working closely with Don Graham to review and evaluate new media opportunities," must have advised Mrs. Brauchli to delete that sentence, which she did. But does the executive editor's wife really believe that newspaper publishers are retrenching because they feel like it, or that 40 years after Watergate, the *Post*'s self-congratulatory tone still makes sense? ♦

The Disappearing-Family Problem

Broken homes could use a little more attention from Washington. BY MITCH PEARLSTEIN

One of the dramatic social developments of our time—family breakdown, now known by the term of art *family fragmentation*—is seldom touched on by our top politicians. Yet with the United States probably leading the industrial world in this amalgam of out-of-wedlock births, divorces, and short-lived cohabiting relationships, it would be valuable for our leaders to find a way around the political pitfalls that dissuade them from addressing a consequential subject.

It did come up toward the end of the second presidential debate in October, when Mitt Romney, responding to a question about guns, said: "But let me mention another thing. And that is parents. We need moms and dads, helping to raise kids. . . . [There are] a lot of great single moms, single dads. But, gosh, to tell our kids that before they have babies, they ought to think about getting married to someone, that's a great idea."

And Barack Obama addressed the issue during the 2008 campaign, in a combination Father's Day homily and campaign speech at a black church on Chicago's South Side. He said:

> Of all the rocks upon which we build our lives, we are reminded today that family is the most important. And we are called to recognize and honor how critical every father is to that foundation. They are teachers and coaches. They are mentors and role models. They are examples of success and the men who constantly push us toward it.
>
> But if we are honest with ourselves, we'll admit that too many fathers also are missing—missing from too many lives and too many homes. They have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men. And the foundations of our families are weaker because of it.

While the future president never uttered the word *marriage*, it is to his credit that he spoke boldly about the need for fathers to take responsibility. Another president who did so is Bill Clinton. In a 1994 speech to the National Baptist Convention, he said:

> [Too many babies] will be born where there was never a marriage. That is a disaster. It is wrong. And someone has to say, again, it is simply not right. You shouldn't have a baby before you are ready, and you shouldn't have a baby when you're not married. You just have to stop it. We've got to turn it around.

Several other presidents who touched on the subject failed to follow through in a significant way. Ronald Reagan, for instance, had Gary Bauer, an energetic conservative, lead a working group on families. But Reagan himself was preoccupied with other issues. George W. Bush charged Wade Horn, an assistant secretary of Health and Human Services, with making the case for "healthy marriages" but seldom dwelt on such questions himself. And as for George H.W. Bush, if his senior advisers had recognized the significance of family breakdown, they presumably wouldn't have panicked as they did when Vice President Dan Quayle spoke his infamous—but

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perfectly on-target—39 words during their 1992 reelection campaign:

> It doesn't help matters when prime-time TV has Murphy Brown—a character who supposedly epitomizes today's intelligent, highly paid, professional woman—mocking the importance of fathers, by bearing a child alone, and calling it just another "lifestyle choice."

One obvious reason for the prevailing presidential silence and inaction on family breakdown is that government is ill suited to orchestrate social behavior. Yet there are areas where public policy can influence family culture, and prominent among them is education. Our stubborn achievement gaps are related to family fragmentation: On average, children from fragmented families do less well in school than children growing up with their married father and mother. And for children who are short one parent in their lives—which often means short of structure as well—there is promise in pedagogical approaches aptly described as paternalistic.

In *Sweating the Small Stuff: Inner-City Schools and the New Paternalism* (2008), journalist David Whitman described six schools that "share a paternalistic ethos supporting a common school culture that prizes academic achievement." Although differently organized—the six include charter, parochial, public boarding, and ordinary public schools—these institutions all teach students "not just how to think but how to act according to what are commonly termed traditional, middle-class values. Much in the manner of a responsible parent, these schools tell students that they need an 'attitude adjustment.'"

Paternalistic schools, Whitman emphasizes, "can value freedom, curiosity, and self-expression" as thoroughly as other schools, while also "inculcating diligence, thrift, politeness, and a strong work ethic." As for how kids do academically, in the three inner-city high schools he writes about, 85 percent of graduates go on to college, while boys and girls in the three inner-city middle schools typically score in the 80th percentile or better on nationally normed tests.

There is, of course, plenty here for adults involved in elementary and secondary education to dislike. The very mention of "charter, parochial, and public boarding schools" is a red flag to many, even before you get to a pedagogical spirit that is poles apart from the progressive ethos of much of education. But, son of a gun, many children from single-parent homes seem to do unusually well in these schools, in Whitman's account.

In a similar vein, the late economist and Minnesota legislator John Brandl argued that religiously affiliated schools "provide some disadvantaged children with a substitute for the care they are not receiving from family and neighborhood—something possible but very rare in public schools." Teachers, of course, need not work in religious schools in order to view their profession as a ministry, but it is only teachers in religious schools who are free to invoke in the classroom what they see as their and their students' obligation to God.

Neither sound arguments from economists nor well-established research findings that disadvantaged children, especially African-American girls and boys, tend to do better in private and religious schools will avail for more than small numbers of such students, of course, unless some form of public support—vouchers, tax credits, or "scholarships"—is made available, and these are anathema to liberal orthodoxy. One would like to believe that a lame-duck liberal White House, with less to fear from the big teachers' unions, would feel free to think anew. It is unlikely.

More realistic may be the possibility that President Obama, in discussing the education of children in broken homes, might return to the kind of morally rich and compelling rhetoric he used over four years ago in speaking about fathers. If he did—and especially if he were also willing to speak plainly about the benefits of marriage—even that modest step would be worth applauding. ♦

Mas Movement

Catalonia ponders secession.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

A country is in big trouble when cities or states it thought prosperous start clamoring for bailouts. Think back to the New York headlines of the 1970s ("Ford to City: Drop Dead") or consider the states now careening towards bankruptcy (Illinois and California tops among them). But Spain has a bigger problem. It is a complicated constitutional federation that relies on the semi-autonomous region of Catalonia to pay a lot of its bills, and Catalonia is now saying to Madrid what Ford said to New York. The Catalan president, Artur Mas, has called elections for November 25, promising to interpret a big victory as a green light for a referendum on full independence. Spain's government has declared, Spain's Supreme Court has opined, and Spain's national assembly has voted that such a referendum would be illegal.

Artur Mas

All of Europe is broke, but Spain is broker, and for a long time Catalonia appeared to be even broker still. For years its public finances have been in disorder and its banks on the verge

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of collapse. But Catalonia remains the economic, research, and financial powerhouse of Spain. Many of its woes come from the need to carry the rest of Spain—with its bubbles and its scandals and its elaborate patronage systems—on its back. Catalonia has a trade surplus of almost $30 billion with the rest of the country, and loses 10 percent of its gross domestic product to the other regions through transfer programs. When a nationalist march in Barcelona, the capital, on September 11 drew huge crowds, Mas seized the moment to demand a less onerous fiscal compact from Madrid. Since that could have imperiled 1 or 2 percent of the Spanish budget, conservative premier Mariano Rajoy, already facing budgetary pressure from European authorities, said no. Mas dissolved the Catalan parliament and asked the public for an "indestructible majority" to hold an independence referendum within four years.

Catalan nationalism is ancient, but the movement as we now know it dates from the 19th century, when the region's industrial development turned the area around Barcelona into something dramatically more modern than the rest of Spain. Mas's voters are not the ignorant, vindictive, and folkloric nationalists of caricature. His mentor Jordi Pujol always strove to distinguish his movement from nationalisms that were "exclusive, uncooperative, and often disrespectful."

The movement has much in common with other breakaway movements gaining steam in Europe now. Scottish nationalists will hold a referendum on independence in 2014, and the new Flemish nationalists have just captured the mayoralty of Antwerp. The Catalan website In Transit has described all these movements as "cosmopolitan nationalism." Pujol built the nationalist Convergence and Union (CiU) party around gentle, cultured, center-right businessmen. He encouraged immigration, on the grounds that North Africans (or whoever) would have to learn the Catalan language, while internal migrants from Andalusia would be content to stick with Spanish. (He has only been half-right. The Achilles' heel of the CiU in the Mas era is that the Catalan language on which the national identity rests is now spoken as a first language by only a minority in Barcelona.)

This kind of nationalism is not as unsettling as its predecessors. For much the same reason, it is not as logical, either. Catalans, like Scots and Flemings, do not seek a country for "ourselves alone." They explicitly seek to submit themselves to the European Union's system of "shared sovereignty." Mas reportedly wants the wording of the referendum question to read: "Do you want Catalonia to become a new state within the European Union?" The legal scholar Antoni Abat Ninet has written that Catalonia must make clear right off the bat that it "assumes the supremacy of community law and intends to maintain stability in international relations and respect for fundamental rights." The foundation Catalunya Estat is optimistic that, under international law—specifically the Vienna Convention of 1978—Catalunya could glide right into EU membership.

Scottish experts, too, have devoted a good deal of thought to whether their country can automatically maintain its membership in the EU. They are a bit less sanguine. In an opinion prepared for the British parliament, Graham Avery of the European Policy Centre in Brussels wrote that "Scotland's EU membership would need to be in place simultaneously with Scottish independence." But why? What if it weren't? Would Scotland still want independence? Would Catalonia? These nationalists sound less like Garibaldi fighting for the unification of Italy than Eleanor Holmes Norton debating statehood for the District of Columbia.

Since parliament has already approved a referendum, Mas's CiU is set to benefit no matter what happens. In ordinary circumstances, a lukewarm plurality wants independence. But as in similar votes in Quebec, big referenda fire people up. Earlier this year, a poll in the Barcelona paper *El Periódico* had 53.6 percent saying they would vote "Yes," versus 32 percent on the "No" side. Mas is now six seats short of an absolute majority. If he gets one, he will have a lot of freedom of action. If he doesn't, his republican right will have to make a coalition with the party known as the Republican Left (ERC). That would be fine, too. It would isolate the non-nationalists on the left, further damaging an imploding Catalan socialist party that has been the CiU's main rival, and which has benefited from a cozy relationship with the Socialists in Madrid.

Madrid is resisting. Under the Spanish constitution, Spain must approve any secession. Lest the message be seen as ambiguous, the National Assembly voted overwhelmingly (276 votes to 42) in October to disallow the Catalan referendum. The conservative Euro-parliament member Alejo Vidal-Quadras opined that an independent Catalonia would have to undertake the long process of reapplying for EU membership. The move towards independence shows no sign of stopping. Catalans, despite their recent history, may underestimate the grim resolve of their fellow Iberians. Spaniards, meanwhile, think Mas is playing some kind of game, and hope he might be willing to negotiate the referendum away in exchange for a generously amended fiscal compact. Tragedies often result when two sides each wrongly think the other is bluffing.

Catalan independence is a wish that has been harbored for centuries. There are cultural, economic, and moral arguments for it. But one must ask why it is happening the way it is happening, and why now. The answer lies in the EU, which is a project for dissolving the continent's nation-states. The EU's leaders might not say it, they might not even think it, but the logic is inexorable. It is natural for minorities within the traditional nation-states to profit from this dissolution. But eventually majorities will see it as a trick that has been played on them. There is nothing more dangerous in politics than a majority convinced it has been tricked. ♦

The New Middle East

Israel and its neighbors

A rocket is launched from Gaza.

NEWSCOM

By Elliott Abrams

It is now two months until the inauguration in Washington, and it would be nice if the world went into a postelection recess for the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays. With Israel facing elections on January 22, there might once have been some hope for a brief respite. Alas, events in the Middle East are heating up and are likely to keep getting hotter this winter and into the spring.

Until this week the hottest crisis was in Syria, where the death total is now around 40,000—with about 10 times that number as refugees and many hundreds of thousands more as internally displaced persons. American policy has, at least until now, been to combine diplomatic activity with military and intelligence passivity. American, EU, and Arab pressure got the Syrian opposition to offer a new, unified face to the world last week, but that unity will be useless unless it elicits more military help. Bashar al-Assad cannot defeat the rebels, but with more help they can defeat him. Optimists think the recent American diplomatic efforts are the precursor to a new, postelection activism that sees us getting more arms to the opposition so they can seize and keep more territory in northern Syria and then begin to move south toward Damascus. And the departure of CIA director David Petraeus may even help here, for he was reported to be extremely cautious about ramping up the CIA's role in the Syria crisis.

Chances are, then, that Syria will see more fighting in the next few months. A no-fly zone remains unlikely, especially if the rebels appear to be making gains without one. If the rebels win, the administration will next year claim that it handled things perfectly well and that critics who argued for a greater American role sooner were just mindless hawks or—worse yet—neoconservatives! But the fall of Assad will only inaugurate the next stage in the Syria crisis, as jihadist, Muslim Brotherhood, and more moderate and secular elements of the opposition struggle for power. Here the administration's passivity—allowing the crisis to drag on for two years—may prove to have been catastrophic. The jihadist presence in Syria was tiny and unimportant when the war began, but grew monthly as Sunnis watched the regime slaughter their brethren while Western powers did little or nothing. Will the jihadists just go home when Assad falls, or make more trouble in the neighborhood? Will the Brotherhood prove to be the best organized group while moderates are divided and feckless, as happened in Egypt? The time to have helped those moderate forces—with guns, to be sure they were a powerful part of the victorious coalition, and with humanitarian aid, to be sure they could buy influence and show the

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benefits of their Western ties—is about over. The Obama administration muffed this, and Syria and its neighbors will all pay the price over the next few years.

Even with the fighting in Syria, the hottest crisis spot right now is obviously Gaza. In the last two weeks the number of rockets and mortars fired from Gaza into Israel grew into the hundreds, something no Israeli government could tolerate for long. This kind of terrorism from Gaza is what produced Operation Cast Lead in December 2008, when Israeli air and ground forces attacked Hamas and other terrorist groups there. It remains unclear why Hamas decided to produce a crisis now, but it is clearly a Hamas decision and not merely the action of uncoordinated jihadist groups. Hamas could have done more to repress the other groups and prevent them from firing into Israel; instead it joined the fray and officially claimed credit for some of the attacks.

The Israelis do not seek another ground war in Gaza, but something had to be done. Their air attacks into Gaza in early November were meant to signal Hamas to knock it off, but failed; in the three-day period from Saturday to Monday, November 10-12, more than a hundred rockets were shot into Israel. Israel responded on November 14 with airstrikes that among other things killed the Hamas military leader in Gaza, Ahmed Jabari. Those strikes had wall-to-wall political support in Israel, and in this preelection period no candidate wishes to appear weak in the face of terror.

The Israeli tactic is to make the Hamas leadership pay directly for these terror attacks on Israel rather than to make the population of Gaza pay. Israeli targeting was extremely careful, and by Friday afternoon there had been several hundred strikes by the Israeli Air Force but fewer than two dozen Palestinian deaths—and very few accidental hits at civilians that Hamas could turn to propaganda advantage. The hope is that Hamas will be persuaded that the price is too high, and the rockets will stop—and meanwhile Israel will not have to listen to European and Arab complaints about the plight of the poor people of Gaza under Israeli attack. The initial Hamas reaction of more rocket attacks into Israel to avenge the death of Jabari was predictable, and does not tell us whether Hamas really wishes to escalate. If it does, an Israeli ground assault is inevitable—and reserves were called up in Israel in midweek.

When Israel began Shabbat, the supposed day of rest, as a day of war on Friday, the question remained whether Hamas was going to force a ground invasion by continuing and even escalating its attacks. It is plausible, because Hamas is in a difficult position, and a week of what it will call "martyrdom" may look attractive. The Muslim Brotherhood takeover of Egypt has not been the boon they had anticipated, and the border with Egypt has been only partially opened. Egyptian soldiers continue to take apart the smuggling tunnels that over the years have provided so many goods to Gaza—and so much income to Hamas. And Egypt's new government has not renounced the peace treaty with Israel, is negotiating with the IMF for a loan, and appears to seek steady relations with Washington—all anathema to the Hamas warriors in Gaza. In fact, Cairo even urged Hamas to stop firing rockets into Israel. Meanwhile the effort of Palestinian Authority president and Fatah party chairman Mahmoud Abbas in the United Nations appears headed for a late November vote that will give "Palestine" the status of a "non-member state" U.N. observer. With that status in hand Abbas says he wants to restart negotiations with Israel after its elections (abandoning the Palestinian Authority's previous position, in essence imposed by the Obama administration, that all construction in settlements and in Jerusalem had to be frozen first).

Whatever Hamas's motivations, it has produced this crisis and must seek to avoid a visible defeat. That should mean stopping now, but the leaders of Hamas are not conventional politicians.

All this left Hamas looking marginalized, and what fun is there in governing a poor and tiny principality? Better, perhaps, to remind the world of Hamas's true vocation, which is terror; to remind everyone that Hamas is still there and can still produce a regional crisis; and to remind would-be peacemakers with Abbas that he controls only half the Palestinian population. But whatever Hamas's debatable motivations, it has produced this crisis and must now seek to avoid a visible defeat. Logically that should mean stopping now, but the leaders of Hamas are not conventional politicians. Their actions in the last few weeks remind us that Hamas leaders too have a "policy" on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that it is not to prove they are effective negotiators in U.N. salons or efficient administrators of the statelet they now rule. They are not irrational, but they are terrorists, enthralled by blood, death, and martyrdom.

What we will learn early next year is whether there is a U.S. policy on Israeli-Palestinian issues beyond stopping the current violence. Since the quick failure of the September 2010 peace extravaganza at the White House, attended by Netanyahu, Abbas, Mubarak, and the king of Jordan, the Obama administration has not had one. The days when George Mitchell and Hillary Clinton inveighed against settlements are long gone. Today the administration is opposing Abbas's U.N. efforts, and when he succeeds the

administration will try to persuade him not to complicate matters further by bringing Israeli generals before the International Criminal Court or joining additional U.N. agencies—actions that would embitter Israeli-Palestinian relations even further, potentially prevent renewed negotiations, and lead Congress to end American support for those agencies just as we have withdrawn our support for UNESCO (where we supplied 22 percent of the budget). We see what Obama wants to prevent, but we don't know what he wants to promote. Does he see the "peace process" as a second-term chance for greatness, or a magnet for endless and useless diplomatic efforts?

Just managing the current developments in the region would seem to be enough to keep our diplomats busy when the president's second term begins, without the reach for an Israeli-Palestinian peace and a great ceremony on the White House lawn. Not only will there be Syria, the violence coming from Gaza, a Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt whose commitment to democracy is at best unproved, and an increasing sense of instability in Jordan, but looming over all this will be Iran. Negotiations between the Islamic Republic and the P5+1—the United States, Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia—will resume soon. But what is the president's game? Obama loyalists debate whether he really means "all options are on the table" and might some day bomb Iran or support an Israeli strike.

Three people were killed when a rocket hit this building in southern Israel.

The first steps will be diplomatic, and the question is whether the administration will avoid the hardest choice—war—not by ending the Iranian program through sanctions and negotiations, but by accepting a bad deal and calling it victory. Defining what is a bad deal will of course be the substance of the debate, and it can be very technical at points. But the gap between what the Security Council resolutions demand and what Iran will be willing to accept seems very wide, and a deal that can be described as "even weaker than what the U.N. wanted!" may not seem too attractive to most Americans. There's no particular reason for Republicans—who have always taken a harder line on Iran than has Obama, and who forced many of the current sanctions on him—to accept such a deal, and they can be expected to oppose it. So may the Israelis, and so at least in private may the French. And so may the Arab Gulf states, who not only oppose a deal that allows Iran to have any nuclear program at all but also fear that an Iran that feels triumphant and has gotten all sanctions removed may step up its subversion in the region.

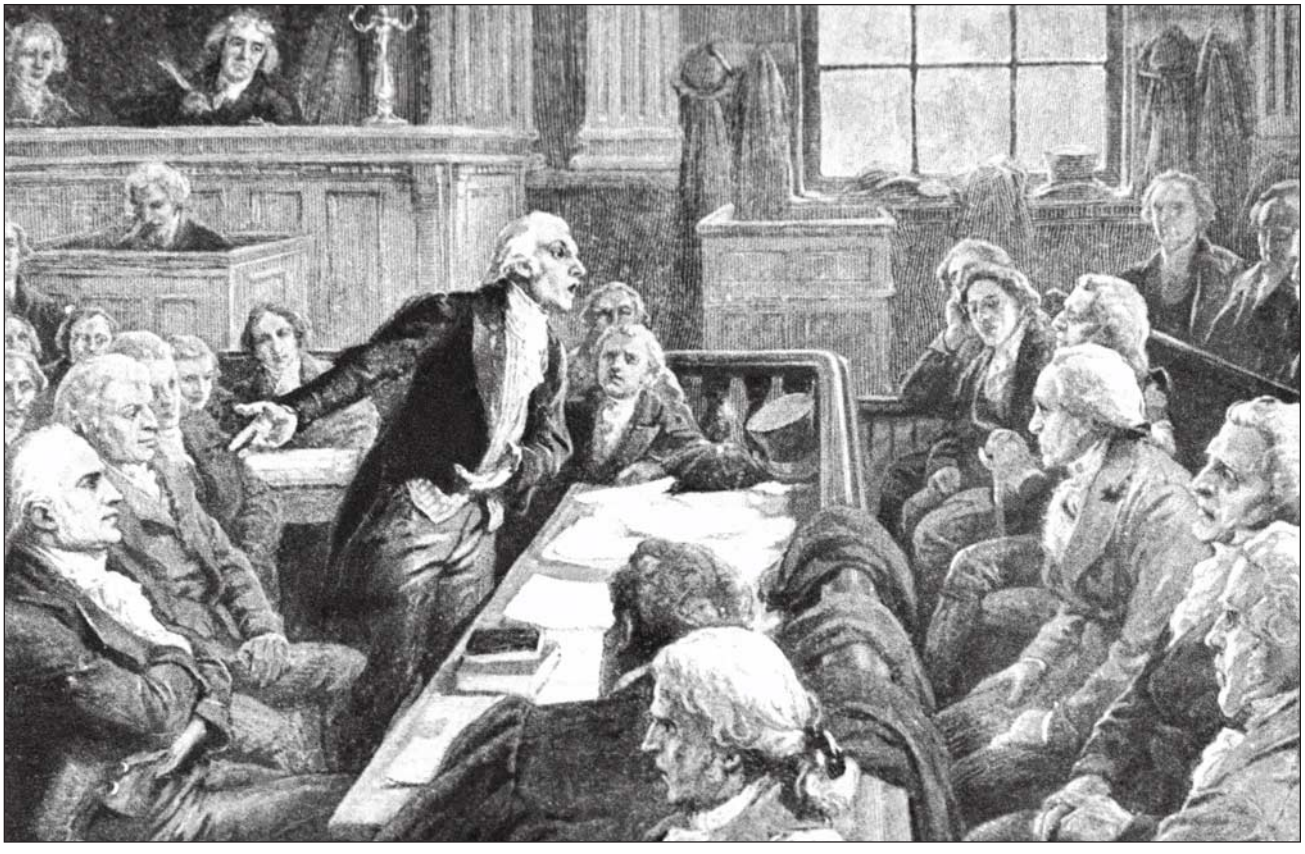
If there are serious negotiations with Iran, the president must decide fast whether they will be bilateral rather than with the Security Council members and Germany—which would make both the Israelis and Arabs very nervous—and whether he will offer Iran a "grand bargain" that goes beyond nukes to end 30 years of hostility between the United States and the Islamic Republic, which would make the Israelis and Arabs even more nervous. He may well find that Khamenei, whose loathing for the United States knows no limits, refuses such talks and such a deal—or indeed any deal. If so, the president will next spring face an Israel that thinks its military option must be exercised soon, as he will face a decision about American military options.

All of this is in the cards, but wild cards may appear. What if we find that al Qaeda groups in northern Mali were involved in the Benghazi attack and need to strike at them before that region becomes a new safe haven for al Qaeda bases? What if the palpable unease in Jordan turns into serious demonstrations (and there were sizable demonstrations this past week) against the king? What if the king and crown prince of Saudi Arabia, both in questionable health, die or become incapacitated in the coming months? What if Iran decides to turn Bahrain into a greater crisis by spurring riots there, or sends more Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah troops into Syria to bolster the Assad regime?

Also among the wild cards are the names of our own top officials. Who will deal with crises on the American side? A Secretary of State Susan Rice, who saw Benghazi as a demonstration and not terrorism, or John Kerry, who long argued that Assad was a reformer? Who will be running the Pentagon on the day the president must decide about bombing Iran, or supporting an Israeli bombing and helping the Israelis deal with its consequences? Who will be CIA director as we contemplate everything from drone strikes in Mali, to arming the Syrian rebels, to sabotage in Iran?

The next three to six months in the Middle East will make Obama administration officials look back to 2012 with nostalgia as a quiet time when they were able to focus on the campaign. The coming year will be much tougher—starting now. ♦

NEWSCOM



Former vice president Aaron Burr on trial for treason

Clash of Titans

A game of hardball among the Founders. BY J. HARVIE WILKINSON III

Many Americans may know the name of Aaron Burr, though not much more. But in 1807, the prosecution of Burr was a very big deal. Imagine: a former vice president of the United States on trial for treason!

So R. Kent Newmyer, professor of law and history at the University of Connecticut, has quite a story to tell, and he tells it well. The tale involves three men—Aaron Burr, Thomas Jefferson, and John Marshall—drawn almost fatefully together out of mutual dislike, even loathing. Around them is a large supporting cast—some of whom remain shadowy while others, most notably the lawyers at Burr's trial, are brought successfully to life in Newmyer's account.

The Treason Trial of Aaron Burr
Law, Politics, and the Character Wars of the New Nation
by R. Kent Newmyer
Cambridge, 240 pp., $28.99

The trial revolved around Burr's mysterious activities on America's Western frontier. Either he was intent on dislodging Spain from Mexico (though perhaps only in the event of a declared war), or on provoking the secession of the Western states from the Union. Newmyer wonders "if Burr himself really knew for sure what he planned to do" beyond resurrecting his own relevance to American life, and finding fame and fortune in the enticing Southwest. So widely mistrusted was Burr by many of his contemporaries—John Adams memorably called him the man who "must and would be something"—that President Jefferson suspected the worst. As did most Americans: The "packed courtroom often verged on chaos," writes Newmyer.

For many, the trial of a humbled blueblood such as Burr was first-class entertainment. According to one young witness, "the crowd soon divided into partisan rooting sections,

BETTMANN / CORBIS

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with the preponderance of the ladies on Burr's side of the courtroom." Lawyers on both sides sought to play to public sentiment in hopes of burnishing their own reputations and influencing the verdict.

The trial took place in Richmond, and John Marshall presided over the fracas in his capacity as a Supreme Court justice riding circuit. At the outset, the defendant seemed to be in a bad way. America's sense of nationhood was new and fragile, and Thomas Jefferson had as much as branded Aaron Burr a traitor in an address to Congress some six months before the trial began. Although Burr and Marshall were fellow Revolutionary War veterans, Marshall was an admirer of Alexander Hamilton, whom Burr had killed in a duel on the heights of Weehawken in the summer of 1804. And yet the jury acquitted Burr—or, more accurately, rendered an opaque verdict of "not proved to be guilty under this indictment by any evidence submitted to us."

How did the prosecution manage to squander its advantages? Well, for one thing, there were several glaring weaknesses in its case. Burr's Western "army" was in reality an ill-equipped gaggle of 25 or 30 men, seemingly incapable of any operational success, much less "levying war" against the Union. Moreover, Burr was not even present when whatever passed for war was supposedly being levied.

Burr also assembled a crack defense team, including the eminent John Wickham, "a lawyer's lawyer and a consummate professional with a killer instinct." But the stage manager of the defense was none other than Burr himself. Burr may not have been steeped in the niceties of legal doctrine, but, says Newmyer, "he knew what he needed to know and had a reputation for getting the job done." He was a good trial lawyer, and, after all, "it was his own life that was on the line—a fact that concentrated his mind wonderfully."

The fact of Burr's acquittal owes much to the nature of the Constitution's Treason Clause. The Framers had themselves recently been deemed treasonous for their activities against the British Crown, and they were not about to make this particular crime an easy one to prove. Moreover, treason was (as Marshall once put it) prone to "excite and agitate the passions of men"—a club too temptingly wielded against political enemies as much as real traitors.

The result was a high bar for conviction, requiring "levying War" against the United States or giving "Aid and Comfort" to the nation's "Enemies." Furthermore, "No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court." It was altogether predictable that a clause such as this would become a lawyer's feast, with terms that were hotly disputed during Burr's trial and remain contested to this day. (As Justice Robert Jackson noted in 1945, "The little clause is packed with controversy and difficulty.") For the most part, prosecutors have avoided treason charges altogether, especially when prosecutions under other federal statutes aimed at protecting national security might achieve much the same end. When Adam Gadahn was indicted for treason in 2006, it was the first such charge in more than a half-century.

The tale involves three men—Aaron Burr, Thomas Jefferson, and John Marshall—drawn almost fatefully together out of mutual dislike, even loathing.

So what kind of man was Aaron Burr? Not, perhaps, the pure villain one might think. Few people are all bad and, as to Burr, Newmyer rightly attempts to balance the ledger. He notes that Burr fought bravely in the Revolution, that he was a devoted father to his daughter Theodosia, that he "served effectively" as vice president, and, most poignantly, that for four years he cared for his friend and defense attorney at his trial, Luther Martin, after Martin "suffered a paralyzing stroke." Still, Newmyer's statement that, in his headstrong actions and "open defiance of polite conventions," Burr was "America's very own Lord Byron" seems, alas, a bit much.

The remarkable thing about America's Founding period is the extent to which it was driven by attachments to ideas and principle. The great figures of that period (Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, Marshall, James Madison, George Washington) are all distinguished by their commitment to a cause much larger than themselves. And for all his better moments, Burr could be astonishingly selfish. Witness, for example, his relative indifference to his own "army," some of whom, at least, were prepared to sacrifice considerably for him. One need not take every instance of the Founders' self-professed idealism at face value to note that Burr's gaze throughout this period was (as Newmyer acknowledges) firmly fixed on Number One.

As for Marshall, Newmyer goes a tad too easy on him. Shortly before the trial, Marshall attended a party for Burr thrown by Burr's chief counsel, Wickham. Whether "the gentlemanly tradition of the Richmond bar and Marshall's long friendship with Wickham" explain his presence, or whether he "toasted Burr's health" out of respect for his host, seem largely irrelevant in view of his initial lapse of judgment. Then, too, Marshall's brother-in-law Edward Carrington was foreman of the jury, and, during the trial, Marshall issued a subpoena *duces tecum* to President Jefferson, an acknowledged archenemy whose views on popular sovereignty and states' rights differed markedly from Marshall's own. Finally, he issued crucial restrictive rulings on what evidence the prosecution might introduce, causing critics to think, not implausibly,

that he was bent on directing a jury verdict for the defendant.

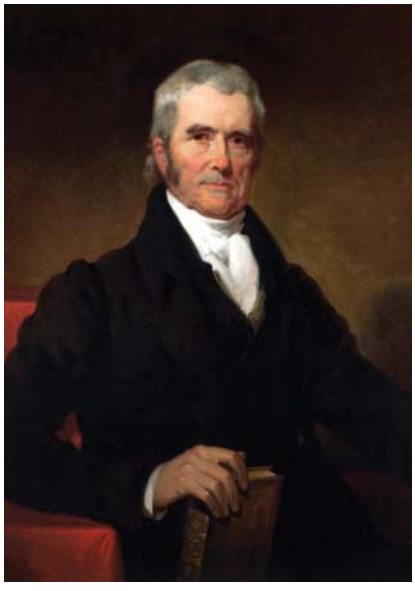
Taken in toto, and even given the fact that judicial ethics were vastly less developed than they are today, the chief justice's actions may yet have given the young republic an ill-advised display of pronounced judicial partiality.

Notwithstanding all this, Newmyer gives Marshall high marks for his conduct of the trial. Despite the unfortunate appearances, the judgment seems sound. Marshall's job was to see that a man whose guilt was assumed almost from the moment of accusation nonetheless received a fair trial. His subpoena sought to give Burr the right to present evidence critical to his defense, and his evidentiary rulings sought to limit the trial to those charges actually set forth in the indictment. Further, Marshall's demeanor in the midst of the encircling mayhem remained calm, and his rulings were laid forth in language that preserved the high ground of legal principle even as they proved difficult for the public to read or comprehend.

The great Marshall opinions in *Marbury*, *McCulloch*, *Gibbons*, and the like secured his place in history; they also secured the place of the courts as a true Third Branch. In the early years of the Republic, the federal judiciary needed to prove itself not just at the heights, but on the ground. The Burr trial helped to do that. Newmyer notes that "the one principle" Marshall never compromised during the trial "was his commitment to judicial duty and judicial independence."

For that, he paid a heavy price. A Baltimore mob hanged him in effigy for siding with the "traitor." Republican partisans sought to arraign the Federalist Marshall before "the bar of the public" as a "disgrace to the bench of justice." The Burr trial also precipitated calls to impeach Marshall in the Senate, calls encouraged by President Jefferson. Yet Marshall had to know this was coming: If a collateral benefit for Marshall of Burr's acquittal was Jefferson's acute discomfort, that does not, in the end, outweigh the course of courage and independence he set for federal courts.

We are left, finally, with Jefferson. Even the greatest of the Founders had their low moments, and among Jefferson's was the trial of Aaron Burr. Jefferson was right to be concerned about Burr's conduct: Communications from the West were poor, rumors abounded, and the prospect of a freelancing former vice president



Chief Justice John Marshall

pursuing his own foreign policy was not amusing. The problem was that Jefferson's desire to get Burr, well past any point of danger, became a near obsession—perhaps because of general mistrust or, perhaps, because Jefferson had never forgiven Burr for his tardiness in bowing out in favor of Jefferson in the disputed presidential election of 1800.

At any rate, Jefferson personally assumed direction of the prosecution, writing letters to his ally, U.S. attorney George Hay, that, according to Newmyer, "were in fact instructions about litigation strategy: about the nature of the charges that should be brought, about evidence, about whom to call for witnesses and how to interrogate them." The spectacle prompted Burr's defense to term "the president's interference with the prosecution . . . improper, illegal and unconstitutional." Luther Martin claimed Jefferson had "let slip the dogs of war, the hell-hounds of persecution, to hunt down my friend."

Mixed with the high code of personal honor in the early 19th century was a startling amount of invective and vitriol. Partisanship was never far from the Burr trial. Not that partisanship is necessarily a bad thing: It imparts energy to politics, encourages participation in electoral pursuits, and frames choices for voters in a recognizable way. But given the stakes, both then and now, no one should suppose that disagreement will be dainty, and the gentlemen of the early 19th century could pummel with the best. The question, then and now, is what limits should partisans observe?

Jefferson was eager to unleash the full fury of prosecutorial power upon a personal enemy and political opponent. Had he succeeded, American politics might have taken a far different and more retributive course. As it is, the willingness to criminalize our political differences is bad enough. Not only through the discredited institution of the independent counsel, but through the executive branch itself, have questionable and marginal proceedings been initiated. Whether the behavior of a president, a sitting or former senator, or numerous subordinate executive officials is vain, greedy, evasive, or sleazy beyond measure is one question; whether it is criminal, not to mention impeachable or treasonous, is something else.

The dangers of executive abuses will only grow with time, as government agencies may be diverted from public purposes to personal or partisan ends. It is here that the Burr trial is instructive. Aaron Burr was a scoundrel; but, based on the evidence adduced, a traitor he was not. Had Jefferson succeeded in having him executed, Burr's blood may have stained Jefferson's hands throughout history. In that sense, Newmyer wisely observes that Marshall (and, ironically, Aaron Burr) saved Jefferson from himself. Burr's acquittal was not an act of absolution for a devious and narcissistic man, but an act of national grace. It set limits on the partisan uses of executive power, without which the rule of law would snap. ♦

B&A

Atheist of the Book

A grand old man of letters meets the literature of Judaism. BY DAVID WOLPE

Amos Oz in Tel Aviv, 2008

Many years ago, Will Herberg spoke of "cut-flower ethics." He argued that, once unmoored from the religious soil that nurtured them, ethical principles would endure for a while, but would ultimately wither. To assume otherwise is to mistakenly dismiss the catalyzing effect that the idea of God has had on ethical motivation throughout the centuries.

That image kept recurring as I read Amos Oz and his daughter Fania Oz-Sulzberger's lovely and unwittingly elegiac book. Amos Oz has passed from cultural insurgent to grand old man of Israeli letters, and a perennial Nobel contender. Now a full-throttle member of the Israeli cultural establishment, he still shares with other major Israeli writers (A. B. Yehoshua and, preeminently, the late Yehuda Amichai) a wry knowingness that does not preclude depth, and a weariness that does not spill over into despair. But alongside Hebrew writers of the first few generations, most notably S. Y. Agnon, Amos Oz is drawing on a cultural patrimony that is thinning in the rarefied air of software startups, and has become a victim of increased polarization between the religious and secular in Israel.

Jews and Words
by Amos Oz
and Fania Oz-Sulzberger
Yale, 248 pp., $25

Oz and Oz-Sulzberger call themselves "atheists of the book." It is one of many fetching turns of phrase here, no surprise from a premier novelist and his historian daughter. The very pairing of authorship is an illustration of the book's central thesis: "So when you ran for your life from massacre and pogrom, from burning home and synagogue, it was children and books you took with you. The books and the children." It is a statement of continuity with the tradition whose claims to authority they are at pains to dismiss.

Jews, write the authors, are not a bloodline but a textline. The great philosopher Saadia Gaon said that Jews were a nation by virtue of the Torah. Oz and Oz-Sulzberger paraphrase as follows: "Tangential to Saadia, the nation is a nation only by virtue of its *texts* . . . we were not a people because we thought so and so, but we were a people because we *read* so and so." It is not hard to make the case for Jewish entanglement with words:

> Jews talk a lot: Verbs denoting "speak," "say," or "talk" appear in the Bible more than six thousand times, making the utterance of words its most common activity. By comparison, the verb for "make" or "do" has fewer than two thousand appearances.

When teaching Judaism to college students, the first point I have to make is that it is an exegetical tradition. The Torah may be the foundation stone, but for addressing any significant question in Judaism, it is but a starting point. Jewish tradition believes in the interpretability of the book—indeed it demands it. Oz and Oz-Sulzberger write that the Torah is "a book that gave birth to innumerable other books. As though the Bible itself harked and heeded the command it attributes to God, 'go forth and multiply.'" As people enmeshed in language, they revel in Judaism's fidelity to the ever-expanding cascade of once-sacred words.

There is some repetition here, and a facile cleverness that collapses upon inspection:

> Who is a Jew? Whoever is wrestling with the question, "Who is a Jew?"

A moment's reflection proves how vacuous this statement is. Jean-Paul Sartre and John Murray Cuddihy struggled with the question of "who is a Jew" but, I think, would decline the honor of being called, thereby,

BLOOMBERG / GETTY IMAGES

David Wolpe, rabbi of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, is the author, most recently, of Why Faith Matters.

Jewish. They continue, "For us, as for any Jew, here is our personal definition: any human being crazy enough to call himself a Jew is a Jew." This clever avoidance of the normative is symptomatic of the problem Herberg saw long ago. What we have in the Ozes' Judaism are cut-flower texts.

Some secular intellectuals, and most religious Jews, spend a great deal of time studying Jewish texts. But the average nonbelieving Jew is rarely occupied with the textline of which Oz and Oz-Sulzberger write so lovingly. Cultural traditions serve the people for whom they matter. Jewish texts, in some way, reflected the will of God; that was why people studied them.

It is no coincidence that in the great enterprise of Daf Yomi—studying a page of Talmud each day until completion over seven years—the participants are overwhelmingly orthodox. The rationale for the nonbeliever begins with the texts' beauty, but there are many beautiful texts; arguing simply for their wisdom enters Jewish texts in fierce competition, with everything from great literature to the latest tract of self-help. The text-lover pleads that you should read it because it is yours, but we all know how careless people are with their cultural inheritances. If it is mine, what need have I of the effort to acquire it?

In the end, for all its virtues and cleverness, there is a hollow evasion at the center of *Jews and Words*. Jewish literacy in Israel itself is appallingly low. No matter how lyrical Oz and Oz-Sulzberger justly insist the Song of Songs is, in an Internet age, who will spend time with it? Paradoxically, for a book about Jews and words, two Israelis have chosen to write this book in English. No doubt that will assure it a wider audience than if it were written in Hebrew, but I fear that is both because Hebrew speakers are already familiar with some of the more facile comparisons and comments, and for a deeper, more troubling reason: They will no longer thrill to its possibilities.

In the English-speaking world we might imagine there is a large coterie of "atheists of the book," waiting to be swept up in the vast sea of Jewish literature. Its very foreignness gives it a seductive exoticism. But this literature was written in a believing spirit. Even when the spirits began to ebb, the first moderns had been raised in the study hall and knew the literature they alternately cherished and rejected. Today, the flowers wither. Or, to put it biblically, the bones only revive when the spirit of the Lord blows through them. ♦

B&A

Left's Turn

Who are the liberals, and what do they believe?

BY FRED SIEGEL

The Cause
The Fight for American Liberalism from Franklin Roosevelt to Barack Obama
by Eric Alterman and Kevin Mattson
Viking, 561 pp., $32.95

Making Sense of American Liberalism
edited by Jonathan Bell and Timothy Stanley
Illinois, 260 pp., $55

The Cause, an account of American liberalism from Franklin Roosevelt to the present, is a strangely bifurcated book that speaks to the underlying dynamic of the recent election. At its best, it is, to date, the most thoughtful critique of contemporary liberalism written from within that worldview. Yet, at moments, particularly when dealing with Barack Obama, it descends into standard-issue screed about the unreciprocated moderation of a timid president beset by the evils of Fox News.

The dueling voices are probably the product of its authorship. It began as a joint project of Kevin Mattson, an Ohio University historian of 20th-century liberalism, and Eric Alterman, a columnist at the *Nation*. Somewhere along the line, Mattson dropped out of the project and, though the final book bears both men's names, Alterman's is in a far larger font. Whatever their differences, however, the authors consistently and continuously argue that the loss of white working-class support has been an enduring misfortune for liberalism.

The authors' nonesuch, the ideal that animates *The Cause*, is an alliance between workers and intellectuals. In the words of their cynosure, Eleanor Roosevelt, they hope for "a partnership between those who work with their hands and those who work with their heads." But their ideal alliance—which came together in the second presidential term of Eleanor's husband, Franklin D. Roosevelt—began to dissolve (as they see it) when Adlai Stevenson, who became the liberals' beau idéal, won the Democratic presidential nominations in 1952 and 1956. "Liberalism," said John Kenneth Galbraith, "came to mean support of Stevenson." Stevenson, they note, was "quite a snob." He was lukewarm about unions, and unionists returned the favor. When one woman tried to console him for his defeats, she told him that he had nonetheless "educated the country." He responded, "Yes, but a lot of people flunked the exam."

They try to speak with the once-vibrant voice of the junior Arthur Schlesinger in *The Vital Center* (1949). The authors are in sympathy with the civil rights, feminist, and gay pride movements, yet are critical of the

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fractious political effects of the counterculture and identity politics. They acknowledge that the quest for personal authenticity and transcendence doesn't lend itself to the ballot box. But they never try to square the circle.

They approvingly quote Arnold Kaufman, author of *The Radical Liberal* (1968), on the Aquarian militants of the 1960s:

> The counterculture threatens the very qualities upon which our best hope for a brighter future depends—a disciplined ability to reason and a morally passionate commitment to a politics that is both rational and relatively independent of the quest for personal salvation.

But they never try to understand why "the mystical militants," as Irving Howe described them, were so drawn to the netherworld of mythmaking and violence once associated with European fascism. Similarly, the aesthetic appeal of black violence understood as a form of political theater is beyond their ken. But they have the integrity to accurately note that "Jew hatred became a kind of casual form of communication among many of the self-styled revolutionaries of both The New Left and the Black Power movements."

Inspired by the coalition of blacks, the white working class, and the "kids" sometimes envisioned by Robert Kennedy, the authors turn a jaundiced eye toward the late George McGovern and the McGovernites, for whom the streets of 1968 became the Democratic convention aisles of 1972. They note the insider gamesmanship and rule manipulation that produced McGovern's 1972 nomination: The McGovernite "rights revolution," they argue, invited "activists to carve up what remained of the Democratic Party in the name of narrow, often conflicting identities." The upshot was an "uncompromising form of identity politics that turned the entire enterprise into a never-ending zero-sum ethnic, racial, gender, and cultural war often driven by mutual fear and loathing."

Liberalism, the authors seem to acknowledge, had "failed to solve the social problems of the 1960s. In important respects it seemed to exacerbate them." No wonder, then, that so many liberals exited the ranks while the white working class moved away from the Democratic party. "Liberals," they continue, "struggled mightily to find a formula that would allow them to somehow hold on to their working class constituency as they simultaneously embraced the ethos of . . . the 'new movements.' It was, in fact, an impossible task," given the movement leaders' penchant for attacking blue-collar values in the name of the utopian promise of a cultural revolution, even as the dystopian reality of day-to-day life meant rising crime and collapsing schools.

This is a damning indictment, particularly since the only liberals they can point to who tried to hold the old alliances together became neoconservatives. But the impossible task had a social, if not political, solution for the increasingly statist liberals. The triumphs of civil rights in the midst of an economic boom opened a broad path for African-American incorporation. But when the black power movement deemed integration "cultural genocide," liberals forsook their integrationist ideals and sought to turn black power to their political advantage. They tried to broker alliances around the new interest groups' power, much as Franklin Roosevelt played off the newly emergent influence of industrial unions in the late 1930s.

The new New Deal was to be led by Edward Kennedy, who (as the authors describe him) believed that liberals needed "to stick to their faith . . . in government's capacity to provide for greater equality and social progress." Teddy Kennedy, they argue, "looked and felt like a throwback running the kind of campaign that liberals imagine Bobby Kennedy might have tried to run in 1968." This is not all a matter of wishful thinking on the part of Alterman and Mattson.

Caroline Kennedy, Barack Obama, Edward Kennedy, 2008

PAT BENIC / UPI / NEWSCOM

In his essay "Going Beyond the New Deal"—one of the contributions to *Making Sense of American Liberalism*—Oxford professor Timothy Stanley describes the now-forgotten left-liberal surge of the 1970s. It was a period when Richard Nixon and Watergate drove Republican registration down to historic lows, renewed international competition drove down American salaries, and capitalism was challenged by Eurocommunism. With big Democratic congressional majorities under President Jimmy Carter, economic stagnation at home, and a left turn by the big three among the unions—the Auto Workers, the Machinists, and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees—the path seemed, indeed,

open to a new New Deal. When Carter declined the progressive mantle, Kennedy, influenced by Michael Harrington of the Democratic Socialists of America, challenged the sitting president for the Democratic nomination in 1980.

The authors of *The Cause* implicitly argue that, unlike the McGovernites, Kennedy subsumed the rights-based demands issued by identity politics groups in a broader, more inclusive coalition, with economic justice as its guiding principle. But, as with Sirhan Sirhan and Robert Kennedy, fate intervened, and the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis revived Carter's standing among Democrats. As in 1968, liberalism was thrown off its promised path, and Bobby Kennedy's younger brother did not win the nomination. But the 1980 Democratic platform was written by his supporters, and its call for greater regulation, income redistribution, and national health care has defined liberalism ever since.

Its depth and subtlety in discussing the 1960-80 period wanes as *The Cause* approaches the present. Bill Clinton, who was able to appeal to both African Americans and working-class whites, is treated with considerable sympathy. But then the authors argue, against all evidence, that Barack Obama (who was contemptuous of Clinton's relative moderation and was opposed to welfare reform) is, in fact, the very embodiment of Clintonian centrism. Obama's first-term failures are laid at the feet of a Republican party that has become (in the authors' words) "an apocalyptic cult . . . terrorized [by] angry, ignorant" Tea Partiers.

In *Making Sense of American Liberalism*, the chapter on "Labor, Liberalism and the Democratic Party" by labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein makes sense of the contemporary politics of unionism. Lichtenstein explains that, because more than two-thirds of all union members live in just 10 states, labor has difficulty winning congressional battles. Card-check legislation, making it easier to unionize, went down to a resounding defeat even as Democrats had large majorities in both houses of Congress during 2009-10. Strikes have also become harder to win, and are less often invoked. The upshot is that labor's strength, based on the rise of public-sector unionism, has largely been on the state level. There, labor has been able (until recent downturns) to engage in political bargaining that would bring in new members and to expand its influence. Lichtenstein brands this as "corporatism," and sees it as labor's future.

The Cause has little to say about public-sector unions or the inegalitarian effects of liberal environmental policy that limits the creation of new energy and manufacturing jobs. Instead, it peters out with shop-worn musings on the danger of the authoritarian personality, a fine ending for a book written a half-century ago. But then again, as *The Cause* makes clear, liberalism, even with its periodic electoral victories, has never escaped the 1960s. ♦

B&A

A Natural Poet

Earthly delights in the shade of Robert Frost.

BY ANN STAPLETON

Lover he was, unlonely, yet alone—
Esteemed, belittled, nicknamed, and unknown.
—from "Epitaph," by Robert Francis

It might be argued that every American poet labors in the shadow of Robert Frost's birches. But the difficulty is particularly acute in the case of Robert Francis (1901-1987), a "poet's poet"—that double-edged designation—best known for his masterly lyric poems (eight books in all, including his *Collected Poems 1936-1976* and his final volume, *Late Fire, Late Snow*). Referred to by Frost as "the best neglected poet," he was constantly compared to his Amherst neighbor and mentor, with whom he could not help sharing a landscape both regional and artistic. Deferential toward the elder poet ("If he stumbles, his stumbling is more eloquent than our dancing") but true to his own gift, Francis himself offers, perhaps, the fairest assessment of this lifelong hazard to his critical reputation: "Robert Frost has pulled my orbit a little nearer to his. He may have pulled me a bit out of my true shape. But the stuff in me is still my own stuff."

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FRANK WAUGH / UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST LIBRARIES

Robert Francis, 1939

And so it is, as can be witnessed in "Who Comes as Light," a characteristically humble-hearted Francis poem—so tenderly vulnerable, yet clear of human disquiet—which Frost, in all his extraordinary power, could not have written:

Who comes as light
Need never wait outside.
Who brings the day
Always has right of way

To enter here,
Has leave to pass
Instant as light through glass.
Who comes as light
Will find these windows wide,
The glass washed clear.

Like Henry David Thoreau, his close companion of the mind, Francis lived much of his life in self-chosen isolation in a modest dwelling in the woods of Massachusetts. Fort Juniper, the house he named for the lowly but hardy ground-dwelling tree he took as his totem (*To overthrow a juniper a wind / Would have to blow the ground away beneath it*), was both a refuge from most human society and, by way of the green world he loved, a doorway into everything. The sun, the earthworm, the fern (*token / Of all things fertile, whole, unbroken*), the rain, and the blueberries (*miniature moon or planet*), and the birds they belong to (*If they belong to anyone*)—these were the beloved regular visitors to his life who found shelter in his poems.

Francis was a violinist and a vegetarian, a self-described "nature observer in a rudimentary way, a sunbather, a man of peace opposed to war, even something of poet." His disarming autobiography *The Trouble with Francis* (1971) reveals an endearingly odd, nature-entranced sensibility. As a child, he kept a "mouse farm" (his father's letter to him at camp: "The mice are O. K. Lovingly, Father") and arranged his own personal county fair consisting of two fine exhibits: a box turtle and a plate of grapes—the first "for the animal kingdom" and the latter "to represent the vegetable."

While working briefly on a chicken and apple farm after his discharge from the Army, he rescued an old baldy hen he named Gladys, a victim of the kind of pecking order violence he had feared as a youngster. To protect her from the cold, Francis housed her in his swept-out, unused fireplace, the stone hearth covered "with clean pine needles and rigged up" with "a little wooden fence." Gladys recovered completely in no time at all: "At Christmas friends came bringing her gifts. We sat around the fireplace, not now to watch the fire but to watch Gladys."

Like the character in *Cast Away* who, in the extremity of his loneliness, befriends a soccer ball, Francis, too, fashioned a friend of sorts out of an inanimate object: a stone face "with one squinting eye and a puckered mouth" atop a stone pedestal, to keep watch over Fort Juniper. The caption beside the stone man's photo in Francis's autobiography—like the poems themselves, and the man who wrote them—is self-abnegating yet revealingly self-insistent: "Origin Unknown, Age Undetermined, Sex Uncertain, Meaning Undeciphered, Endurance Unlimited, Integrity Unimpeachable."

Attempting to account for this divided self in Francis's poems, author Andrew Stambuk has argued that the true subject explored by Francis, a homosexual who didn't enter into his first relationship until he was nearly 60, is "the bottling up of desire." Stambuk, in *The Man Who Is and Is Not There: The Poetry and Prose of Robert Francis* (2011), chooses part two of Francis's "Dark Sonnets" to illustrate his point:

We are the lonely ones, the narrow-bedded.
Our last "good nights" are interchanged below.
Then up cold stairs alone—the odd, the unwedded.
What do we know of night? What do we know?
What do we know except that night is blindness,
That on a bed one sleeps, or lies awake,
That after too long waking sleep is kindness,
That for the unsleeping, day will sometime break?
Oh, we know more. We can tell you how wind sounded
On windy nights, and how the writhing rain
Hissed on the roof, mice gnawed, and something pounded
Over our head—or under the counterpane.
We are the lonely ones. When we are dead
We'll be well suited to a narrow bed.

Suppression of such an essential aspect of Francis's nature might well be the battery that runs the silver timepiece of his art. But if this alone were his subject, its appeal would be limited, and Francis's best poems—such as the one above, such as all good poems—are meant for anyone, and are everlasting. Perhaps Francis's true subject is the silent one who goes uncomforted (*What do we know of night?*), the wind's last friend, who's always been; that patiently waiting and painfully hopeful stone man with a beating heart.

Francis was a connoisseur of loneliness, an authority and specialist. In "Cypresses," his *Trees / Of Death* (*teaching birds / In little schools, by little skills, / how to be shadows*) embody *Always an attitude of solitude / To point the paradox of standing / Alone together*. In "Ladybird, Ladybird," a tiny red beetle (*on the parchment shade of* [*a*] *reading lamp*) becomes a saving grace: *a tall tale / I could tell if I wanted to / for no one to believe: an angel / sent to cheer a lone man's evening chair*. The two beggars who are turned away with nothing to eat in "Two Bums Walk Out of Eden" leave *a little / Briskly as men heedful to waste no time— / As men bending their steps toward due appointments*. In "Eagle Soaring," the solitary writer is depicted as a raptor wheeling high, *Above all in the complete undistraction / And extreme loneliness of his observational*.

In "Remind Me of Apples," Francis writes to an anonymous "someone" in the language of light, touching briefly on what we love and are losing; he is the stone man who waits for us, trying to remember it all, keeping watch:

When the cicada celebrates the heat,
Intoning that tomorrow and today
Are only yesterday with the same dust
To dust on plantain and on roadside yarrow—
Remind me, someone, of the apples coming,
Cold in the dew of deep October grass,
A prophecy of snow in their white flesh.

In the long haze of dog days, or by night
When thunder growls and prowls but will not go
Or come, I lose the memory of apples.
Name me the names, the goldens, russets, sweets,
Pippin and blue pearmain and seek-no-further
And the lost apples on forgotten farms
And the wild pasture apples of no name. ♦

B&A

Legation Nation

A good laugh while darkness lurks around the corner.

BY ANDREW ROBERTS

As China saber-rattles against Japan over the Senkaku Islands, and economists predict that she will overtake the United States in terms of GDP sometime this decade, it is well to look into the psychology of what Napoleon called "the sleeping giant," and especially at what makes modern China so easy and quick to take offense at foreigners. In this well-researched, well-written, and profoundly thought-provoking book, Julia Boyd provides us with an important insight into the Chinese pathology with regard to outsiders.

For, although part of *A Dance with the Dragon* can be read as a charming travelogue of the Roaring Twenties and Troubled Thirties—populated with diplomats like the unflappable Sir Miles Lampson, fraudsters like Sir Edmund Backhouse, White Russian emigrés like General Dmitri Horvath, and good-time girls like Wallis Simpson—the important part of it constitutes nothing less than a timely warning to the West: Underestimate China at your peril, it states, for she never forgets. The mobs protesting against Japan in Beijing today couldn't care less about the microscopic Senkaku Islands; they are protesting the Rape of Nanking, the invasion of Manchuria, and the deaths of 15 million people as a result of Japan's policies towards China from 1931 to 1945.

The history of China in the years that Boyd covers—from the crushing of the Boxer Rebellion at the dawn of the 20th century to the victory of Mao Zedong's Communists over Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang half a century later—was mostly a sorry tale of (as she says) "inadequate leadership, callous warlords, political ferment and lack of financial probity." As a result, all too many Westerners adopted an unthinking racially superior attitude towards the Chinese, one that we are being made to pay for dearly today in terms of Chinese hyper-nationalism. Even the normally wise Sir Miles Lampson, who served as British minister in Peking, rarely treated Chinese as full adults: "These men are just like children when they're in the mood they were tonight," he noted in his diary after an evening playing a game called "Drunken Coachmen" with two senior Chinese ministers. But, he added, "really they are pleasant folk socially whatever their shortcomings as a race or government might be."

A Dance with the Dragon
The Vanished World of Peking's Foreign Colony
by Julia Boyd
I.B. Tauris, 288 pp., $29

The Westerners living in the Legations led fabulously sybaritic lifestyles of, in Noël Coward's phrase, "cocktails and laughter," with dozens of servants, multiple adulteries, endless costume parties, amusing excursions—and next to no interest in indigenous Chinese culture or politics. "My clothes are a screaming success and I am cutting a spectacular dash," wrote Alice Green Hoffman, rich cousin of the Roosevelts, from Peking in 1925. The fact that there was no Prohibition in Peking was another reason that it attracted the international party set, as well as the fact that the cost of living was very cheap.

So for every genuine expatriate Sinophile, like John Dewey or Bertrand Russell (whose wife Dora Black dressed in Chinese clothes), there were all too many Bright Young Things, "whose insensitivity and ignorance were to leave such a scar":

> Had they been more astute and less incurious, keener to nurture China's self-confidence than to undermine it, had they not lived so insistently in their own bubble, and had they been, above all, less convinced of their own superiority, their legacy in China might not be regarded with quite such contempt and China's recovery of its former prestige would surely have proved less traumatic.

Yet Boyd does recognize the positive aspects of several Westerners' contributions, and points out how virtually no one thought in the 1930s that the Communists would have taken power by the end of the next decade. She also writes with sensitivity about how,

> despite the dazzling skyscrapers and motorways of modern Beijing, it is still just possible for those with a nostalgic bent and a little imagination to wander through the Legation quarter (where many of the old buildings survive), or the temples of the Western Hills so beloved by Peking's foreigners; to ride in moonlight by pedicab under the walls of the Forbidden City; or to pause in some secluded corner of the Temple of Heaven, and for a fleeting moment catch a glimpse of their world.

For all the scolding we give them today, they did have one hell of a party.

A prize for prescience must go to, of all people, the Japanese consul-general of 1932, who, even at the very moment that his country was bombing Shanghai, remarked to Lampson that "in a hundred years' time, China might have absorbed Japan." There are 20 years still to go, after all. China is buying up the world's raw materials on every continent, building fleets of aircraft carriers, and starting to contest hegemony in the South China Sea. Plus, it's pretty hard to imagine any present-day Chinese minister playing Drunken Coachmen. ♦

Andrew Roberts is the author, most recently, of The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War.

B&A

The Inner Bond

A therapeutic thriller featuring the usual suspects.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

It's no wonder Danny Boyle's spectacular opening show at the London Olympics featured a scene in which Daniel Craig's James Bond jumped from an airplane along with Queen Elizabeth. For just as those ceremonies finally and for all time sealed Great Britain's journey from the nation of the stiff upper lip to one that dances in merry lockstep with the rationed beat of its National Health Service, this brand-new Bond movie takes one of the few genuine British cultural icons of the postwar period and turns him into a poor little orphan boy with substance-abuse problems, resistance to authority, and mommy issues.

Skyfall is intermittently a terrific Bond film featuring several key elements from the series's 50-year history: It has gorgeously crazy chase sequences, a criminal's island lair, a sexy model who can't act slinking around a casino, and a querulous relationship between the field agent who won't play by the rules and the starchy intelligence service that knows it needs him but is annoyed nonetheless. The brooding and authoritative Daniel Craig again proves himself the most compelling Bond since Sean Connery and, in some respects, even Connery's superior. But because it was directed by an Oscar winner (Sam Mendes of the dreadful *American Beauty*) and cowritten by a Tony Award winner (John Logan of *Red*), *Skyfall* cannot simply be wild, outrageous fun as Bond movies are at their best. Instead, it must Tell Us Something about what makes a man like Bond tick.

What makes James Bond tick? Who cares? A psychological backstory was entirely unnecessary when Ian Fleming invented Bond in the 1950s and Sean Connery played him in the '60s. It was simply assumed that Bond was a man who had been toughened and hardened by unimaginably difficult wartime experiences and by years of fighting the Soviets in a new kind of war with few rules.

Skyfall
Directed by Sam Mendes

I remember being awestruck as a teenager by Fleming's description of Bond evading torture by holding his breath long enough to make himself pass out. Though I have no idea whether such a thing is even humanly possible, Fleming had come up with an unforgettable way of conveying the kind of supernatural self-discipline that would have to accompany the "license to kill" Bond was granted—with only six others preceding him, as the "007" indicated.

That self-discipline is exactly what made it acceptable, even thrilling, for Bond to indulge himself with women and booze and gambling. In the first place, he was never doing it out of mere sybaritic fancy; there was almost always a mission involved (except at the very end, after he'd saved the world and gotten himself a few days of R&R). In the second, he certainly deserved to indulge himself as others surely did not, given how frequently he was called upon to save the world.

Daniel Craig's Bond may share the same name as Sean Connery's, but he is of course far too young to have served in World War II; his only wartime experience would have been the Falklands, and that doesn't have the same oomph. (If the series lasts another 20 years, maybe Daniel Radcliffe or some other very young British actor could play Bond as a veteran of Basra or Helmand.) Instead, it turns out that he was made for the life of a secret agent because his parents died when he was young. Therefore, he came to see MI6 as a family substitute, and its leader, M, as his mother.

This would have been impossible for Connery or George Lazenby or Roger Moore or Timothy Dalton, of course, as the part of M was played by a man in their pictures. But the Pierce Brosnan and Daniel Craig movies have featured the great Judi Dench playing M, so there you go: a perfect opportunity for a bit of nonsense that would have seemed risible even back when people still believed in reductive Freudianism.

I hate to say it, but this half-accomplished, half-pretentious movie even concludes (cease reading if you don't want spoilers about the setting) with Bond essentially returning to the womb—a hidden tunnel, or "priest hole," at his ancestral Scotland home to which he would retreat for safety as a boy and in which he saves himself by reentering as a man.

The film's climax isn't set in a hollowed-out volcano, as in *You Only Live Twice*, or a hollowed-out mountain, as in *Diamonds Are Forever*, or a space station, as in *Moonraker*—fashionable facilities featuring thousands of people in kooky costumes shuffling about while a disembodied voice counts down the seconds until the world is to blow up. It takes place in the middle of the night, in the dark, in the tiny stone chapel where Bond was baptized. And there are only three people present. And Bond cries.

Yes, I know he cried when his wife died in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. But that is a movie in which gorgeous women are being brainwashed at an allergy clinic in Switzerland to fan out across the globe armed with bacteria that will destroy the world's food supply! Ludicrous, perhaps. But no more ludicrous, in its own way, than *Skyfall*. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

Iran fired on U.S. drone five days before election, Pentagon officials disclose.

—News item

OFFICE OF MEDIA RELATIONS

Press Briefing: Wednesday, November 14, 2012

TRANSCRIPT

Mr. Carney: Alright, people, alright. Settle down, settle down. OK, so first things first: It's been a busy week. Busy week. Busy, busy, busy. You, uh—excuse me—we all found out quite a bit this past week. We had a, uh, drone shot down by Iran. Also, of course, the Petraeus issue that has arisen, I mean—who saw that coming, right? I know some people are, uh, saying that these things were covered up for political purposes until after the election, but I would say those people are, uh, just engaging in politics as usual, and this administration refuses to engage in the type of divisive and inflammatory rhetoric that, say, a privileged, white-bread, corporate tool like Mitt Romney might engage in. Anyway, in fact, there is, uh, more to, uh, report. A few things the president, um, decided to, uh, not tell the American people until after the election, out of concern for their best interest or national security or whatever. So get your pens out or your iPhones or what have you. I'm only going through this once.

[Mr. Carney takes out a list.]

Mr. Carney: OK, let's see. Um, alright, so… apparently, back in April, the president—the president cried in front of Vladimir Putin, just wept like a little girl—sorry, ladies, I mean he cried like a strong, modern woman with no access to free contraception. And there is, um, a video of the president crying. CBS has it—so, Scott Pelley, it's totally cool to show that now. OK, moving on—

Reporter: Wait, why was he crying?

Mr. Carney: Uh, well, from, from what, uh, it says here the president was moved, uh, by a description he was giving of, uh, the John Hughes film "Sixteen Candles." Oh, man. Okay, so, alright, no more questions, just let me read what they wrote here on this list, we'll get through it, and that'll be that. Next: The president reconstituted the Choom Gang, an, uh, organization he helped to found in high school dedicated to smoking marijuana. I mean, come on, you guys knew that, right? Anybody watch the first debate?

(Cont.)

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