

**THE GIMLET EYE
OF SAUL STEINBERG**
JOSEPH EPSTEIN

the weekly

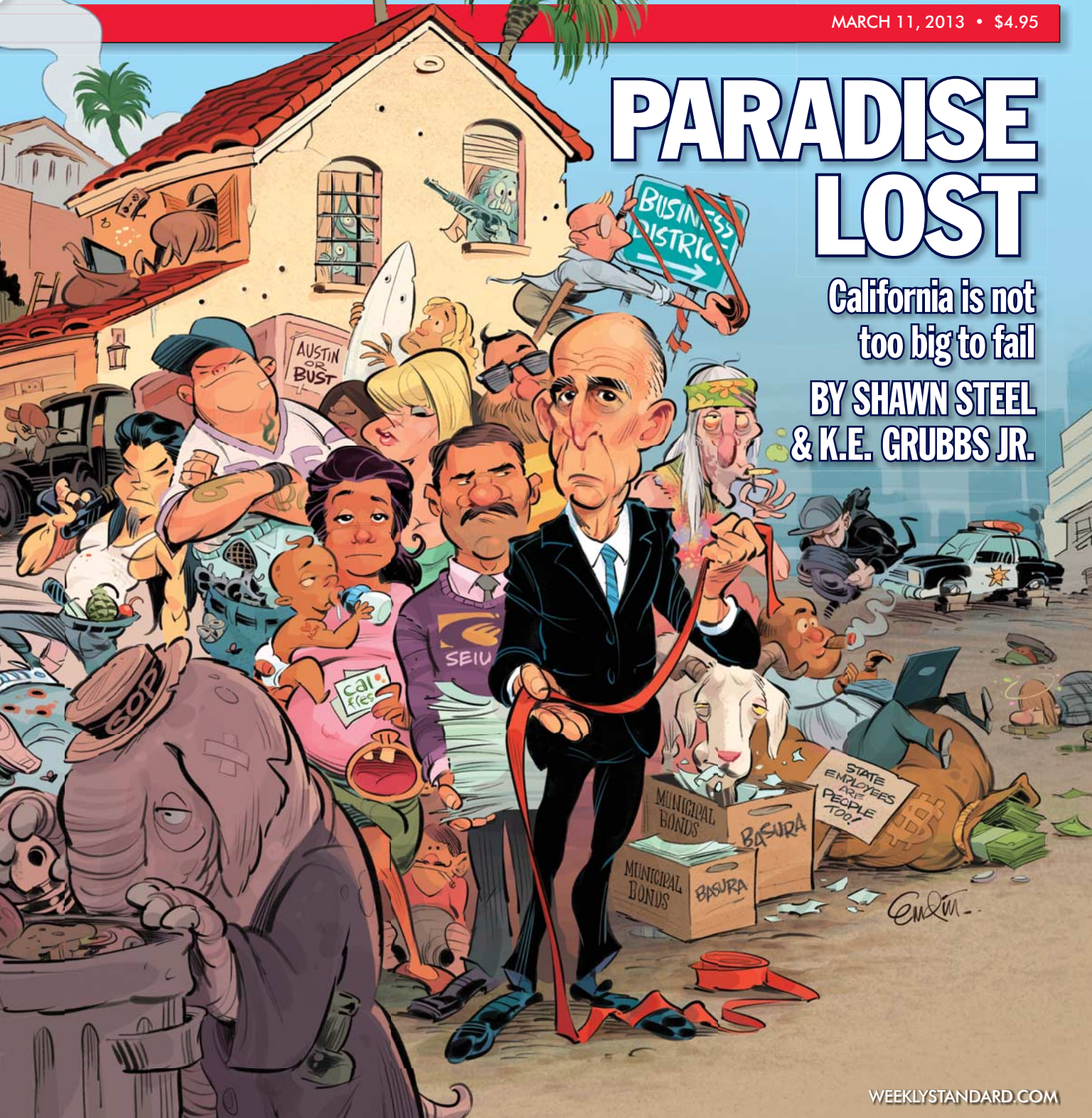
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PARADISE LOST

California is not
too big to fail

BY SHAWN STEEL
& K.E. GRUBBS JR.



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Humanitarianism, Hollywood Style

THE SCRAPBOOK doesn't pay too close attention to the Academy Awards—we're still recovering from the Indian maiden, Sacheen Littlefeather, who accepted Marlon Brando's Oscar for the *Godfather* in 1973 and tried to read his 15-page manifesto on national television—but we do have a weakness for the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award, which the motion picture academy bestows separately. Ceremonies such as the Oscars are basically expensive, well-dressed exercises in self-inflation, and the Jean Hersholt Award is given for "outstanding contributions to humanitarian causes." Recent recipients include the studio mogul Sherry Lansing, gabfest legend Oprah Winfrey, and the latest winner, Jeffrey Katzenberg, who received his statuette last November.

Katzenberg, of course, is the CEO of DreamWorks Animation, the highly successful studio, and it is perhaps emblematic of the Hersholt Award that he was recognized for his contributions to the Motion Picture and Television Fund, which helps indigent (mostly elderly) people in show business. Otherwise, his philanthropy is predictable, by Hollywood stan-

dards: several million dollars over the years to Democratic political candidates and super-PACs, and experience as a multimillion-dollar "bundler" for Barack Obama.

The real depth of Katzenberg's humanitarianism was revealed a few days after Oscar night, when he announced that, owing to box-office losses from his recent brainstorm *Rise of the Guardians*, he would be firing 350 of DreamWorks's 2,200 employees—nearly one-fifth of its workforce.

Throwing workers out on the street for their boss's mistakes was not easy for the Jean Hersholt laureate: This is "very, very difficult to do," Katzenberg told the *Hollywood Reporter*, adding that mass dismissals of subordinates are "against our culture." Well, maybe—but business is business. Katzenberg's wealth has been estimated in the neighborhood of \$800 million, and he probably could have written a personal check to keep his workers employed for the next few decades. But what attracted THE SCRAPBOOK's attention was his explanation for the necessity of layoffs, spoken without evident irony in the language of any animated capitalist baron:

Let's look at everything and say, "What could we be doing better, smarter, more effectively to really position the company in the best possible way to move forward?" And that's what we've done, and that's what restructuring is all about.

No doubt, those 350 fired DreamWorks gerbils, especially those who had nothing to do with Katzenberg's *Rise of the Guardians*, will be comforted to know that their unemployment now moves DreamWorks forward in "the best possible way." But that was not quite the way Katzenberg looked at things when, in 1994, he was denied promotion to the presidency of the Walt Disney Company, and thereupon sued Disney. This was followed by an entertaining public squabble—Disney chairman Michael Eisner on Katzenberg: "I think I hate the little midget"—but Disney ultimately settled the lawsuit out of court with an estimated \$250 million payment to Katzenberg.

Unseemly it may be to sue the recipient of the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award; but in the case of this year's winner, THE SCRAPBOOK would cheer on the effort. ♦

Ted Cruz and His Enemies

In a column in the *New Republic* last month, John B. Judis laid into newly elected Senator Ted Cruz of Texas for asking Chuck Hagel, during his confirmation hearings to become secretary of defense, about his relationship with Chas Freeman. Hagel was chairman of the Atlantic Council and Freeman served on its board. Hagel brushed aside the question during his Senate hearing but did call Freeman a "respected public servant for this nation." Freeman, you may recall, was Obama's pick to chair the National Intelligence Council in 2009 but withdrew his name after contro-

versy ensued over past statements. Freeman later blamed "the Israel lobby"—an unfortunate descriptor Hagel is also fond of—for torpedoing his nomination.

For having the temerity to ask Hagel about his relationship with Freeman, Cruz was reminiscent of Joe McCarthy, Judis declared: "Americans who worry about democracy need to keep on [Cruz]. He is a not dumb drunk [sic] like McCarthy." Recall that one of the reasons Chas Freeman's nomination faltered was that he had defended the Chinese government's slaughter of students and activists in Tiananmen Square in unequivocal terms. To sum up, Cruz is a threat to democracy for daring

to ask Hagel about his "respected" colleague who happened to defend a Communist state that has slaughtered its democratic activists. Got it.

Nonetheless, the Cruz-is-the-new-McCarthy meme has taken off on the left. In one particularly repugnant item, *Talking Points Memo* editor Josh Marshall ran photos of Cruz and McCarthy side by side, commenting on their "strong physical resemblance." The *New Yorker's* Jane Mayer asked, "Is Senator Ted Cruz Our New McCarthy?" Mayer dug up a speech from almost three years ago, in which Cruz said of his time at Harvard Law School in the 1990s, "There were fewer declared Republicans in the faculty when we were there than

Communists! There was one Republican. But there were 12 who would say they were Marxists who believed in the Communists overthrowing the United States government.”

Of course, Mayer didn't dispute there are Marxists on the Harvard Law faculty or that Cruz was wrong about their number—but she did try to downplay the matter. However, in a blog post responding to Mayer, New York attorney Dan McLaughlin, who was a year behind Cruz at Harvard, quotes the course description of one of the “critical legal theory” classes at length and accurately states that it would “fit comfortably on the syllabus at Patrice Lumumba University.”

Mayer also quotes Harvard Law professor Charles Fried saying Cruz was wrong because he could “count four ‘out’ Republicans (including myself)” that were on the faculty. McLaughlin, a former president of the Harvard Law School Republicans, is mystified by this comment. Mayer did not ask Fried to name the other professors, and the “Republican” Fried might be an unreliable narrator—he supported Obama and has been drifting left for some time. McLaughlin even posted a picture of the T-shirts Harvard Law Republicans printed after the '94 election to make a point about the paucity of Republicans on the faculty. The shirt read: “U.S. House 53% U.S. Senate 54% State Governors 60% Harvard Law School 1%.”

Even accepting Fried's generous calculation, Cruz would still be warranted in expressing righteous anger that self-identified Marxists would outnumber Republicans three to one on the faculty of America's most prestigious law school. It seems laughable to call someone a McCarthyite for pointing out that being an avowed Marxist is no impediment to success.

It's worth noting that McLaughlin rightly concedes Cruz is guilty of “hyperbolic flourish” in characterizing the radicalism of the professors in question. To be scrupulously fair, perhaps what Cruz should have said is that Harvard Law's Marxists merely bear a “strong physical resemblance”



to “Communists overthrowing the United States government.” ♦

The Party of Big Business

A few years ago, the Democratic party bragged that it had adopted new rules barring corporate and individual donations over \$100,000. Because of these rules, Democrats called their convention in Charlotte last year the “people’s convention.” However, just to make sure they had the money to fund the convention, the DNC secured a \$10 million credit line from Duke Energy Corporation. And as it happens, Duke's CEO headed up the party's fundraising efforts for the

convention. The DNC host committee for the convention insisted it did not intend to tap this credit line, but a month after the convention took place, the DNC had raised just \$24.1 million of the \$36.6 million it pledged to raise in order to pay for the convention.

Last week, the *Charlotte Observer* reported that Duke Energy was making shareholders foot a \$6 million bill to pay for the convention, in violation of the much-touted DNC rules on campaign donations. The election is over and Obama won, so the DNC probably isn't going to be terribly contrite about its hypocritical posturing. The bigger issue is that Duke Energy is no benign corporate influence.

Duke Energy is one of the most

active members of the U.S. Climate Action Partnership. About half the electricity the company supplies comes from traditional coal-fired plants; the other half comes from nuclear power. The Obama administration's punishing policies for traditional energy sources have made Duke's nuclear plants—which don't emit any greenhouse gases—much more valuable, and most of the company's coal-powered energy plants are in areas where they have a government-enforced monopoly. They can just pass extra costs on to consumers who will have to pay higher rates or go without electricity. Duke also has growing windmill and green energy interests, and they rake in the green energy subsidies that Democrats are so fond of distributing. Did we mention Duke Energy's CEO, Jim Rogers, is a former Enron executive?

THE SCRAPBOOK wonders if it's a coincidence that the State Department announced its tentative approval for building the Keystone XL pipeline

from Alberta to Texas the same day that Duke Energy announced it was picking up the DNC's tab. Supplying America with cheap oil from Canada might just make Duke's green energy portfolio that much less valuable. (Though it should be noted the State Department's approval is based on a preliminary draft of an environmental report—so far, five federal environmental studies have been done in 54 months without yet granting final approval. The Canadian government approved the pipeline in six months.)

Finally, it was reported in January that the DNC still owes \$15 million to Amalgamated Bank of New York, which is majority owned by the Service Employees International Union, one of the party's largest donors and an organization with its own strident agenda. Democrats may say they want corporations and special interests subject to new campaign finance laws, but it turns out they actually win campaigns by letting those same groups pick up the tab. ♦



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The Age of Anxiety

I was in second grade when I first became convinced that things fall apart.

The year began with the attempted assassination of an American president, followed a few weeks later by the attempted assassination of a Polish pope, followed a few months after that by the successful assassination of an Egyptian president. The attempted murder of leaders, it seemed, was a fact of life.

My day-to-day doings were tinged with low-grade, existential fear stemming from the Cold War. At my Quaker elementary school in South Jersey, we talked about Hiroshima and Nagasaki enough that my small circle of friends and I used to discuss how much worse the coming nuclear conflagration with the Soviets would be.

Not that the American way of life seemed particularly deserving of preservation. My mother taught in a public elementary school, and on at least three occasions she was mugged at knifepoint in her school's hallways—during the school day—by criminals who came and went as they pleased. Whenever my family took excursions to the city—either nearby Philadelphia or farther-off New York—the places were like something out of a nightmare: every brick and wall covered with graffiti; vagrants and homeless camping on steam grates and street corners, begging for change. To this day, the essence of city life imprinted in my brain is the omnipresent, and not terribly vague, smell of urine.

I didn't know who Yeats was, and if you had pressed me I wouldn't have been quite sure what "the center" might be. But it was clear to me that it could not hold.

I've been wondering about that world again since Pope Benedict XVI announced his return to the

monastery. His abdication filled me—quite unexpectedly—with the same sense of despair.

For Catholics there was much to love in Benedict's pontificate—it isn't often that the bishop of Rome is also the church's preeminent theological mind and clearest, most graceful writer. In addition to his written work, Benedict offered an extraordinary example



of humility. The speeches he gave leading up to the conclave that selected him suggested a man desperately trying to wave off his fellow cardinals and decline the job in advance. When the Holy Spirit chose him, and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI, he had placed on his papal coat of arms a saddled bear as an indication of how he saw himself: not as a saintly Great Man, but as a humble beast bowing to the assigned task.

Gradually, though, I've realized that my melancholy isn't really about Benedict himself; it's that, with his withdrawal, we lose our last, best link to John Paul II.

And John Paul II stood for something very distinct to my young self.

In the tempest of the 1970s and '80s, while the world was coming

apart, John Paul stood against the maelstrom and affirmed the right. He maintained that the world I saw around me was not inevitable; that it was not a permanent condition. He proclaimed that truth and beauty had their own power. According to him, the center would always hold, regardless of how things looked at any given juncture of history.

John Paul was an immense source of comfort. To millions behind the Iron Curtain, of course. But also to a small boy in New Jersey. Be not afraid, he said. And although I didn't understand it fully, I understood enough. The world might not make sense, but this man did.

It would be years before I learned anything about Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. But what always strikes me in looking back on that period is that even when it was darkest, there were a handful of serious, formidable people fighting for the light.

In some ways, the crisis that accelerated in the late 1970s resembles the crisis in which we've lived since 9/11. Both featured existential threats to the liberal order. Both were marked by brutal economic recessions. Both were, to some large degree, marked by the failure of trusted institutions.

It's unclear which case was direr. But it isn't the crisis now that worries me. It's that there are no analogues to John Paul, Reagan, and Thatcher. And with Benedict gone, our already attenuated link to those leaders loses another thread. Soon, it will be broken. And when you survey public life looking for their heirs, what you see is callow and pale.

If the travails of 1981 prepared me for Yeats, Benedict's withdrawal calls to mind Auden:

*The prophet's lantern is out
And gone the boundary stone,
Cold the heart and cold the stove,
Ice condenses on the bone:
Winter completes an age.*

JONATHAN V. LAST

John Brennan and the Bin Laden Files

During a speech at the Woodrow Wilson Center on April 30, 2012, John Brennan, President Obama's nominee to head the CIA, discussed "The Ethics and Efficacy of the U.S. President's Counterterrorism Strategy." Brennan explained that President Obama has "pledged to share as much information with the American people 'so that they can make informed judgments and hold us accountable.'" Obama, he continued, "has consistently encouraged those of us on his national security team to be as open and candid as possible." After all, "our democracy depends" upon "transparency."

But nearly two years after the May 1, 2011, assault on Osama bin Laden's compound, the Obama administration has made public just 17 documents out of the huge cache of information captured during that raid. U.S. intelligence officials tell THE WEEKLY STANDARD that the vast collection includes "hundreds of thousands of documents and files." Obama administration officials themselves have referred to the documents as a "treasure trove" the size of a "small college library." Why hasn't the public seen them?

One of the main reasons: John Brennan.

The Obama administration, with Brennan as its top counterterrorism adviser, has worked hard to convince the American people that al Qaeda "is a shadow of its former self," in the words of the president. Its affiliates are atomized cells that operate without serious coordination, they've suggested, and with the assassination of several top leaders, the defeat of al Qaeda is, according to Obama, "within reach." The war on terror, or whatever it is, is nearing an end.

These claims are important to the administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan and the key to its broader counterterrorism posture.

Immediately after bin Laden's demise, there was a natural inclination to trumpet the al Qaeda CEO's importance in the overall war. This was an honest

assessment. But over the year that followed something interesting happened. Key administration figures decided to downplay bin Laden's role in managing the groups that fight in al Qaeda's name, even as many facts cut against their revised narrative. Why? It is easier to declare the 9/11 wars near their end if al Qaeda is all but dead, leaving little for bin Laden's successor, Ayman al Zawahiri, to oversee.

Al Qaeda cannot be "on the path to defeat," as President Obama repeatedly claimed during the 2012 presidential campaign, if bin Laden's vision of terror lives on. That vision is outlined in bin Laden's documents.

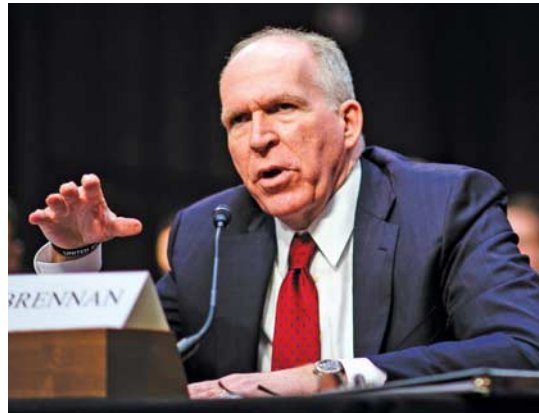
Tom Donilon, President Obama's national security adviser, was among the first administration officials to discuss bin Laden's files. One week after the Abbottabad raid, during an appearance on NBC's *Meet the Press* on May 8, 2011, Donilon described the recovered files as "the largest cache of intelligence

derived from the scene of any single terrorist." Citing the CIA, it was Donilon who said the files would fill a "small college library."

Donilon also weighed in on what the documents showed about bin Laden's role within the al Qaeda network. The documents indicate "to us that in addition to being the symbolic leader of al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden was involved operationally in strategic direction, in the direction of operations, including their propaganda efforts," Donilon said.

Meet the Press host David Gregory repeatedly pressed Donilon on this point, noting that Donilon's characterization of bin Laden's active role was "something different than what intelligence officials have believed."

Donilon conceded that the intelligence community was "just starting to go through this treasure . . . this large cache of information." But he didn't back down. Donilon insisted that bin Laden "had an operational and strategic direction role, which makes the raid last Sunday night . . . all the more important in terms of our ultimate strategic goal, which is the strategic defeat of this organization."



Brennan at his confirmation hearing

A few days after Donilon's interview with Gregory, Sebastian Rotella of *ProPublica* published a fascinating look at bin Laden's world. Citing U.S. intelligence officials who had reviewed the al Qaeda CEO's files, Rotella described bin Laden as a "fugitive micro-manager" who "clearly played a role in al Qaeda's operational, tactical, and strategic planning."

Although communications were hampered by security protocols, Rotella continued, bin Laden "managed to retain authority over al Qaeda's affiliates in Yemen, North Africa, and Iraq." He sent messages to them, and they sent responses. In one instance, some in Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) suggested that Anwar al Awlaki take over leadership of the group. Bin Laden nixed that idea, preferring to keep his longtime aide-de-camp, Nasser al-Wuhayshi, in charge. Wuhayshi remains in that position today.

There are additional examples in this early reporting that support the same view: Osama bin Laden managed a cohesive, international terrorist network.

Nearly one year later, however, the fix was in. Some in the Obama administration had decided to spin bin Laden's documents to portray the slain al Qaeda chieftain as a recluse with little sway over the terror network he had helped build.

This new narrative was first pushed by administration-friendly journalists such as the *Washington Post's* David Ignatius, who characterized bin Laden as "a lion in winter" in a March 18, 2012, article. A month and a half later, in a May 3 opinion piece riddled with logical contradictions, CNN's Peter Bergen described bin Laden as "isolated" and yet a "micromanager." Bergen has repeatedly argued that the threat from al Qaeda is insignificant, and his reporting on the documents more often than not is intended to buttress his view.

A pathetically small sample of documents, the 17 mentioned above, was given to West Point's Combating Terrorism Center (CTC), which analyzed them and concluded that bin Laden "enjoyed little control over either groups affiliated with al Qaeda in name," such as AQAP or Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), "or so-called fellow travelers," such as the Pakistani Taliban.

The CTC's analysis, also published on May 3, 2012, clearly contradicted the initial assessments made in the wake of the Abbottabad raid. We cannot say that the CTC report's authors had better access to the documents in the year that followed, though, as the documents they looked at were not even a significant percentage of the vast cache recovered. Moreover, even the documents analyzed in the CTC report do not support its conclusions.

What has been reported about the documents excluded from the administration-approved subset does not support the CTC's conclusions either. Consider what the *Guardian's* Jason Burke reported on April 29, 2012—just days before the CTC report was published. Burke reported that the

documents recovered in bin Laden's compound "show a close working relationship between top al Qaeda leaders and Mullah Omar, the overall commander of the Taliban, including frequent discussions of joint operations against NATO forces in Afghanistan, the Afghan government, and targets in Pakistan." Both Osama bin Laden and his replacement, Ayman al Zawahiri, were involved in coordinating attacks with the Taliban.

Mysteriously, the documents Burke reported on were not among those the administration allowed the CTC to publish just four days later. Why? As Burke noted beforehand, the documents "undermine hopes of a negotiated peace in Afghanistan, where the key debate among analysts and policymakers is whether the Taliban—seen by many as following an Afghan nationalist agenda—might once again offer a safe haven to al Qaeda or like-minded militants, or whether they can be persuaded to renounce terrorism."

Indeed, the Obama administration has repeatedly pushed for fantasyland peace talks with the Taliban. At one point, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made it clear that the Taliban must renounce al Qaeda, which it has repeatedly refused to do. Simultaneously, administration officials, including the president, have sought to downplay al Qaeda's presence inside Afghanistan. If the Taliban and al Qaeda are closely cooperating on attacks, and they are, then the entire rationale for drawing down forces in Afghanistan comes into question.

Another, more startling example of what the administration excluded from the documents released to the public was offered by Bruce Riedel, a former adviser to President Obama. Riedel said the files show a close relationship between bin Laden and the leader of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Hafiz Saeed. The LeT is a Pakistan-based terrorist group with known ties to the Pakistani military and intelligence establishment. It was responsible for the November 2008 siege in Mumbai, India, in which 166 people were killed and hundreds more wounded.

"The documents and files found in Abbottabad showed a close connection between bin Laden and Saeed, right up to May 2011," Riedel told the *Hindustan Times*. And that's not all. Riedel said that the recovered intelligence "suggested a much larger direct al Qaeda role in the planning of the Mumbai attacks than many assumed."

This is a bombshell. It changes the public understanding of how al Qaeda operates both inside and out of Pakistan. The *Hindustan Times* reported Riedel's comments on April 4, 2012. Yet less than one month later, there was no sign of the Mumbai connection in what the administration released to the public.

The story of bin Laden's documents is not merely a historical curiosity. The files have a direct bearing on the future of America's counterterrorism strategy.

This brings us back to John Brennan, the man President Obama would have lead the CIA. It was Brennan who

announced, during his Wilson Center speech last April, the pending release of the 17 bin Laden documents. It was in that same speech that he reiterated President Obama's promise of more transparency.

The linchpin of Brennan's approach to fighting al Qaeda is the use of pinprick drone strikes and special operations raids to take out select al Qaeda members who are thought to threaten the American homeland. Brennan and his fellow administration officials certainly know that al Qaeda's affiliates are growing in places like Syria, where upwards of 10,000 al Qaeda fighters are on the ground today. But they want to define the threat in such a way that a more robust American military response is not necessary.

Brennan portrays al Qaeda's South Asian "core"—itself imprecisely defined—as a threat distinct from al Qaeda's affiliates. Coincidentally, this is what the administration-approved assessment of the 17 documents suggested. Others should carry out most of the fighting against the affiliates, the administration believes. Only certain al Qaeda-affiliated terrorists should feel the wrath of American drones.

But if al Qaeda lives on as an extended network, with Ayman al Zawahiri at its helm, then the picture becomes far more complex. Drones cannot contain the growing threat from al Qaeda in places like Syria. Similarly, it took French military forces to stem al Qaeda's advances in Mali. The administration and its surrogates would have us believe that these are all discrete problems, and America can mainly "lead from behind."

It is for that reason, among others, that the American public deserves to see bin Laden's files. To use Brennan's own words, let the American people "make informed judgments" about the Obama administration's counterterrorism strategy. Let them see bin Laden's files.

—Thomas Foscelyn

Indefensible

President Obama is an appalling commander in chief. In the last couple of months alone, he's selected and muscled through the Senate the least qualified nominee for secretary of defense in a half century; forced out of his position early a superb combatant commander, General James Mattis, because Mattis took seriously the Iranian threat; and blithely ordered women into combat arms units, with no pretense of serious consideration of the effect of this on the capability, discipline, and morale of our warfighters. Before that, while growing every other part of the federal government, he cut defense. So we shouldn't be surprised that he's not

doing anything serious about the further devastating cuts sequestration will impose on the military.

And the Republicans? To their credit, they opposed Chuck Hagel, and did so forcefully. But on General Mattis, on women in combat, and on national security in general, they've been mostly silent. And now, with respect to the sequester, the Republican party has, at first reluctantly, then enthusiastically, joined the president on the road to irresponsibility.

Touting their role as trimmers of a welfare state they once wanted to transform, titillated by the prospect of using as a boomerang against President Obama an idea that was originally his own, thrilled to be showing unaccustomed cleverness by trying to make lemonade out of lemons, the Republicans have taken to the ramparts to pre-sequester, protect, and defend sequestration.

It was only a couple of weeks ago that GOP politicians and conservative commentators were reluctantly allowing as to how they might temporarily have to accept the sequester as the least bad of a set of bad options. But despondent Republicans wanted to believe in something. Demoralized conservatives wanted to be excited about something. So they convinced themselves: That creature we're enamored of? It's not an ugly duckling at all, it's a graceful swan!

Now what? It's the morning after. Bloated domestic discretionary federal programs may become a bit less bloated. But they won't be reformed or improved. Meanwhile, it is defense—the first function of the national government, whose share of federal spending has gone from about 47 percent under John Kennedy to less than 20 percent today—that takes the bulk of the cuts. The one part of the government that has performed well, even above and beyond the call of duty, over the last decade is slashed deeply and indiscriminately.

It's at this point that the writer is supposed to interject, hastily and apologetically, that of course the Pentagon can and should be cut to some degree, that of course there is at least some bloat in its budget, and that of course no one is mindlessly defending all defense spending. We scorn this pointless accommodation to what are assumed to be the prejudices of uninformed readers. The fact is, if America is to pursue anything resembling its traditional role in the world for the last 70 years, the Pentagon has already been cut too much. We are already at dangerously low levels. The most reasonable position to take now on defense spending cuts is: No.

But the GOP is now saying: Yes. Which means the Republican party is complicit in the failure of political responsibility and national seriousness we're now witnessing. Which means, unfortunately, that historians will say not just of the Obama administration but also of today's Republican party: "They were weighed in the balance and found wanting."

—William Kristol

Second-Term Blues

Is Obama's free ride over?

BY FRED BARNES



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Why do presidents get in trouble in their second terms? They think they have a mandate when they don't. They believe they're stronger politically than they really are. They're convinced they can get away with things other presidents couldn't. They think too highly of themselves personally and act accordingly.

President Obama hasn't hit the second-term skids—yet. And he insists he knows the perils of four more years in the White House and how to avoid them. But there are signs of trouble ahead, signs that Obama and his advisers appear not to have recognized.

Sign number one is the sequester. It's given Obama numerous

opportunities to overreach, and he seems determined to seize all of them. The first: blaming Republicans for the automatic spending cuts that went into effect last week. The idea for the sequester, as everyone now knows, originated in the White House. And contrary to the president's claim, it did not allow for substituting tax hikes for cuts.

Then the president unleashed a campaign of near-hysteria over the sequester's impact. The cuts amount to \$44 billion from a \$3.6 trillion budget between now and the end of the 2013 fiscal year on September 30. The White House clanged the bell for all hands on deck and deployed cabinet members, agency heads, and Democratic governors to sow fear in the land with predictions of widespread disruptions in the lives of most Americans.

Obama himself led the fear-mongering. The health of children will suffer, he said. Hundreds of thousands will be deprived of flu vaccinations and cancer screenings. Federal prosecutors will “let criminals go.” Unemployment will soar. Border security will be harmed, as will military readiness and “our ability to respond to threats in unstable parts of the world.”

Whew! Obama's list of horrors is longer than Dante's. But after the House and Senate rejected his vague plan for more tax increases than spending cuts, the president faces the temptation to further overreach and make his worst-case scenario come alive—to vindicate his dire predictions.

The problem is the public knows there's fat and waste in the federal budget. And it should be easy to expose, say, that furloughs of air traffic controllers or food inspectors were ordered when the required cuts could have been satisfied by eliminating conferences, administrative jobs, and a federal pay raise due April 1.

Obama sneered at a suggestion from Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal when he met with governors at the White House last week. If the president delayed Obamacare's Medicaid expansion and subsidies offered by state exchanges for two years, that would more than offset the sequester. Obama, in response, said he wouldn't let opponents succeed in blocking his health plan by the back door after they'd failed through the front door.

You may not have heard of Organizing for Action (OFA). It's the organization for continuing the Obama campaign during his second term. Its ostensible aim is to promote the president's policy priorities. To do so, it intends to raise \$50 million, chiefly from big donors.

OFA is unprecedented. No previous president had such an organization or even considered having one. It's a kind of private political pressure group. Had President George W. Bush set one up, the media would have pounced and demanded he jettison it. But Obama has gotten minimal push-back from the press.

MICHAEL RAMIREZ

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The real purpose of OFA, I suspect, is to attack Republicans to improve Democratic chances of capturing the House in 2014 and gaining total control of Washington. By exploiting a loophole in campaign law and ethics regulations, OFA is officially a “social welfare group,” at least nominally nonpolitical. But its first ad targeted Republican House members on gun control. A second purpose is to spare Obama his least favorite task, dealing face-to-face with members of Congress, especially Republicans.

But politics isn’t the problem OFA creates for Obama. Nor is the hypocrisy of establishing it, given Obama’s past assaults on special interests looking for favors and preferences in Washington. Rather, it’s the special interests seeking access and favors by writing big checks to the new group. OFA is an invitation to crony capitalism and scandal. It offers “ample potential for influence peddling,” the *New York Times* said.

OFA’s intention, as reported by Nicholas Confessore of the *Times*, was to reward \$500,000 donors with quarterly meetings with Obama—in other words, provide access for contributions. But White House press secretary Jay Carney said this won’t happen. He referred to OFA as “independent,” which it is, technically. In reality, it’s a subsidiary of the White House, answers to Obama, is run by his campaign aides, and is empowered by the campaign’s vast database of supporters and Obama followers on Twitter, almost 28 million strong.

Another sign of possible trouble ahead comes from the media. Yes, it’s true you would have gone broke betting the press would get tough with Obama over the past four years. And the prospect of treating him the way the media would a Republican president is nil.

But on the sequester, Obama hasn’t gotten the usual free ride. The Associated Press referred to “sky-is-falling hype” in a story about the Obama-led claims of looming disaster. “For most Americans, though, it’s far from certain they will have a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day if the

budget-shredder known as the sequester comes to pass,” the AP said. Fact checkers haven’t been kind either.

Obama, from all appearances, isn’t worried about serious second-term difficulties. He’s more full of himself than usual. He’s made it clear he prefers hobnobbing with Hollywood celebrities to spending time with Washington’s political class. And he may be right in thinking his situation, postreelection, makes him

immune to the woes of earlier presidents. But maybe not.

It makes an enormous difference whether he stumbles badly over the next year. If the president is forced on the defensive, Democratic prospects for winning the House in 2014 will evaporate and Republican hopes of gaining the Senate will soar again. And Obama may realize he isn’t exempt from the normal workings of politics, as he once thought. ♦

Living Small

The micro-apartment craze.

BY ETHAN EPSTEIN

New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg has always been interested in real estate. The billionaire media tycoon owns—as *THE WEEKLY STANDARD* goes to press—11 homes, including his primary residence, a 12,500-square-foot townhouse on East 79th Street. (He’s the only New York mayor who’s completely shunned the city’s official residence, Gracie Mansion, where mayors have lived since 1942.)

So Bloomberg may simply have been acting on his lifelong passion for property when his administration announced a Request for Proposals last summer for architectural firms and developers to design a building of so-called micro-apartments, with units measuring between 250 and 370 square feet (as the *Wall Street Journal* noted, about four times the size of a prison cell on Rikers Island). The contest drew some 33 entrants, and in late January, the mayor personally announced the victorious bid.

The winning entrant will construct a building containing 55 micro-apartments, all featuring small balconies, 9- to 10-foot-high ceilings, and that old standby of early-20th-century,

impoverished urban living: the Murphy bed. About half the units will be income-restricted—though at a minimum of \$914 a month for 250 square feet, not exactly cheap—and the other half will rent at market rates. Bloomberg hopes that this “pilot project” will prove a success and that micro-apartments will soon pop up all over Gotham.

It’s been widely reported that no taxpayer money is involved in the development. “The city will not be subsidizing the project,” reads a typical report, from Reuters. But New York City taxpayers are indeed—albeit slightly indirectly—subsidizing the project. Here’s how: The new building will be constructed on a city-owned parcel of land in Kips Bay. The city sold the Manhattan property to the winning development company for \$500,000. That’s a laughably measly sum. Through the first eight months of 2012, the average land price in Manhattan was \$323.43 per square foot, according to data from a Brooklyn-based real estate agency. The city sold the parcel at a rate of only a little more than \$100 per square foot. An independent agency values the land at \$1.2 million, more than twice the price at which the city unloaded it. And that’s not the only way private developers are profiting from Bloomberg’s public policy.

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Since 1987, under an anti-slumlord statute, New York City has required that new apartments be a minimum of 400 square feet; his administration is also unilaterally waiving zoning regulations for this particular project.

While there's a case to be made that micro-apartments might make sense in densely packed Manhattan, where housing is limited and far more people live alone than the national average (even if the subsidy is unjustifiable), the micro-apartment trend is spreading into cities with plenty of elbow room. Cleveland, where the population has declined some 60 percent since its postwar high, is now seeing micro-apartment development. In Providence, Rhode Island, where the population has declined significantly, the Arcade, America's first indoor shopping mall—an early nineteenth-century architectural jewel, modeled on the *passages* of Paris—is being converted into micro-apartments. In Redmond, Washington, in a region of the country famed for its wilderness

and low population density, the Tudor Manor apartment building has units as small as 150 square feet. Some micro-apartments feature their own full kitchens, but those on the smaller end come with only private kitchenettes and shared kitchens. Just about all come with tiny private bathrooms.

Not all micro-apartments receive taxpayer subsidies, but many do. Seattle's Solana apartments (depressingly referred to as "aPodments" by the real estate company), averaging 170 square feet per unit, is one of four micro-apartment buildings receiving tax exemptions in the Emerald City. (Seattle mayor Mike McGinn has championed micro-apartments as "affordable, transit-friendly options for city dwellers.") In Santa Monica, the Olympic Studios, with units as small as 361 square feet, are income-restricted, meaning the developers receive tax credits each year from the U.S. Department

of Housing and Urban Development. And where they don't receive direct subsidies, developers—as in New York—are often freed from zoning regulations. Late last year, San Francisco reduced its minimum unit size to 220 square feet (on a "trial basis") so as to allow for the construction of a 375-unit micro-apartment building filled with 220-square-foot units.

In justifying the subsidies and zoning waivers, their supporters hail micro-apartments as "affordable housing." But this doesn't hold up. Across

The micro-apartment micro-boom is being driven primarily by greens, as it represents a move towards greater population density, a central goal of the environmentalist left. Even as U.S. population growth slows to a crawl, density is still all the rage. "Increased urban density is the way of the future; it has to be if we want our cities to lead the way in addressing the climate crisis," writes the environmentalist website *Grist*. In this, micro-apartments fit in perfectly with additional environmentalist objectives, such as

high gas prices, telecommuting, and other initiatives designed to reduce humanity's "carbon footprint." And in the micro-apartment universe, while we'll be living like rabbits, we certainly won't be breeding like them: It goes without saying that the 250-square-foot home isn't exactly conducive to procreation—or even marriage or cohabitation.

For whatever reason, many developers and the micro-apartment evangelists in government and

the media have convinced themselves that people born in the 1980s and 1990s—the so-called Millennial Generation—are just dying to live with as much personal space as did New York City garment workers of the 19th century. One California micro-apartment developer "believes tiny apartments are particularly well-suited for the active, car-free, single Millennials already coming to American cities," reports *The Atlantic*. (Note that now-standard bit of cant, "car-free," rather than, say, car-less.) As most big micro-apartment projects are still under construction, we'll see how popular they prove. Even more depressing, one self-styled urban guru has suggested that micro-apartments "have the potential to be great homes for people in their late 70s and 80s." Forget putting Grandma in a nursing home—just shove her into a shoebox. After all, it's the environmentally friendly thing to do. ♦



The micro-hip: We'll keep the children under the sink.

the country, micro-apartments that don't have income restrictions attached tend to rent for nearly as much as, or sometimes even more than, extant—and by definition, larger—studio apartments. Bloomberg's micro-apartments, with free-market units expected to fetch more than \$2,000 a month, roughly equivalent to the average New York studio rent of \$1,950. (Moreover, the rent "is 40 percent higher than the median New York City household can sustain without infringing on basic necessities," notes the *Gotham Gazette*.) In Boston, units in a building of 350-square-foot micro-apartments will be priced between \$1,200 and \$1,600 a month. In 2011, the average rent for a 485-square-foot apartment in Beantown was \$1,215. At Portland, Oregon's "Freedom Center" micro-apartments, a 267-square-foot studio rents for \$865. The average *one-bedroom* Portland apartment rents for \$774 a month.

Sayonara, Asian Allies

Obama's damaging diffidence.

BY ROSS TERRILL

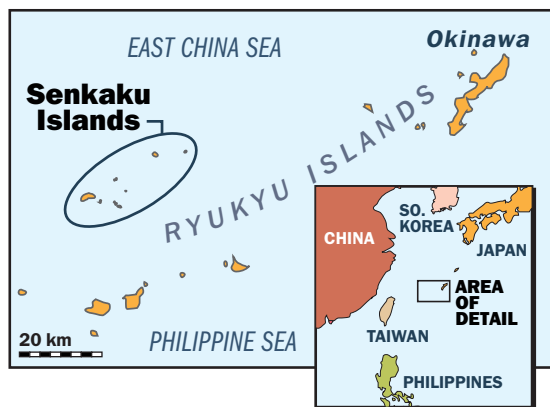
The Senkaku Islands dispute is the first Japan-China security crisis in seven decades of peace. This puzzling contretemps between Asia's two giants unnerves the region, whose waters host half of global trade, and President Barack Obama faces a test. American power anchors the China-Japan balance in a tripod that is the unsung secret of East Asia's peace and progress.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is worried. "As a result of the trust and confidence between Japan and the United States having gone through a pretty rocky period," he told the *Washington Post* on February 16, "Japan's foreign policy clout has been declining. And the stability in Japan's adjacent waters and in the Asia-Pacific region is being affected, with acts of provocation seen against Japan's territory and territorial waters." Obama did not mention the Senkakus (Diaoyu in Chinese) in public during the prime minister's visit, as Abe did at length, and much depends on the president's acting upon his one strong sentence: "The U.S.-Japan alliance is the central foundation for our regional security." Only if he goes beyond "leading from behind" will peace hold in the East China Sea and Beijing receive an overdue message.

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"Japan is back, keep counting on my country," Abe said in Washington, but he will also need luck with his economic policy and agreement to join Trans-Pacific Partnership talks, to regain Japan's clout as a top power and perhaps stir Obama from insouciance.

War or peace between China and



Japan, and America's coping with the consequences, has been a drama in East Asia for a century. In 1895 the weakening Qing Dynasty fought upstart Japan and was crushed; Beijing lost Taiwan, and soon Japan colonized Korea. Washington backed the loser. Repeatedly from then on, the United States failed to achieve good relations with China and Japan simultaneously.

As China recovered from the collapse of its 2,000-year-old Confucian monarchy in 1911, Japan pushed again with its infamous "21 Demands" for Chinese territory in 1915. When Japan invaded Manchuria, China's northeastern provinces, in 1931 and launched full-scale war in 1937, the United States and United Kingdom wrung their hands and did nothing. The famous Kellogg-Briand love fest

of 1928 "outlawing war as an instrument of national policy," signed by 62 nations (including Japan!), turned out to be toothless.

Pearl Harbor ended the dithering, and the United States led the Allies in a deadly war with Japan. Chiang Kai-shek's flawed China was the West's ally from his wartime capital, Chongqing. This time the United States backed the winner, Japan lost, and Hiroshima and Nagasaki paid the price.

But Washington's closeness with China ended when Mao Zedong defeated Chiang in 1949, and Stalin and Mao soon gave North Korea a green light to attack South Korea. For a quarter-century the United States was in a dangerous standoff with China, firming up security treaties with Japan, Australia, South Korea, and others.

The breakthrough to China by President Nixon in 1971-72 began an economic transformation that replaced repeated fighting in East Asia (Japan-China, Korea, Vietnam, close shaves in the Taiwan Strait). This prosperity occurs under the umbrella of a U.S.-China-Japan entente. The potentially fraught relationship between Japan and China is finessed by superior U.S. power.

Not only have Japan and China been at peace, but they have become vital economic partners. And the United States for the first time in close to a century has achieved good relations with Beijing and Tokyo simultaneously. Smaller powers breathe easier after years of feeling pressured between a Communist bloc and an American bloc. Amusingly, the Australian academic Hugh White in a new book, *The China Choice: Why America Should Share Power*, delighting U.S. declinists, urges an end to U.S. primacy so that Asia can enjoy "peace, stability, and opportunities to grow." That's exactly what U.S. primacy, keeping China and Japan steady, has afforded Asia for 40 years.

But this China-Japan-U.S. tacit entente is under threat amidst the rocky barrenness of the Senkakus.

THE WEEKLY STANDARD

Like two champion footballers arguing over a pair of boots, Japan and China snarl and escalate. Japan points out the United States included the islands in the Okinawa Reversion of 1971. China says the islands have been Chinese since the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

True, this is Japan's dispute, not the United States', but the two countries together face a broad challenge from China. Ronald Reagan at first felt neutral about the Falkland Islands dispute between Britain and Argentina in 1982, irritating Margaret Thatcher, but in the end he backed Britain for the sake of the alliance.

The real problem in the East China Sea is Japan's apprehension about China's growing muscle-power, and China's maritime push to match economic success with military dominance in its "historical backyard." An eye on resources, yes, but President Hu Jintao's remark on the 60th birthday of the People's Republic of China is seminal: "Today a socialist China is standing toweringly in the Eastern world."

This "towering" China and a Japan with backbone under Abe make the flare-up serious. The four-term governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara, cried, "I don't want Japan to end up as a second Tibet." Last week Abe became the first major world leader to say Chinese nationalism is being dragged to the rescue of a government no longer gaining legitimacy from socialism.

"As a country that is under the one-party rule of the Communist party," he told the *Washington Post*, "formally what they should be seeking is equality. . . . And I believe it is fair to say that is probably what constitutes the legitimacy of one-party rule by the Communist party. But as a result of introducing the market economy, China has dropped one of its pillars of legitimacy, which was equal results for all. This has led them to require some different pillars—one of which is high economic growth, and another of which is patriotism [italics added]."

Yet Obama just asks everyone to be careful with their guns. His national security aide Daniel Russel briefed

the press: "Sino-Japan relations have a significant impact on all of us, and on all the countries in the region, so it's something we pay close attention to." But U.S.-Japan relations should also have an impact around the world. Why be passive about the alliance? Why not secure Beijing's "close attention" too? Must others always lead? It did not help that Hu got a state dinner from Obama whereas Abe got lunch and that Abe's wife did not make the U.S. trip because Michelle Obama was "too busy" to host her.

It's true, as Obama aides say, that Japan has catching up to do after three years of drift under a Democratic Party



The Senkakus, aka the Chinese pretext

of Japan government. Abe acknowledged that it's "high time, in this age of Asian resurgence," for Japan to bear more responsibility to promote "our shared rules and values, preserve the commons, and grow side by side with all the high achievers in the region." He refreshingly aligned Japan under his Liberal Democratic party with "the United States, Korea, Australia, and other like-minded democracies throughout the region."

At one level Obama's caution is understandable, as the rocky isles are worth little. Alexander Downer, long-time Australian foreign minister under John Howard (1996-2007), told me the day Abe visited Washington: "There's nothing to fight for in those islands. The two won't go to war." Abe himself declared, "I have absolutely no intention to climb up the escalation ladder." But the danger lies in any perception that Tokyo and Washington acquiesce

in Beijing's maritime push. The dragon would open his mouth for more. Should Abe acknowledge China's equal claim to the islands, Beijing would nibble further at Vietnam and the Philippines in the South China Sea. On we would go, and no new Kellogg-Briand pact would "outlaw" combat.

"Since we have decided that the United States is bluffing in the East China Sea," wrote a Chinese air force colonel in Beijing's *Global Times* in August, "we should take this opportunity to respond to these empty provocations [by Japan] with something real. This includes Vietnam, the Philippines, and Japan, . . . the three running dogs of the United States in Asia. . . . We only need to kill one, and it will immediately bring the others to heel." That is why Abe trumpeted the U.S. alliance last week and why Obama should have pulled out the stops to do the same.

Japan wants steady U.S.-China relations, not a love affair and not hostility. It is often overlooked that China also faces limits. Plummeting relations with Japan would surely bring China major problems with the United States; even Obama's whispered backing of Abe has given Beijing pause. Continuance of Japanese-American closeness is arguably in China's interests, because an unleashed Japan with nuclear weapons would be worse for China and North Korea than Japan as junior partner to the United States.

China's rise is fine, but the tacit China-Japan-U.S. entente is essential. It would be a disaster for Asia if Japan's record-breaking performance as a major power that for 68 years has not killed or lost a soldier in war came to an end.

China understands U.S. power but wonders, as many around the world do in hope or fear, about Obama's will. France and the United Kingdom cannot push Obama to take a stance in the East China Sea, as they did in Libya. His own resolve is the key, and the Senkakus are unlikely to calm down unless Obama supports Japan with believable conviction. Secretary of State Kellogg in 1929 won the Nobel Peace Prize

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: NEWS.COM

for wishful thinking on disarmament. Obama won it in 2009 for antiwar pledges. In the East China Sea, wishful thinking will not suffice to steady the U.S.-China-Japan entente.

Obama came to office vowing “fresh thinking and a change from the U.S. policy approach of the past eight years.” During 2009 he sought close rapport with Beijing, but he failed and sobered up. What Obama should emulate is the Reagan-Shultz architecture for Asia policy. In the 1970s President Nixon felt in urgent need of China’s support to cope with the Soviet Union. President Reagan saw less need. He and George Shultz believed that in China, as in the Soviet Union, communism was ultimately a passing phase. Shultz wanted an Asia policy, not just a China policy. He spoke of China’s important “regional role” (even more important today) but reserved the term “strategic” for Washington’s relationship with Japan. In fact, this policy brought the Reagan administration superior relations with the People’s Republic of China as well as with Taiwan and Japan. James Lilley, later ambassador in Beijing, called the period from 1983 to 1988 “the Golden Years in terms of China policy.”

Many here in Australia hope Obama’s “pivot” might mean an Asia-wide policy bringing Japan, India, and Australia heavily into the picture, with China important but not the alpha and omega. They may be disappointed. Obama’s diffidence toward Abe seems a missed opportunity. Abe favors cooperation with China but wariness of China’s nationalism. Obama should draw the same distinction for the United States.

Obama wants Beijing’s “help” with North Korea and other matters, but the Chinese don’t think that way. The Chinese naturally only want to help themselves. But they understand strength, and if we grasp both points, we’ll secure equilibrium in East Asia. Beijing’s attitude is close to the one Lord Palmerston expressed in 1848: “We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.” ♦

Tax the Nonprofits

A modest proposal.

BY CHARLES WOLF JR.



Okay, now render unto Caesar.

Nonprofit organizations (NPO), often referred to as the “independent sector,” are an essential part of America’s vibrant, pluralistic civil society. Their activities span a wide range of public and private purposes—philanthropic, cultural, religious, professional, educational, scientific. The public as well as private interests that NPOs represent add vitality as well as fractiousness to American society.

A common feature nurtured by NPOs’ expansive diversity is their “enormous and incessant growth,” to quote a leading authority, Bruce

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Hopkins. Although their exact number isn’t known, the best current estimate is about 2 million, consisting of 1.4 million in the annual IRS registry, an additional number of religious organizations (approximately 350,000), and a further increment of “smaller” NPOs. Neither religious organizations nor the smaller NPOs are required to file annual returns with the IRS—hence the uncertainty about a precise number.

Can the NPO sector contribute to easing the U.S. fiscal imbalance, while helping rather than hindering the dynamic free enterprise system, and retaining societal benefits provided by nonprofits?

Annual NPO income is about \$1.6 trillion—a revenue stream equal to 9 percent of U.S. GDP. This income includes donations and membership fees deductible from contributors’ taxable income, as well as earnings

realized by some NPOs from services they provide to government and to the business sector. NPOs are allowed to earn income consistent with their nonprofit status, but are restricted in realizing profits from such earnings, as well as in the uses to which net earnings can be put.

Employment in the independent sector is about 8-9 percent of total nonfarm civilian employment, and total assets held by NPOs are estimated at \$2 trillion, about twice the amount held a decade ago.

The United States continues a slow and unprecedentedly weak recovery from the Great Recession of 2008-2009—depressingly reminiscent of Japan's protracted stagnation since 1990. Annual U.S. GDP growth is less than 2 percent, while unemployment hovers between 7 and 8 percent. If involuntary underemployment and temporary employment are included, total unemployment is about 14-15 percent of the labor force. The accompanying fiscal predicament consists of a federal budget deficit of more than \$1.2 trillion in each of the past three fiscal years, and an accumulated gross public debt, approaching \$17 trillion, which now exceeds GDP. Slightly over 70 percent of the gross debt is publicly held, and more than one-third of the publicly held debt is owed to other countries (mainly China and Japan); the government debt that's not publicly held resides mainly in the balance sheets of the Federal Reserve.

Resolving our budget problems is difficult and urgent—the difficulty is compounded by the intense wrangling that pervades the political system. While the two political parties profess agreement on the need to reduce both the annual deficit and the accumulated gross debt, the parties disagree over how large the reductions should be, whether they should be accomplished by cutting spending, by raising revenues, or by both measures, and how much of the reductions should be made now versus in the future. Invoking the future reminds us that actions taken now do not prevent legislators and presidents from reversing them later.

Democrats urge that cuts focus mainly on defense spending, that cuts in entitlement spending should be avoided, and that any other cuts should be limited lest they set back the slow recovery. They argue that more substantial cuts should be deferred until later when (and if) more robust growth resumes. Instead of such cuts, the Democrats favor additional spending for infrastructure and education, as well as further increases in taxation of upper-income recipients beyond those enacted a few months ago to avert the fiscal “cliff.”

Republicans insist on larger spending cuts now, especially reductions

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in escalating entitlement costs, along with commitments for further cuts in ensuing years. Republicans oppose cutting defense spending, arguing that such costs would imperil national security. They are equally opposed to any further tax increases, arguing that these would adversely affect business investment, consumer spending, economic growth, and employment.

Despite its seeming remoteness from this familiar wrangle, the independent sector might provide a modest contribution to resolving the fiscal impasse. In the 2011 edition of his authoritative work on tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations, Bruce Hopkins asserts that rules for granting tax exemptions “are a hodgepodge of statutory law that has evolved over nearly 100 years.” Nevertheless, he identifies several “rationales” for granting tax-exempt status, one of which may be

relevant and useful for easing the U.S. fiscal predicament: namely, the specific rationale for NPOs that relates to their ability to “serve as an alternative to the governmental sector as a means for addressing society's problems.”

I suggest we retain tax exemption for only that portion of the two million NPOs that directly “serves as an alternative to the governmental sector,” and can demonstrate that existing budgets of specific government agencies and programs will be reduced as a consequence of the NPO's activities. For all the remaining NPOs, a modest excise tax (for example, 10 percent) would be levied on their income.

The fraction of NPOs that would remain tax exempt is probably small. I conjecture that perhaps 15 percent might qualify while the remainder would not—the qualifiers comprising only those NPOs that compete with and can substitute for government provision of services (for example, preschool and K-12 education, or R&D services). The revenue enhancement that might be expected from the levy on the no-longer-tax-exempt NPOs would be about \$140 billion annually—a modest but significant reduction in the overall fiscal imbalance.

In this scenario, donors' contributions to charitable organizations would remain tax-exempt for donors, although as income to the recipient NPOs, the contributions would be subject to the excise tax.

The multifaceted activities of the NPOs subject to the excise tax would obviously be scaled back, although the effect would be minimal because donors would retain their deductibility. The rich diversity that NPOs contribute to America's civil society would still flourish. To the extent that a quasi-market mechanism operates in the NPO sector, we can expect (or at least hope) that any reductions in donations and after-tax income would mainly affect the less effective NPOs. Moreover, the tax differentiation that retains an exemption for those NPOs specifically providing services that substitute for government outlays would have several worthwhile consequences: streamlining government,

incentivizing NPOs to provide services that reduce government spending, and helping to ease the acute U.S. fiscal imbalance.

The short-term effects of taxing some NPOs would make a modest contribution to reducing this imbalance. Business taxes and personal income taxes would be unaffected. In the medium to longer term, the effects of differentiated taxation of NPOs would increase the scale and activity of those that compete with government and hence would tend to curtail its expansion. Although donations to the large majority of taxed NPOs would remain deductible from the donors' taxable income, the lower after-tax income of the NPOs would tend to reduce only slightly their numbers and scale.

It is also possible that the modest NPO contribution to reducing the overall fiscal imbalance could catalyze similarly modest contributions by reduced spending on entitlements and on defense. For example, Medicare spending might be modestly reduced by introducing scaled co-payments for all nonemergency care, and by nationwide, cross-state competition among insurers. Modest reductions in Social Security outlays might be accomplished by adopting an inflation index for cost-of-living allowances that takes account of quality improvements, and by prudently linking outpayments from the Social Security system to inpayments made to it. And reductions in defense spending might be realized by lowering some outlays for personnel and for O&M (Organization and Management), rather than outlays for procurement and for RDT&E (Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation). Summing these several sources of lower spending—each “modest” in size—along with the tax revenues from NPOs, can sufficiently reduce the overall fiscal imbalance so that a resumption of normal GDP growth rates would entirely eliminate the imbalance!

Notwithstanding these changes, America's “civil society” would remain far-and-away the world's most diverse, vigorous, and influential. ♦

Our Italian Future

Atop a political volcano.

BY MICHAEL LEDEEN



Grillo the clown

Italy has long been the political laboratory of the West. From Roman republics and tyrannies through the city-states of the Renaissance, into the Counter-Reformation and on to fascism, Eurocommunism, and homegrown terrorism, the Italians have provided us with advance looks at our future. We should keep that in mind when sifting through the flotsam and jetsam of the Italian elections at the end of February.

The polls, both the “serious” ones before the election, and the instant exit polls shortly after the ballot boxes closed, were way off. They overestimated the strength of the center-left, and underestimated both Silvio Berlusconi's center-right coalition and the movement led by the foul-mouthed comic actor turned populist orator, Beppe Grillo. The final results make it extremely difficult to form a government with any hope of stability. Thanks to the latest electoral system,

the center-left is the biggest party in the chamber of deputies, but is nowhere near commanding a majority, while the center-right is the strongest force in the senate. The leader of the center-left, Pier Luigi Bersani, says he won't even consider a grand coalition with Berlusconi. Grillo, in far more colorful language, says he won't work with anyone. The comic stiff-arms journalists for the most part, but he blogs, and he quickly defined Bersani as “a dead man talking.” Grillo also warned that the country couldn't be governed without his people, and predicted that his “5 Star Movement,” having won a quarter of the votes, would take over the country very shortly.

Meanwhile, Berlusconi, the political piñata of the European establishment media, was calling for calm, reminding all who were inclined to listen that somehow or other the country had to be governed, and declared himself open to negotiations with everyone.

The easiest way to describe these events is to say that the two colorful characters did much better than expected, while the boring party apparatus flopped. Berlusconi's story

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verges on the miraculous, as one of his associates admitted. Left for dead last November with his popularity around 22 percent, he damn near carried the day outright. Indeed, as Berlusconi staggered from gaffe to gaffe in the final days of the campaign, and canceled scheduled rallies on very flimsy grounds, Roman insiders whispered that he was terrified of winning and was trying to depress his vote. They believe there is no way he can be prime minister again—all hell would break loose, both in Italy and across the eurozone—and yet he’s the only figure in his People of Freedom party with any national standing. Whatever his intentions, he’s much better off where he is, not in the government, but strongly represented in parliament.

Grillo is the crude vessel into which the long-simmering popular rage has been poured. Most Italians have had it, up to their enviable hair, with the political/business/intellectual class, and Grillo doesn’t hold anything back in his denunciations of the

ruling elite. He demands a purge. Out with the long-termers in parliament and the ministries. Slash their salaries and pensions. Reduce their numbers. Take the savings and distribute the cash to normal people. Enough with the relentless tax increases. Et cetera.

These elections actually accomplished part of the purge. Many famous names will vanish from the next parliament, including Grillo’s celebrated precursor, Antonio di Pietro, the crusading judge who decimated the political establishment during the *Tangentopoli* purge trials in the 1990s and then formed a party, Italy of Values, ostensibly based on high morality. He and it are gone, having been caught in financial scandals. Grillo would do well to take note, but probably won’t. Such types, from Savanarola to today, generally get sent to the stake, and Grillo has a flair for overstating his importance, as when he claimed, apparently falsely, that the Nobel economist Joseph Stiglitz supported Grillo’s program.

In any event, Grillo can’t lead from

inside the government, because he’s barred from parliament, having been convicted of manslaughter in an automobile crash.

The other big losers include President Obama, who warmly welcomed Italian president Giorgio Napolitano to Washington a few days before the vote and spoke enthusiastically about the great accomplishments of the “technicians’ government” that had been installed last year in an amazing move that produced a council of ministers in which nobody had been elected to anything. It was headed by the biggest loser of all, the economist and former European commissioner Mario Monti, who got barely more than 10 percent of last month’s vote. The establishment had hoped that Monti’s parliamentarians, plus Bersani’s, would produce a strong majority, but the Italians were fed up with higher taxes in exchange for fewer services and fewer jobs, especially for young people. The street wit about Monti said it all: “He even looks like an undertaker.”

But nobody can match Angela Merkel’s opponent in the next German elections for sheer buffoonery. When asked to comment on Italy, Social Democrat Peer Steinbrück said that “two clowns won,” one of whom “would not be offended to be called that,” while the other is “definitely a clown with a high testosterone level.” This remark caused President Napolitano to cancel his scheduled dinner with Steinbrück in Berlin, but at least had the merit of identifying a third clown on the northern side of the Alps.

So whither Italy? If you’re superstitious—as Italians tend to be—the most dramatic augury for the immediate future came from Naples. There’s a volcanic area known as the Phlegraean Fields, where the ground is hot, and sulphurous smoke emerges from fissures. The ancient Romans had no doubt that Hell lay beneath. The National Vulcanological Institute just confirmed that, since the beginning of the year, the ground of the Phlegraean Fields has been rising by more than a centimeter a month.

There’s going to be Hell to pay. ♦

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Paradise Lost

California is not too big to fail

BY SHAWN STEEL & K.E. GRUBBS JR.

One early December morning, Las Vegas police moved in on the Silverton Hotel and Casino, just off the Strip and known for its 117,000-gallon aquarium. There, having located a getaway black Audi with no license plates, they arrested 31-year-old Ka Pasaouk—a Laotian immigrant with a violent history who had eluded deportation as well as imprisonment. The *Dragnet*-style work came less than 24 hours after police back in Northridge, a Los Angeles suburb known for a state university campus, discovered what they called a “very grisly tableau.”

Outside an overcrowded boarding house, described in press accounts as unlicensed, lay the bodies of two men and two women, whom Pasaouk has now been charged with murdering. The story captured attention up and down the already tense state, where the phrase “grisly tableau” could easily have found wide use in the ubiquitous conversations about California’s economic, political, and social decay. America’s promised land has turned dystopian.

Especially in the movies, Californians do love to imagine how the forces of darkness could bring an Armageddon-like end to their earthly paradise. That is because, as they leave the theater, it has always still been paradise. Lately, however, life outside the cineplex has also turned dark.

The image of idyllic California, as cable watchers from coast to coast know, took another devastating blow in mid-February, when the disgruntled former LAPD officer Christopher Dorner went on his wild, manifesto-driven killing spree. In the frantic, weeklong manhunt,

during which police officers managed to shoot innocent civilians who stumbled in their way, a sense of unloosed anarchy descended.

Dorner and Pasaouk. The first a crazed ex-cop who, amid his quadruple murders, managed to tweak a race-troubled LAPD history into a PR campaign that stymied public information officers and even, appallingly, gathered a measure of public admiration. The second a near-perfect symbol of the breakdown of liberal institutions. Both accentuating

the sense that everything is falling apart in the storied state.

A civic unease runs through California these days. Premonitions abound of terrible things ahead. Not the space invaders or blade-runners of cinematic imagination, but padlocked public services, interminable DMV lines, closed classrooms, off-limits recreational areas, public employee strikes, inadequate or nonexistent police, fire, and medical responses.

Just days before the Northridge slaughter, San Bernardino city attorney Jim Penman addressed a crowded city council meeting in the wake of an elderly woman’s murder, telling residents of the bankrupt municipality to “lock their doors and load their guns.” Pen-

man was not alone among California city officials forced to slash law enforcement budgets. Nor did he back down amid the predictable media tut-tutting: “You should say what you mean and mean what you say.”

California voters in November overwhelmingly pulled the lever for a one-party state. Democrats control the governorship, statewide offices, and veto-proof legislative majorities—all beholden to powerful state employee unions. If the recent standoffs with such unions in Wisconsin and Michigan seemed dramatic, just wait for the coming epic in California, a state known for manufacturing drama. No prospective Scott Walker or Rick Snyder, the governors of

It was Jerry Brown who, in his moonbeam years, allowed state workers to unionize in the first place, a decision that propelled the Golden State into decades of budgetary troubles and brought it to its current precipice. Besides placating unions, he also saddled businesses with a slew of environmental regulations and halted highway construction, the makings of a 30-year plague.

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Wisconsin and Michigan, appears on the political horizon. But that doesn't mean peace with the unions—the money to buy it doesn't exist. So there will be a budget war of multiple battles and skirmishes. With Republicans already prostrate, some joke darkly—this, mind you, in the land of Reagan and “sunny optimism”—of adopting a Leninist approach: *Let it all collapse . . . break the whole egg carton . . . build on the ruins . . . make lots of morning-after omelets.* A dark scenario indeed, but name another more likely for Republicans.

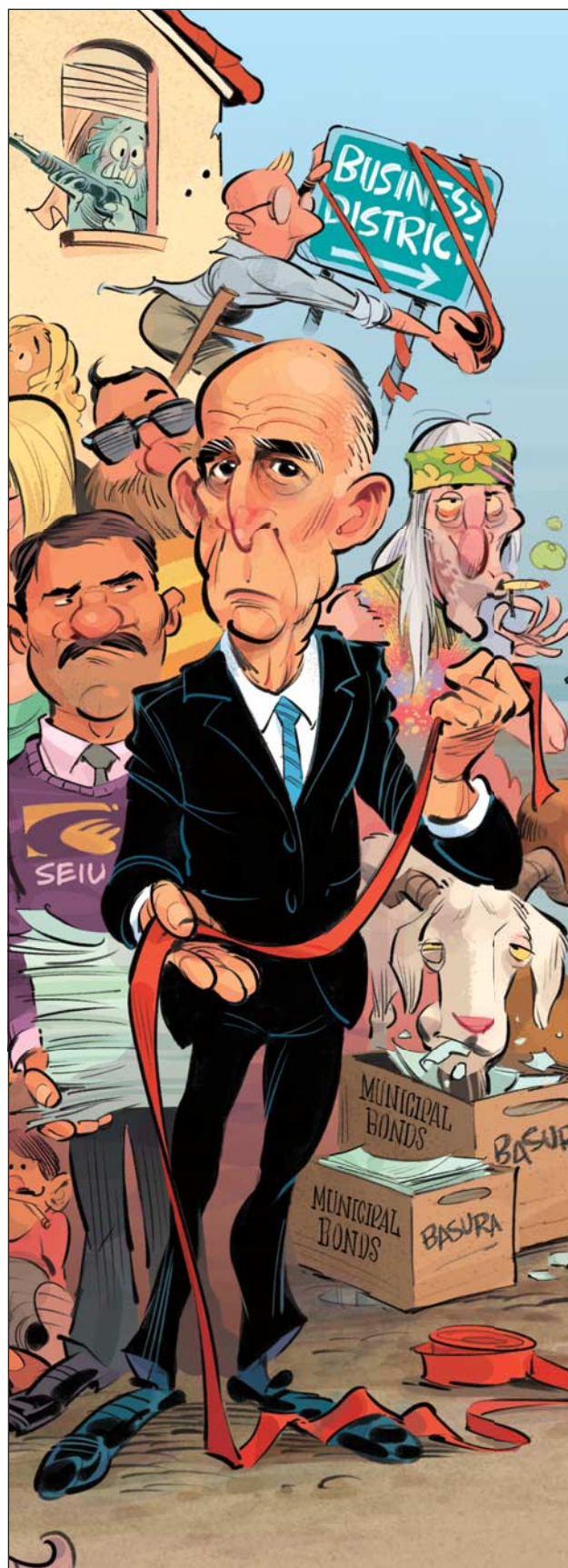
To be sure, and before the joke is taken seriously, Lenin actively instigated disorder and turmoil, the better to erect his totalitarian structure and, yes, his one-party state. The gallows humor of California Republicans is strictly passive; they are resigned to let nature take its course, the better to dismantle failed structures and launch productive, pluralistic systems consistent with freedom. The state's new political dispensation gives Republicans no alternative other than to be ready with workable proposals after the fall.

The grim conversations begin and end with public safety, but every conceivable policy issue—the economy, education, the environment—has made its way into the crucible, testing whether a state can survive with a prosperous, enlightened populace under the political left's expensive, freedom-killing programs. Our Burkean libertarianism tells us that California's current travails will prove it cannot.

Take Ka Pasaouk (please). Now charged with orchestrating four homicides, the Laotian had stuck his thumb in the eye of California's criminal justice and immigration bureaucracies for more than five years. Charged with felonies ranging from auto theft and assault to illegal drug possession, Pasaouk, against probation department recommendations, last September was moved from jail to a drug diversion program by the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office. Upon his release from state prison in 2008, authorities sought to deport him but failed to file requisite paperwork, the Southeast Asian thus becoming emblematic of government failure to serve and protect the public.

With California already under a U.S. Supreme Court mandate to relieve inmate overcrowding by multiple thousands, the Pasaouk case pricked the anxieties of a public already alarmed by what violent crimes may await them. At the end of the year the *Sacramento Bee* reported that gun sales had jumped dramatically—600,000 last year alone, up from 350,000 in 2002. Giving credence to the argument that more guns equal fewer crimes, gun injuries and deaths also plummeted over a corresponding period, the latter by 11 percent, though the *Bee*, not without an ideologically satisfactory explanation, attributes the improved numbers to “a well-documented, nationwide drop in violent crime.” Sure.

More recently, reports the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oakland police last year arrested 44 percent fewer suspects on violent and other charges than in 2008—not because of



ANTON EMDIN

shrinking crime rates but because of a triage policy adopted in the face of lower budgets. Notoriously, Oakland maintains the state's highest crime rate. Last year saw "a 23 percent spike in murders, muggings and other major offenses."

The political left may chortle that gun purchasers are panicking, but the reality is that more municipalities are likely to fall into bankruptcy (Moody's warns of 30 more, joining Stockton and San Bernardino), severely cutting police, court, and jail budgets. State Treasurer Bill Lockyer, a man of the left, in December commissioned an economist and a research group to create a "default probability model" for city bonds.

Stirred into the state's social instability are the swelling legions of school-aged youths now taking to the streets. Oakland-based Children Now's research director Jessica Mindnich reports that, over the past dozen years, the number of young people neither in schoolrooms nor in workplaces has grown by 200,000, or 35 percent, disquieting to those who assumed that future generations, if cradled in good intentions, would surpass the achievements of their elders.

In a recent Google search of "prisoner release," before we could finish typing the second, perfectly appropriate word, the screen suggested instead "prisoner realignment," which is the Democrats' euphemism for their response to the Damoclean order by the Supreme Court from May 2011. The idea was to shift "non-violent, non-serious, non-sex offenders" from the state's prisons into already over-burdened county jails or alternatives such as home detention.

Some 9,000 prisoners were released under the program, with projections of more than three times that number to be freed. Over the nine months before the Public Safety Realignment Act of 2011 was enacted, according to law enforcement officials, property crimes had dropped 2.4 percent. In the nine months following its passage in early April of that year, property crimes rose 4.5 percent. Naturally, scholars are available to tutor the public on the difference between correlation and causation. The public—not to mention the law enforcement community—is not reassured.

Which brings us to the governor, 74-year-old Jerry Brown. Before defeating Republican Meg Whitman in 2010, Brown put in time as state attorney general and mayor of the aforementioned Oakland, not to mention two antic terms as governor back in

the 1970s and '80s—when many who voted for him this time around were not yet born. They might have heard about him as a colorful, iconoclastic, "Zen" chief executive who slept on the floor and dated a rock star, and who at least was not the dread millionaire Meg Whitman. But they knew little else and took the leap.

Unless they were public employees voting out of gratitude, the new-generation, low-information voters likely didn't know it was Brown who, in his moonbeam years, allowed state workers to unionize in the first place, a decision that propelled the Golden State into decades of budgetary troubles and brought it to its current precipice. Besides placating unions, he also saddled businesses with a slew of environmental regulations and halted highway construction, the makings of a 30-year plague.

Let it not be said that Brown fails to tease and confound commentators, who need him to be fresh. Even in his first gubernatorial incarnation, as he marched to the left, he could come across as a kind of New Age conservative, pinstriped and looking for all the world like a young Churchill in the glow of a parliamentary speech. On alternate days he would make his "small is beautiful" philosophy seem to apply to state government, which to the

sober-minded raised questions about his credibility.

In this January's "State of the State" speech to the legislature, Brown, strangely complimenting his audience for their fiscal discipline, treated us to more of his philosophical eclecticism. He quoted the biblical story of Joseph, cited the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, and, as the *pièce de résistance*, offered this from Montaigne: "The most desirable laws are those that are the rarest, simplest, and most general; and I even think that it would be better to have none at all than to have them in such numbers as we have."

Such messages may quicken the libertarian pulse, but only the most naive could imagine the governor means to roll back big government rather than spread confusion about his direction. Last November, when voters approved his Proposition 30 to raise both income and sales taxes by \$50 billion, he spread confusion to a national audience. CNN's Candy Crowley, invoking the state's property tax-limiting Proposition 13 of 1978, asked if he thought the birthplace of the tax revolt could now be "the start of a tax-increase sweep." Brown answered:

Yeah, I do. I was here in 1978, when [the late Prop. 13 author]

Those who want to restore California's fiscal health, not to mention the California dream, cannot count on a Scott Walker-style standoff. There is no Scott Walker, only Brown, who owes his political life to the unions, after all.

Howard Jarvis beat the entire establishment, Republican and Democrat, because the property taxes had just gotten out of control. Now the cutting, the cutting and the deficits are out of control. Our financial health, our credibility . . . as a nation that can govern itself, is on the chopping block.

Of course, he didn't specify any "cutting" or "chopping" that he had in mind. Californians with long enough memories know that he was a ferocious opponent of the Jarvis amendment. Once voters overwhelmingly approved it, the "maverick" young governor miraculously remade himself into the measure's chief exponent and champion. That sort of fast footwork made him legendary and, on occasion, a presidential contender, if usually too clever by half.

He's still capable of the occasional magic act. A mere month after last fall's election he announced—abracadabra!—a balanced budget. A "break-through," he called it, pretending his ingenious abstemiousness had taken a giant step toward restoring California's economic health. One Facebooking schoolteacher even suggested the governor was more frugal-minded than that notorious Republican budget cutter, Wisconsin representative Paul Ryan. Oddly enough, no disgruntled public employees emerged to produce a television spot of Governor Brown wheeling Grandma over a cliff.

Why not? Well, for one thing, Brown claimed that, while balancing the books, he had managed to find \$2.7 billion more for schools and an extra \$500 million for the university system while keeping a \$1 billion reserve fund. Truly, a miracle worker. Moody's, on record as expecting municipal meltdowns, was sufficiently impressed to keep the state's ranking at A1—with the caveat that the presumed surplus would be used to pay down the debt. Standard & Poor's upgraded its rating by a single notch.

Only one problem. The vanished deficit may be the least credible trick Jerry Brown has pulled in his cynicism-breeding career. Wyatt Buchanan of the *San Francisco Chronicle* explained the "convenient budget trick that helped make this possible."

Over the past decade, lawmakers have balanced the state budget in part by borrowing money from special funds, revenue that's raised by specific fees and taxes. Lawmakers have borrowed from those funds in the very lean times, and promised to pay them back.

Brown did this as well, and although he had planned last year to pay back special funds by \$5.2 billion in the 2013-14 year, he now proposes to pay \$4.2 billion. Turns out, says H.D. Palmer, spokesman for the California Department of Finance, that those special funds "had higher balances" or fewer needs than had been projected.

Buchanan also found a November projection by the Legislative Analyst's Office that California would see a deficit in 2013-14 of \$1.9 billion, "absent the lower debt payments to special funds."

There remains, as the governor acknowledged, a "wall of debt" amounting to \$28 billion. Brown straight-facedly presented a timeline, beginning this July and lasting into 2017, in which the wall would be knocked down in payment increments from \$4.2 billion to \$7.3 billion.

But that \$28 billion, reported the *Los Angeles Times*, constitutes only a small, if delectable, appetizer to be served up to the Debt Monster over the next four years. The *Times*:

Numerous reports by state agencies, think tanks and academics have shown the wall of debt to be many stories higher than \$28 billion—hundreds of billions of dollars over the next few decades. Brown's repayment plan does not significantly reduce the sizable debt to Wall Street or account for promises the state has made to its current and future retirees but is not setting enough money aside to cover.

The amusing idea that Brown could play the moderate, or, in the words of the *Orange County Register*, put "a stop sign in front of his fellow Democrats in the California Legislature," could turn grim, as disgruntled teachers and state employees, their guaranteed pensions suddenly in doubt, grab their pitchforks and pivot in the direction of the septuagenarian wonderboy. There's still time to produce those TV spots of Grandma at the cliff, with Brown pushing.

It will not take much for the state union leadership to ally with the more ideologically committed legislators, of whom there are many, to create dramatic tensions and turmoil in Sacramento. And those of us who want to restore California's fiscal health, not to mention the California dream, cannot count on a Scott Walker-style standoff. There is no Scott Walker, only Jerry Brown, who, loving to confound, could conceivably stand his ground. But that scenario strikes us as pure Hollywood. Brown does owe his political life to the unions, after all.



Brown defends \$68 billion high-speed rail project, July 2012.

The governor's giddy idea that his successful tax increase could sweep the nation runs up against another, more disturbing, trend: The looming municipal meltdown is not just a California problem but one faced by all the big-spending, high-taxing states, such as Illinois, Connecticut, Maryland, and New York. A day of reckoning is likely "at the national level," according to University of Chicago economist Brian Barry, "no matter what happens to federal taxes or health care spending."

We're talking about as much as \$4 trillion in unfunded pension liabilities courtesy of these financially troubled big states, whose governors doubtless hope to pass on their woes to Washington. The ever resourceful conservative idea man Grover Norquist, picking up on Barry's prediction, suggests congressional Republicans exact from acquiescent Democrats a trade. He would exchange for bailout funds a plan to block-grant Medicaid and other entitlements to the states, thereby eliminating the costly, one-size-fits-all federal requirements that so bedevil state budget-makers. It could help.

As could a plan circulated by renowned supply-side economist Arthur Laffer, who would, among other solutions, have California march back to the Jarvis era, reversing Brown's tax-hike bandwagon. He would moreover have California—in some rankings the worst state in which to do business—leave the 26-state bloc of forced unionism and join the 24 right-to-work states, many of which enjoy higher productivity, personal income, and population growth than their progressive counterparts. Sacramento as currently constituted won't allow any of it.

Meanwhile the malaise. The once-Golden State now has the country's highest poverty rate, more than 23 percent. Also depressing: California, whose population is 12 percent of the nation's, is home to a third of the country's welfare recipients. A hardened underclass, as Chapman University urbanologist Joel Kotkin has put into uneasy relief, is emerging as a source of social, economic, and political strife.

Laudably, Kotkin wants to see the unemployed raised up via a blue-collar boom, with housing, infrastructure-building, and energy, where the promise of undeveloped natural gas fields could lead the way. Again: Not bloody likely if Sacramento has any say.

Already, as Kotkin points out, the once-prosperous middle class has shrunk essentially to state retirees and those still living in homes protected by the Proposition 13

property tax limits. Allergic as they have historically been to class analysis and warfare, Republicans must answer by showing how a vigorous, free-enterprise economy can jump-start growth, spread prosperity, and lessen the chasm between the hyper-successful creative class on the coasts and the lumpenproletariat left behind on public assistance.

When multimillionaire golfer (and Republican) Phil Mickelson grumbled about his tax burden and threatened to leave the state, he found little sympathy among the suffering Californians who, their personal finances far more modest, are thinking of joining the growing out-migration of middle-class producers. A rebuilding GOP of necessity will have to direct its message to them and to ethnic groups, from the inner cities to the Central Valley, for whom the California dream of self-advancement still resonates.

The class anxieties were forced into relief when Texas's Republican governor Rick Perry, in radio spots and personal appearances, put the welcome mat out for struggling businesses. As Perry knows, enclaves of California expats are mushrooming in Dallas and Austin suburbs. With exquisite symbolism, the national financial newspaper *Investor's Business Daily* announced its plan to relocate its production facilities to the Lone



L.A. soup kitchen: the prospect of a permanent underclass

Star State—not the first business to do so.

Brown's inelegant response? Perry's ad was but a "fart." California's glorious coastline, majestic mountains, and fair climate, reasoned the governor, would keep businesses slavering under his spell. But Perry, the bumbling cowpoke of last year's presidential debates, has outfoxed him, perhaps having taken Benjamin Franklin's counsel to "fart proudly." Let the coastal breezes do their work.

What then, as Lenin might say, is to be done? We may dream that this rhetorically gifted performer might retire, perhaps to join his predecessor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, in a box-office stinkaroo. He does have plenty of experience with make-believe crime-fighting, always a Hollywood favorite.

Other than that, the political choices are excruciatingly limited. Republicans can marshal the constructive ideas of the Laffers and Kotkins while rebuilding an opposition party, but it will require quiet patience and resolve not to join the multitudes of out-migrants. The California we love always offers the most sensual solaces; Brown is not wrong about its natural glories. We must cherish them. That, and sit back serenely in our cushioned movie-house loges, popcorn at the ready, and watch as the horror show unfolds. ♦

NEWS.COM

How to Prevent Atrocities

There's no substitute for presidential leadership

BY TOD LINDBERG

In August 2011, about five months after Bashar al-Assad ordered the Syrian military to fire on unarmed demonstrators, President Obama issued his “Presidential Study Directive on Mass Atrocities.” PSD-10 instructed the executive branch to create an interagency group called the Atrocities Prevention Board, with senior representatives from the White House, all major cabinet departments, the military, foreign assistance and trade bureaus, and the intelligence community. The APB’s mission would be “to coordinate a whole-of-government approach to preventing mass atrocities and genocide,” which the president called “a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States.”

PSD-10 ordered up a report with recommendations for creating the Atrocities Prevention Board within 100 days and the APB to begin its work within 120 days. In the event, the review took the National Security Council staff longer, and the announcement of the establishment of the APB did not come until April 23, 2012. About a month before, a United Nations official informed the Security Council that the civilian death toll in Syria had reached 9,000. At this writing, civilian deaths stand at about 30,000, with more than 70,000 dead all told.

The juxtaposition of the humanitarian disaster unfolding in Syria and the establishment of an Atrocities Prevention Board could hardly go unremarked. As Sen. John McCain, long a proponent of U.S. military support for the Syrian opposition, acerbically noted on ABC’s *This Week*, “Thousands of people [are] being massacred in the streets, and the president—I’m not making this up—goes to the Holocaust Museum, where we said never again, and says that he is setting up an Atrocities Prevention Board.”

The real problem here is not the APB. At worst, the APB is contributing to the problem through sins of omission. The creation of the Atrocities Prevention Board had

nothing to do with events in Syria. The APB was in the making long before Syria blew up, and indeed, before any of the Arab Spring eruptions. Its origins lie in the 2008 recommendations of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Genocide Prevention Task Force (on whose staff I served). The task force, chaired by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former Defense Secretary William Cohen, called for the creation of an interagency group to coordinate the U.S. government’s response to gathering indications of atrocities, with an emphasis on early warning and timely action to defuse crisis situations before the body count starts to mount. The key player in the creation of the APB within the administration was Samantha Power, a senior NSC staff member, Obama confidante, and author of the hugely influential book *A Problem from Hell*, a study of failed responses to genocide.

Nor is the APB responsible for the Obama administration’s Syria policy. Those decisions belong to senior administration officials, starting with the president himself. The administration has continued to press its case for a U.N. Security Council resolution, without effect. Although considerable humanitarian aid has flowed from the United States to Syria, Obama has repeatedly and pointedly ruled out U.S. military intervention in the conflict and has rejected the lesser step of providing the Syrian rebels with military aid. The most dramatic instance, which came to light last month in congressional testimony and news reports, was Obama’s rejection last summer of a proposal to vet, train, and arm elements of the rebellion. The proposal had the support of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, CIA chief David Petraeus, and Joint Chiefs chairman Martin Dempsey—in short, was the consensus view of his senior national security team, only one of whom, Dempsey, is still serving.

This is policy-making at a far higher level than any interagency group at the assistant secretary level could aspire to control within this or any other administration. The Atrocities Prevention Board, chaired by Power, has been quietly conducting its meetings, delving into other potential crisis situations. It is still very new and weak institutionally, facing

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a struggle to obtain purchase against turf-based bureaucratic resistance. (At a recent dinner party, a long-serving Foreign Service officer with no direct involvement in the issue fairly dripped with disdain in describing the board as a waste of energy in relation to the regional and country expertise already available in Foggy Bottom; I take his comments to be representative of views in the building.) A presidential executive order, which would shore up the APB's status within the administration, is in the works but not finished.

The public profile the APB has taken is almost vanishingly low. It has scarcely been mentioned in news accounts since the announcement of its creation. The administration has yet to release, even in redacted form, the original study report that PSD-10 ordered up. And the APB has had only dog-and-pony-show contact with human rights groups and experts outside government. Power, meanwhile, is leaving the administration, at least for a time. (She is widely considered a favorite to succeed Susan Rice as ambassador to the United Nations, though Rice has made no announcement of departure plans.)

And yet, despite the impetus for the board falling long before Syria exploded and the absence of the board in policy decisions concerning Syria, the Atrocities Prevention Board does loom large in relation to Syria policy. Because how, really, do you announce you are setting up an Atrocities Prevention Board *in the midst of mass atrocities*? Won't someone ask, sooner rather than later, snarkily or in earnest: What exactly is the Atrocities Prevention Board doing to prevent atrocities in Syria?

The timing of the establishment of the APB has the appearance of exquisite refinement—just over a week after a (bogus) cease-fire announcement by the Syrian government but before the Syrian government ceased pretending to agree to a cease-fire; two days after (still) the most successful Security Council resolution on Syria, April 21, 2012, which authorized more monitors for the cease-fire that didn't exist and more support for the mission of Special Envoy Kofi Annan—a mission Annan would abandon in futility about three months later. This might have been the finest hour of the international community's attempt to do something about Syria—grading on a curve, that is. So it was time to announce the APB.

It is unsurprising that as conditions in Syria only got worse, the APB bunkered, focusing its work elsewhere, perhaps on such scheduled potential crises as the one in Kenya following elections March 4. What else could it do? After all, it owes its existence to President Obama's personally stated conclusion, quoted above: "Preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States." The president continued in PSD-10, "America's reputation suffers, and our ability to bring about change is constrained, when we are perceived

as idle in the face of mass atrocities and genocide." The APB by its very existence serves to remind people that that's what Obama professed to believe in the midst of doing nothing effective to stop the mass killing of civilians in Syria.

Perhaps somebody can get the president off on a technicality. I hope it's not that the number of dead Syrians hasn't yet met the criterion for "mass" atrocities. Maybe the defense rests on the distinction between "completely ineffectual" (which we have been) and "idle" (which we arguably have not been). Some have warned of the difficulties and dangers of coping with Syria's air defenses in order to establish a no-fly zone or to destroy artillery pieces in the act of shelling civilians. Yet somehow I doubt that the contest between the U.S. Navy and Air Force on one side and the Syrian military on the other would be a close one. Prudential considerations are always relevant, but this is not a case of Russia abusing Chechen civilians or China Tibetans.

As to our ability to influence a post-Assad Syria, it is clearly limited—not least by our unwillingness to help the people who are seeking to overthrow him. Obama is said to have concluded that Assad is going anyway and that supplying arms to the rebels would make little difference. If it's true that Assad's regime is doomed, it would make sense to find some people among those who will vie to succeed him with whom we can do business. And the focus on the narrow question of whether arms from the United States would make a difference seems to be a rather transparent attempt to change the subject from the more basic questions of whether the judicious and prudent application of U.S. military power could have ended this conflict and saved civilian lives, and whether it still can.

The real conclusion invited by the creation of the Atrocities Prevention Board amid ongoing mass atrocities in Syria seems to be this: Preventing mass atrocities is "a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States"—except when it isn't.

The creation of the Atrocities Prevention Board followed more than a decade's worth of international consciousness-raising on the need for concerted action (by whom is always a question) to prevent or halt genocide and mass slaughter. At the 2005 United Nations World Summit, member states formally embraced the "responsibility to protect," a principle of humanitarian intervention aimed at stopping atrocities. Briefly, the principle holds that states have a responsibility to protect populations residing on their territory from genocide and lesser atrocities; if they cannot or will not act in fulfillment of this responsibility, the international community may intervene to provide protection. The intention of the principle, known colloquially as R2P, is to defeat claims that states

might make about their sovereign right to noninterference in their internal affairs in order to shield their own acts of mass atrocity or their failure to stop atrocities.

R2P, though it is often described as an emerging norm in international politics and international law, has always been controversial. Needless to say, authoritarian states complicit in atrocities will never do more than pay lip service to any such responsibility toward the people they rule. Other states have expressed concerns that R2P is indistinguishable from neocolonialism and amounts to a “right of intervention” by strong states in pursuit of their national interests against weaker states. Critics have also noted the potential unevenness of the application of R2P: Powerful states with the ability to deter military intervention will be able to disregard the asserted responsibility. That’s the Chechen and Tibetan problem.

There is, moreover, the vexing question of how the “international community” decides to act to fulfill the responsibility to protect when a state is failing to fulfill it. The “World Summit Outcome” document vests this authority with the Security Council:

138. Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means. We accept that responsibility and will act in accordance with it. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability.

139. The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In this context, we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

It’s doubtful that all states genuinely supporting the principle of the responsibility to protect would take the view that international action and intervention always require a Security Council resolution. The NATO military intervention in Kosovo, though it predated the adoption of R2P, was clearly a humanitarian intervention to protect civilians. Thanks to Russia, it lacked a Security Council resolution of authorization, leading some to conclude that the intervention was illegal (although some embracing this conclusion nonetheless viewed the intervention as morally justifiable). The United States, to pick one great power, has

often preferred to try to work through the Security Council, but has generally reserved the option of acting on its own authority. It is perhaps telling that in taking military action against Georgia in 2008, the Russian Federation ludicrously cited its supposed “responsibility to protect” ethnic Russians residing in Georgia.

The 2011 NATO intervention in Libya is, to date, the most conspicuous example of the application of R2P. Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973 refer directly to the Libyan government’s responsibility to protect its people and its failure to do so. The first of these demanded a halt to violence against civilians; the second authorized member states “to take all necessary measures” to protect civilians.

The case of Libya was therefore R2P at its most pristine—military action to protect civilians under the authority of the Security Council. Except that the NATO mission in Libya also had the unstated goal of toppling the regime of Muammar Qaddafi, at which it succeeded, and this was in no way authorized by the Security Council resolutions (which would certainly have fallen to Russian and Chinese vetoes had they been put forward with any such authorization).

The use of R2P to topple Qaddafi did not go over well, to put it mildly. A substantial part of the reason Russia and China have blocked any meaningful Security Council resolution on Syria is their view that the authority the Security Council granted in the case of Libya was abused. Perhaps the blatant use of the chemical weapons the Assad regime reportedly has at its disposal would fundamentally alter the debate at the Security Council. But as things stand, the likelihood of a resolution authorizing “all necessary measures” to protect civilians in Syria is zero.

Given the dimensions of the loss of life in Syria, one could be forgiven for wondering whether R2P is now as dead a letter at the United Nations as President Obama’s declaration that preventing mass atrocities is “a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States.”

But that would be to misunderstand both the responsibility to protect and the impetus behind the creation of the APB. The notion that R2P would somehow harden into customary international law that binds states, or even into a norm of international politics that would dictate the course of action of the “international community” in difficult cases, was surely misguided. Similarly, the APB is not going to be running U.S. government policy when atrocities loom, let alone when they break out.

R2P is, at its best, a tool in the hands of states and statesmen willing to hold perpetrators of atrocities to account. It provides a legitimate basis for rejecting, in cases of mass atrocity, the principle of noninterference in the affairs of sovereign states. It will never be a substitute for political will, but rather can be an instrument of political will.

The same is true of the APB. Properly managed, it can be an effective tool in building awareness inside the government of potential trouble spots. It can assess what resources might be available to try to nip problems in the bud and guide those assets to the task. It can do so not only in specific cases, but also in promoting the drafting of guidance and planning documents to deal with various contingencies as they arise. It can perform a government-wide “lessons learned” function, long sorely missing, following outbreaks of atrocities, as well as in the more epistemologically challenging cases of the successful prevention of atrocities (you can’t really prove you prevented an atrocity, since there was no atrocity). In a better world, its chairman would stand somberly alongside as the president explains what the United States will do to stop the loss of tens of thousands more lives.

What the APB cannot do is *compel* U.S. government action to prevent atrocities. That’s where political will comes in. It cannot be generated by a committee or a principle of action, and there is nothing that can take its place.

The Obama administration’s extensive engagement at the United Nations over Syria is in effect substituting the pursuit of procedural compliance with R2P in the form adopted by the United Nations for the pursuit of the actual

protection of Syrian civilians. Consciously or not, that may be the point. Samantha Power’s book presses the case that modern genocides have not represented failures of U.S. government policy or of the “international community,” but rather the *success* of policies of inaction and nonintervention. Such a policy dare not speak its name. It travels instead under a false flag—the inability of the Security Council to take action, say, or the insistent propagation of the view that taking action of any kind would be both reckless and ineffectual.

To judge by news reports, President Obama is now being pressed to revisit his decisions on Syria. If he is serious about doing anything to protect Syrians and vindicating his own claims with regard to a core American interest and responsibility, he will bypass the procedural bottleneck at the United Nations. He should have done so long ago. And if he doesn’t, it will be entirely plausible for critics to suggest that the impasse at the United Nations is actually serving the ends of a deliberate U.S. policy of inaction.

And here, perhaps, is the ultimate utility of the establishment of the Atrocities Prevention Board and the adoption of the principle of the responsibility to protect. Given Syria and any future such instances in which action is possible but the possibility denied, they serve to shame. ♦

Washington Needs a Reality Check

By **Thomas J. Donohue**

President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Washington could use a strong dose of reality right now. To solve our problems and seize opportunities, we must face up to some basic facts and fundamental realities.

The first reality is that we can’t do much of anything without economic growth, and you can’t create growth and jobs without the private sector. The debates are often centered around revenue and spending—who’s paying up and who’s getting what. But economic growth is the real force behind opportunity, security, and prosperity.

We could return the economy to full employment through growth alone, with no rise in government spending. With stronger growth, the government would collect more revenue and help drive down the debt and deficits. Exports would boom, household income would increase, and millions would rise out of poverty.

Another reality that’s often overlooked is that demography is destiny. Due to our aging society and increased life expectancy, the entitlement programs designed for an earlier era are unsustainable. They must be revised to meet today’s obligations and to keep tomorrow’s promises. We also face a shortage of native-born Americans to run our economy. We need an open and welcoming immigration policy that allows the world’s best talent and hardest workers to contribute to our economy and help keep it robust and competitive.

Our policies must reflect the reality that we are part of a competitive global economy. We can’t afford to think only in domestic terms. We need a bold trade agenda that ensures American exports are reaching world markets and that global trade and investment are welcome on our shores. Our tax code must not place U.S. companies at a competitive disadvantage in the world. We need a regulatory system that fosters innovation

and keeps the United States an attractive place to do business.

Finally, any rational analysis of the facts and our history show that our nation’s prosperity has been—and must always be—borne out of economic freedom. Our citizens and businesses have the right to take risks and be rewarded. They can go as far as their dreams, talent, and hard work will take them. Why would we ever want to move—by design or accident—to a system where we turn over more of our freedom and responsibility to the government?

The tough choices we face about our future demand a clear-eyed approach. Our economic and fiscal challenges require a public debate that’s based on reality and characterized by truth telling. Washington isn’t exactly known for being forthcoming—but expect to hear it straight from business.



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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Man with a Line

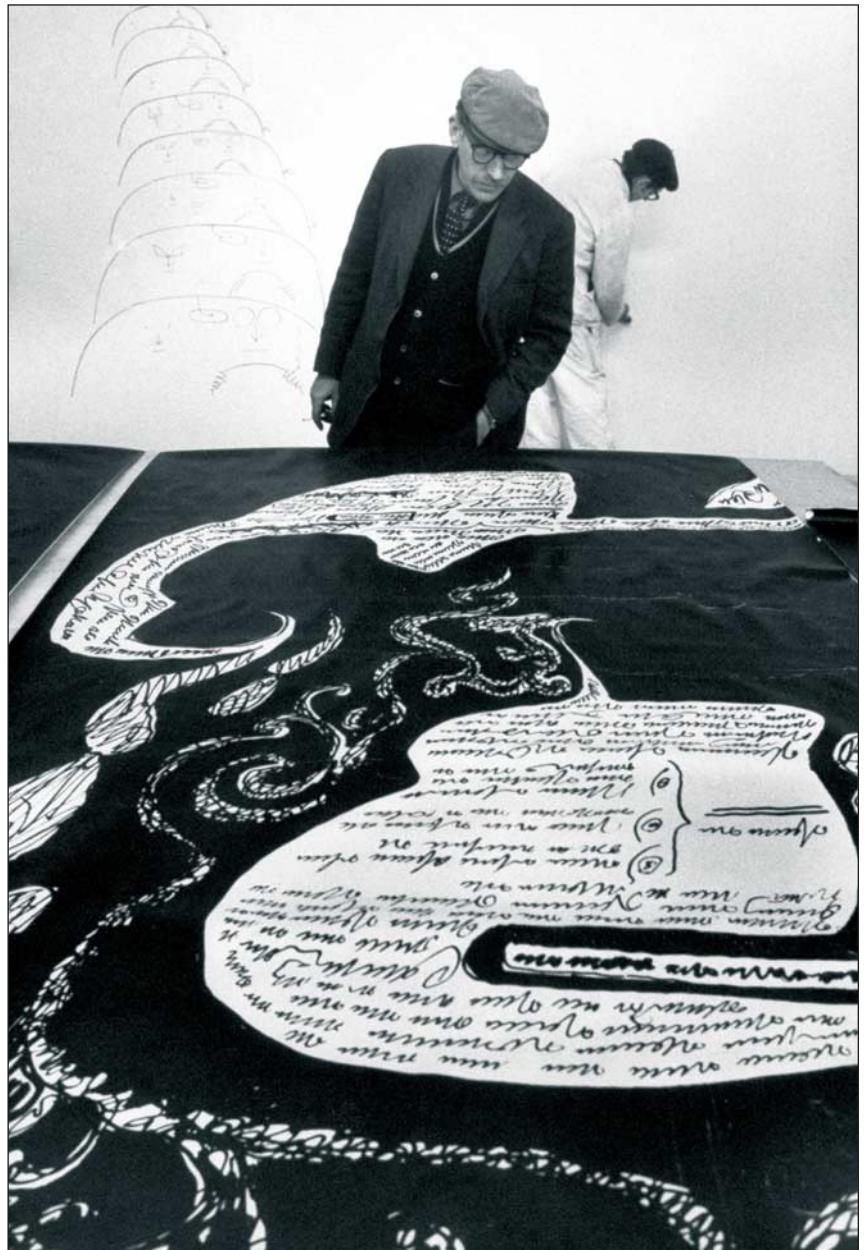
The gimlet eye of Saul Steinberg.

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

At a celebration at UCLA of the career of Eugen Weber, the Romanian-born historian of France, I made the mistake of describing Eugen as an exile. In his response to the tributes paid him, Eugen corrected me, remarking that he had never considered himself an exile. “From the moment I attained consciousness,” he said, “I wanted to leave Romania. The place is a dump.”

Tristan Tzara (né Samuel Rosenstock), one of the founders of Dada, was a Romanian. Eugène Ionesco, perhaps the most famous Romanian artist of the last half of the 20th century, was a surrealist playwright prominently associated with the Theater of the Absurd. E.M. Cioran, the Romanian aphorist, wrote: “An acute

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Saul Steinberg surveys his work at the Brussels World's Fair, 1958

Saul Steinberg

A Biography
by Deirdre Bair
Nan A. Talese, 752 pp., \$40

sense of absurdity makes the merest action unlikely, indeed impossible. Lucky those who lack such a thing! Providence has indeed looked out for them.” Dada, surrealism, absurdity—Romania seems to have encouraged such responses on the part of its writers and artists.

Another Romanian, Saul Steinberg (1914-1999), the cartoonist, illustrator, and artist, called the country of his birth “a sewer.” Feeling stymied by Romanian anti-Semitism, well on the increase in the late 1920s with the advent of the fascist Iron Guard (for whom the Nazis were moving all too slowly), in his adolescence Steinberg escaped, going off to Milan to study architecture. (A fine education, he averred, for everything but the practice of architecture.) He did not escape Cioran’s curse of an

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

acute sense of absurdity. If there are mixed blessings, so, too, may curses be mixed. Absurdity was Steinberg's stock in trade, his manner of looking at the world. Without it, he was out of business; with it, however, happiness was always out of his reach.

Outwardly, Saul Steinberg's was an immensely successful life. And this success did not come only after great travail. He drew, and the world was eager to have him continue to do so. On the artistic front, warm welcome met him all of his days. Money, fame, honors fell into his lap. "After nearly forty years of looking at his work," said William Shawn, then editor of the *New Yorker*, "I am still dazzled and astounded by it. His playfulness and elegance are of a sublime order."

While a student in Milan, Steinberg published cartoons in Italian satirical journals. When Mussolini began rounding up Jews, he was briefly interned in an Italian concentration camp, which, by his own account, was more a disorganized detention depot. With the help of relatives and friends, he won his freedom and made his way to Portugal. Because American immigration quotas for Romanians were filled, he had to spend a year awaiting a visa in the Dominican Republic. While there, he published drawings in the *New Yorker*, which was to prove a lifelong and lucrative connection. Over the years he provided the magazine with nearly 90 covers and hundreds of drawings.

Soon after his arrival in New York in 1942, Steinberg went to work for the graphics division of the Office of War Information. Once naturalized as an American citizen, he was immediately commissioned as an ensign in the Navy. He served in China, North Africa, India, and Rome, illustrating instructional manuals and turning out drawings used as propaganda dropped behind enemy lines. During this period, he continued to contribute to the *New Yorker*, where he had a "first-look" contract giving the magazine initial refusal rights on all his drawings.

In his early days in New York, Steinberg met Hedda Sterne, a Romanian emigré, an abstract painter, and a woman

of intelligence, beauty, and sympathetic understanding. She invited him to lunch, and, in her words, "he stayed six weeks." They married, though Steinberg persistently betrayed her through adultery, and they eventually separated. But they never divorced. She remained someone he called on in times of confusion, anxiety, and depression, and these times were neither few nor far between.

A Jew in Romania, then a Romanian in America, Saul Steinberg was an outsider by fate but also by choice, forced to think in a language to which he was not born. He saw the world in the coolly detached way of an artist. This allowed him to capture it in his drawings in its illogicality, its unconscious comedy, its silly pretensions. In Steinberg's drawings the figure 5 makes love to a question mark, a Don Quixote-like figure attacks a pineapple, the earth is seen in parochial diminishment when viewed from Ninth Avenue in Manhattan.

"I don't quite belong in the art, cartoon, or magazine world," Steinberg claimed, "so the art world doesn't quite know where to place me." Was he major or minor, a high- or middle-brow figure, a mere cartoonist and illustrator or a major artist? Even now, 14 years after his death, this question has yet to be resolved.

Deirdre Bair's well-researched biography is less a work of interpretation than of reporting. Bair chronicles the year-by-year facts of her subject's quotidian life. Her book records an odyssey of success played in counterpoint to an *iliad* of woe. As she builds up her details, in pointillist fashion, patterns emerge. Hedda Sterne claimed that "the mystery over [Steinberg's] work was always 'where did it come from?'" Deirdre Bair's biography does not finally solve the mystery but, in helpful ways, greatly lessens it.

As for Steinberg's success, along with artistic honors and critical approval, he made a vast amount of money. This came not through sales to magazines, where his drawings were much in demand, but from Hallmark, Ford Motors, Neiman Marcus,

Noilly Prat vermouth, and other companies for which he made drawings to accompany their ads; he also designed wallpaper and fabrics, and created dust jackets for books and murals for restaurants. The demand for Steinberg's work was always greater than the supply—though the supply itself never ran out, for his facility as a draftsman was unremitting and his production prodigious.

Yet artistic and commercial success could not stay Steinberg's depression. He blamed much of his gloomy outlook on Romania and his family. His mother, the implacable Rosa, was one of those women for whom no act of generosity, no accomplishment on her son's part, was ever satisfactory. She drove her husband, Moritz, into psychological retreat and her son to early desertion, though a highly qualified desertion it was. Little as he could bear to be in his mother's presence, listening to her cacophony of nagging and complaint, witnessing its shriveling effect on his father, Steinberg nonetheless supported his parents and his sister Lica and her family until their deaths. He also sent money to relatives who had emigrated from Romania to Israel, and who always had a fresh list of requests for him to fulfill. He kept his first lover, a married Italian woman, on his payroll for much of her life.

If Steinberg's generosity seemed more dutiful than heartfelt, it was because expansive emotions were not in his psychic portfolio. He tended to be in business for himself, emotionally as well as artistically. In conversation, he was a monologist, offended if not given the floor at dinner parties. "I am not a listener," he acknowledged. "I am a talker." In relationships, things had to be weighted in his favor. "We are the two people in the world who love you most," Hedda Sterne told him, and, in their almost daily phone conversations after their separation, she claimed that "we talked only about him."

Steinberg was a relentless woman chaser. A small man, bald, with thick glasses and a chosen nose, he must have made up for what he lacked in

animal magnetism through the aphrodisiac of his artistic fame. As he grew older, he chased younger and younger women. Friends could not leave him alone with their attractive adolescent daughters. At one point, he seduced the babysitter of painter Ad Reinhardt's children. While still living with his wife, he began a love affair with the wife of a couple with whom he and Hedda Sterne were friendly and whose child he liked, and so he proposed, in all seriousness, a *ménage à cinq*.

"In a way," Hedda Sterne said, "sex was [Steinberg's] life. He deprived himself of a true union because he was not ever in love." His friend the art critic Dore Ashton seconded the motion, telling him, "Saul, you do not love women. What you love is *your* reaction to them. . . . I well know that deep sentiment is alien to you, that somewhere you are lamed, and that secretly you are afraid of and despise love." Had there been an attractive woman in the room when Ashton said this, Steinberg wouldn't have heard a word of it.

The saddest of Steinberg's love affairs, recounted in detail by Deirdre Bair, was the longest lasting. This was with a German emigré named Sigrid Spaeth, which began in 1960, when he was 46 and she 24. At first besotted by her, he shaved off his mustache at her request—for a vain man, the ultimate sacrifice. As Bair puts it, "The thirty-five years war began." Sigrid, who called herself Gigi, was psychologically fragile, given to deep depression. He moved her in and out of his apartment in Greenwich Village and house in East Hampton. He took her to Europe and paid for her many trips to Africa. He gave her an allowance, paid her tuition for courses at Columbia, and provided her with everything except what she really wanted: marriage and children. He made plain that he was up for neither—and added that, in any case, he wasn't in love with her. A bit of a hippie, with lots of love affairs of her own, and a druggie, she eventually killed herself, at the age of 60, by jumping off the roof of the Riverside Drive building in which Steinberg had bought her an apartment.

In her bill of complaint against Steinberg, Sigrid Spaeth claimed that he often shut her out, and that he didn't include her in his social life. She embarrassed him, he countered, by not being sufficiently sophisticated, socially or intellectually. Steinberg was often invited to the dinners and parties of those rich given to dabbling in art. As an intellectual who read in a serious way, he also had entrée to the *Partisan Review* crowd. Two figures in that circle, Mary McCarthy and Dwight Macdonald, pushed him politically further to the left than he might otherwise have gone. A closer friend was Harold Rosenberg, a high-powered schmoozer who wrote art criticism for the *New Yorker* and who championed Steinberg's work.

On his frequent trips to Europe, Steinberg met with Alberto Giacometti, Vladimir Nabokov, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Nicola Chiaromonte, Carlo Levi, Janet Flanner, Igor Stravinsky, and Pablo Picasso. He bought Stravinsky's Cadillac, and described Picasso as resembling "an old Jewish man in the Florida sun—all torso and shorts. The voice of a cigar smoker . . . the falsetto of a cello."

Steinberg thought of his own art as in the tradition of James Joyce and Nabokov. If so, it would have been the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake* and the Nabokov of *Pale Fire*, farcical works built on the mockery of the vagaries of language. Nabokov, Bair reports, reciprocated Steinberg's admiration, and said of him that, in his drawings, he "could raise unexpected questions about the consequences of a style or even a single line, or he could open up a metaphysical riddle with as much wit as Escher or Magritte and with far more economy." Steinberg also admired Picasso, and thought he and Picasso were the two most important visual artists of the 20th century—an assertion that, at best, may be half true.

Resisting all attempts to get him to explain his art, Steinberg said: "The sort of people who need an explanation deserve a mystery." He claimed to be "a writer who draws," by which he must have meant that

he was a visual artist of ideas. Anton van Dalen, his studio assistant, maintained that Steinberg "was all about ideas." Steinberg's notion of his own art was that it was "only an indispensable way of showing a poetic invention. Notice the drawing."

The first things worth noticing about his drawings are their immediate fascination and infinite charm. "Don't underestimate your god-given ability to enchant and delight," Hedda Sterne told him during one of his many glum periods. And so his endlessly inventive talent does. Steinberg held that one of the aims of the artist should be to keep alive the childlike ability to see things innocently and afresh. He was aided in this attempt by being an outsider in every culture into which fate had tossed him—Romanian, Italian, American—which gave him his peculiar off-center slant on things.

What to American eyes might be ordinary was to Steinberg's often astounding. He could be amusing in his representations of American ambitions and vanities, and took particular note of the contradictions that ran up the center of American culture. In a famous *New Yorker* cover showing an American monument, the figure of Prosperity sits atop the highest pedestal, flanked by statues of Freud and Santa Claus, while at the bottom Uncle Sam shakes hands with Uncle Tom; in the middle, under a banner reading "The Pursuit of Happiness," a snake and a crocodile are biting off each other's tails.

Death was always much on Steinberg's mind. He has drawings in which he sets out life as a series of ascending steps from childhood to a paunchy retirement in Florida, which he called a "concentration camp for old people." In one drawing, a man appears enclosed on the right side of a parenthesis, a bird about to place a wreath over his head, with the date 1905 followed by a dash occupying the left side of the parenthesis. In another drawing, a Quixotesque figure on horseback, lance at the ready, chases a crocodile down an incline, unaware that a large boulder (death itself) is in

pursuit of, and certain to kill, him and the crocodile both.

The autobiographical element in many of Steinberg's drawings is not difficult to spy. A drawing of a man earnestly dancing with a girl crudely limned in crayon recalls a photograph, reproduced in this book, of Steinberg dancing with Sigrid Spaeth. The subject of many of his drawings is drawing itself, and the comedy of artistic creation generally. In several of these, styles from different art-historical periods—from cubism to childish scrawlings—appear in the same drawing, just one of the many instances (as he put it) in which he combined “ideas in unpredictable ways.”

A splendid calligrapher, Steinberg was able to bring letters of the alphabet, as well as numbers, to life. In one drawing, the letter “H” from the word “Who” pushes over the word “Did,” which crushes the letter “I” in the word “It” in the phrase “Who Did It”—with the question mark off to the side presumably asking the question. In another, a man sits before a desk while the authoritative man behind the desk fills the large balloonish letters “N” and “O” with much indecipherable writing, all of which of course adds up to “NO.” Owing to their construction, he thought the numbers 5 and 2 erotic, and 1, 4, and 7 quite without sex appeal, though he felt the number 4 might be of interest to cats.

Cats with human countenances—many of them resembling that of Franz Kafka—in Steinberg drawings slyly observe people solemnly pursuing their ridiculous ambitions. He drew false documents in which he substituted fingerprints for faces. In other drawings, human beings are lost in mazes and labyrinths; military men are given severely geometrical faces; women are all legs in whorish high heels or else menacingly birdlike; rococo architecture looms in the back-

ground (he drew the Chrysler Building over and over); a vinyl record, on the Sphinx label, shows the head and bosom of a woman attached to a cat's body, with the song on the record called “Kumming Tango.”

In an oeuvre so large as Steinberg's, not everything succeeds. Late in life he began producing the tops of desks and their contents, and these, apart from being tidy compositions, seem of

by giving them situations that are out of context and contain several [possible] interpretations,” he said. He even claimed that he published a few drawings in the *New Yorker* “that I myself didn't quite understand.” He rendered the watercolor painting of a palette of watercolors; a man under the hood of an old-fashioned camera photographing a woman in a burka; men and women carrying portraits, statues, busts, and pennants of themselves; a parade of avant-garde painters like so many soldiers in Red Square, marching in lockstep past a building marked the “National Academy of the Avant-Garde.”

As “a writer who draws,” Saul Steinberg also claimed that “drawing is a way of reasoning on paper.” Had he been born “in a place with a good language, a good vocabulary,” he told a *New York Times* reporter,

I would have stayed there, I would probably have become a writer. This was my inclination. But being deprived of this thing, and having what I considered a modest talent, gave me from the beginning a *métier*. I transformed this *métier* into something much more complex and much more to my own needs.

That “something” was illustration at the service of ironic observation.

Steinberg's uniqueness resides in the fact that we do not enjoy his work in the way we do most art—considering its elements, examining the feeling it evokes, gauging its power—but instead tend to read it for meaning. He himself sometimes referred to his audience as “readers.” These drawings force us to ask, *What's going on here? What is the true subject? Why is it amusing?* And, finally, *What makes it all so Steinbergian?*

Like “Orwellian” or “Kafkaesque,” “Steinbergian” is a personal adjective of a kind assigned to only a few exceptional modern artists. The Steinbergian figure is a man who, like E. M. Forster's description of the



Drawing Jean-Paul Sartre, 1946

slight interest. His postcards, often of landscapes with rubber stamps on them, fail to engage the imagination. In the 1960s, his view of America darkened, and so did his drawings. They began to be filled with menacing Mickey Mouse-like figures toting guns, hookerish women, fierce dogs, rats, bums, menacingly bearded Black Panther types. Of all his drawings, these seem most like the doodlings of a frightened neurotic, and hence are of the least interest.

Steinberg was best as a humorist, though one who went in less for jokes than for puzzles, paradoxes, and visual parodies. “I try to make [people who view my drawings] jittery

poet Cavafy, stands “at a slight angle to the universe.” In Steinberg’s various drawings, he is a male figure with a rabbit inside his head, or a man able to detach his nose from his face, or a man photographed holding the hand of a life-size photograph of his 8-year-old self. Fairly certain that life is a joke, Steinbergian Man anxiously awaits its punchline.

Because he published his drawings chiefly in the *New Yorker*, Steinberg probably had the largest audience for his art of any visual artist in the 20th century. Print was his preferred medium, and magazines the preferred venue for his work. Of that work, Harold Rosenberg, in an essay accompanying the collection of drawings that appeared at a Steinberg retrospective at the Whitney Museum in 1975, wrote: “Steinberg is the only major artist in the United States who is not associated with any art movement or style, past or present.”

Because of this, Steinberg’s art is not easily categorized. I think of him as belonging to that small but lustrous school of artists—Alexander Pope, Honoré Daumier, Maurice Ravel, Max Beerbohm are of this same school—who do not overpower, but instead charm through the mastery of their craft and the unalloyed pleasure they provide.

Saul Steinberg’s considerable success—financial, critical, social—wasn’t sufficient to offset the depression that scorched his last years. As a hypochondriac who was more than a bit paranoid, a heavy drinker, and a man more than normally terrified by death, Steinberg found life drearier and darker as he reached his seventies. As his friends died off, Steinberg’s depression deepened. So strong was its hold on him that, in the hope of shaking its grip, he submitted to electroconvulsive therapy. Being diagnosed with slow-growing lymphoma didn’t lift his spirits. Pancreatic cancer took him in his 85th year.

Saul Steinberg was not the first, and doubtless will not be the last, of those artists who gave the world much more pleasure than he was able to derive from it. ♦

BCA

The Inside Story

George W. Bush was most successful when defying ‘consensus.’ BY MICHAEL S. DORAN

‘M’ake sure,” Elliott Abrams told me, “that you have the better idea, and then push for it aggressively.”

He offered this advice back in 2006, when I was working for him in the National Security Council. At the time, I was involved in a minor conflict with another White House office, which was assuming a heavy-handed role in the formation of Lebanon policy—an area that, bureaucratically, fell to me.

When I told Abrams of my intention to tell the director of the encroaching office to back off, he counseled against the move.

“Never fight turf on turf,” he told me, meaning that I should never assert authority by waving around the White House organizational chart. “Fight it on the basis of ideas,” he said.

Fighting for the better idea is a key theme running through this inside account of George W. Bush’s policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It recounts how, after dramatically breaking with the consensus of the Middle East experts, Bush turned around again and embraced it. In Abrams’s view, the original rejection was the sounder move, and his view must command attention. Elliott Abrams was one of the most influential officials who worked on the issue; in addition, he is a man of ideas. Only a handful of other Americans can claim to have thought as deeply about Israeli-Palestinian issues.

Tested by Zion is two books in one. In

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Tested by Zion
The Bush Administration and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
by Elliott Abrams
Cambridge, 352 pp., \$29.99

addition to being a candid memoir, it is a meticulous history, peppered with passages from interviews with the key American, European, and Middle Eastern participants in the events. These testimonials alone make this an indispensable source for anyone interested in understanding the evolution of American policy toward the Middle East. But this is no mere chronicle; its heart and soul is a defense of Bush’s departure from the foreign policy “consensus.” As such, it represents the single most cogent statement of the neoconservative analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In presenting his case, Abrams is remarkably forthright—at times, shockingly so. He makes no effort, for example, to disguise his deep disagreement, during Bush’s second term, with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the architect of Bush’s reembrace of the conventional wisdom. And this particular subplot makes for a fascinating case study in Abrams’s idea-oriented style of bureaucratic politics.

As a general rule, senior officials avoid close association with any particular course of action, lest they be excluded from the halls of power when the mood at the top shifts. Abrams enjoyed an exceptionally good run; but when Rice steered policy back toward the conventional wisdom, he was relegated to the role of in-house skeptic.

The “consensus” that guided Rice’s move is familiar to anyone who has ever read an editorial on the subject in the *New York Times*. According to this



Ariel Sharon, George W. Bush, Mahmoud Abbas in Aqaba, 2003

view, the Clinton administration nearly solved the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: “We were *this* close,” its supporters say, pinching their thumb and forefinger together. “Everyone already knows the contours of a peace deal.”

The major impediment to reaching it (so the thinking went) was the unholy alliance between right-wing Israelis and their powerful supporters in Congress. If Bush had simply pounded his fist hard enough on the Israeli prime minister’s desk, he would have orchestrated yet another historic handshake on the White House lawn.

On the basis of such thinking, Rice convinced Bush to hold the Annapolis Conference in 2007 and to race for a peace treaty between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Abrams never bought any of it: “I am not,” he writes, “an optimist about negotiating a final status agreement because the compromises are terribly difficult for both Palestinians and Israelis.” The two sides know each other very well. They have no difficulty envisioning the contours of a peace treaty. And they do not prefer it to the status quo.

This is, in Abrams’s view, the stark reality. Condoleezza Rice and, by implication, all the foreign policy “realists”—Brent Scowcroft, James

Baker, Colin Powell—were actually advocating policies founded in fiction.

In 2006, such claims invited widespread derision from the foreign policy establishment. The Palestinian-Israeli “peace process” is a multinational industry, and, in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East, thousands of careers in think tanks, universities, and chancelleries depend on the perpetuation of the conventional wisdom. Accordingly, Bush’s iconoclastic policies were loudly dismissed on three continents as neoconservative cant, mindlessly pro-Israeli policies passed off as strategic argument.

Abrams provides a valuable corrective. Though he is a persuasive advocate of a peace agreement, he argues that the rush to final status simply will not work. A durable two-state solution can only be accomplished slowly and deliberately. Peace, writes Abrams, “will be built on reality, not hope.”

George W. Bush’s policy of “no daylight” between Washington and Jerusalem did not, in fact, mean that the White House became a rubber stamp for Israel. On the contrary, it was a method of maximizing American leverage—often with results that even Bush’s critics should have applauded. For instance, advocates of a speedy race to final

status frequently railed against Israeli settlements, which they identified as the single greatest obstacle to their goal. But few took note of the fact that Bush’s policies led to the Gaza withdrawal—a development that dismantled more settlements than at any time since 1982.

In Abrams’s view, only when Bush bucked the conventional wisdom did he open up new vistas of opportunity for a two-state solution. This is good advice for Barack Obama, especially as he charts his own course for a second term. Indeed, it is a little-recognized fact that Obama’s policies simply continue the course that Bush charted in 2006; and for nearly seven years, the conventional wisdom has reigned supreme. So what successes can it celebrate?

Recently, when I bumped into a senior Rice aide on a plane, I put this mischievous question to him. “But we were *this* close,” he responded, pinching his thumb and forefinger together. “We resolved 95 percent of the issues separating the Palestinians from the Israelis”—which I’m sure was true. But it is only the last 5 percent that actually matter.

What is needed now is not a new push for negotiations, but a better idea. *Tested by Zion* is a good place to start the search. ♦

Roman Spring

The fundamental challenge(s) of Catholic renewal.

BY RYAN T. ANDERSON

But who do you say that I am? This question, from an obscure Nazarene carpenter to an even more obscure Galilean fisherman, has proved to be the world's most important query. How you answer it has profound implications for how you will lead your life. And, as C. S. Lewis pointed out some 50-plus years ago, Jesus left us with only three options: He was either a pathological liar, a deranged lunatic, or the Lord of the universe.

For those who answer with Simon Peter, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," a life of radical discipleship is required, particularly in this new millennium. So argues George Weigel in *Evangelical Catholicism*. The task of Roman Catholics in the 21st century, as he sees it, is "proclaiming the lordship of Jesus Christ and the possibility of life-transforming friendship with him."

While Weigel is nowhere near the end of his career, this book is, in many ways, a culmination. *Evangelical Catholicism* draws on his acclaimed biography of Pope John Paul II as well as some of his other works, such as *The Courage to Be Catholic* and *Letters to a Young Catholic*, highlighting many of the themes Weigel has developed over the past quarter-century. The end result is Weigel at his best, situating our present moment within the context of the last century, and laying out an agenda for Catholic reform and mission in the future.

Weigel marks the beginning of Evangelical Catholicism with the pontificate of Leo XIII (1878-1903). The ensuing development of the liturgical

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Evangelical Catholicism
Deep Reform in the 21st-Century Church
by George Weigel
Basic Books, 304 pp., \$27.99



George Weigel

movement, and the renewal of biblical scholarship and Thomistic philosophy, reached maturation with the decrees of the Second Vatican Council, and blossomed fully during the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. But the true champions of Evangelical Catholicism are the multitude of priests of the John Paul II generation; the university students at places as varied as Texas A&M, Princeton, and the Franciscan University of Steubenville; religious sisters in Nashville and Ann Arbor; and young professionals gathering in parishes from Soho, London, to Midtown Manhattan.

In contrast to a Counter-Reformation Catholicism that taught truths *about* Jesus, this new era of Catholicism centers on *knowing* Jesus. No longer content with the question-and-answer format of a Baltimore Catechism, it

finds its source and summit in Word and Sacrament; no longer at home in an ambient Christian culture, this Catholicism is both countercultural and culture-forming. It demands of its adherents a fundamental choice: to follow Christ without counting the cost, or to be swept up in the relativism, subjectivism, and nihilism of what Weigel refers to as our postmodern cult of the "imperial autonomous Self."

Evangelical Catholicism isn't a new church, but a new cultural expression of the timeless truths of Christ. Its adherents embrace faith and reason, Scripture and tradition, church authority and individual conscience, liturgical prayer and personal piety, and holiness and mission above all else. For, ultimately, the church in the new millennium must undertake what John Paul II called "The New Evangelization," presenting the Gospel (perhaps for the first time) to those whom Weigel describes as "baptized pagans."

G. K. Chesterton famously quipped that "the Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried." For far too many, the Christian ideal simply hasn't been found. Weigel suggests that an entire generation has never even heard the Gospel proclaimed, let alone seen it embodied: "the poorly catechized, the liturgically bored, the morally confused." For these, "when Evangelical Catholicism is proposed, it is more often embraced enthusiastically than rejected as impossible to accept." And that's the key to conversion, as Weigel sees it: The church must propose the truths of Christ and man, and invite all to see what the Gospel reveals about both.

Opposed to Evangelical Catholicism are two groups of dissenters: liberals who reject what the Gospel reveals, and reactionaries who think the cultural forms of Counter-Reformation Catholicism were, themselves, divinely established. But for Catholic life going forward, both of these alternatives are sociologically and theologically desolate. No one dedicates his life for the trivial truths of liberal Catholicism; and a Catholicism that can't engage modernity can't pro-

pose St. Paul's "more excellent way."

Weigel believes that understanding our cultural moment will prompt reforms within the church, and he outlines a detailed plan of action for renewal: (1) Priests, bishops, and popes should more fully embrace their identity as *alteri Christi* and their role as heirs to the apostles to teach, govern, and sanctify; (2) Catholic liturgy should form a sacred space in a countercultural time, allowing beauty to serve as a special on-ramp to friendship with Christ; (3) lay Catholics should embrace vocations *in* the world but not *of* it, joyously live out Christian marriages, and "take possession of their unique responsibility as *lay* agents of the church's mission to the world"; (4) Catholic scholars should embrace the symphony of truths of faith and reason, to *think with the church*; and (5) Catholic public officials should allow these saving truths about God and man to guide their policy decisions, remaining sensitive to the difference between first principles and prudential considerations.

Evangelical Catholicism has its limitations. Notwithstanding the recent papal resignation, Weigel's suggested reforms for the Vatican bureaucracy will cause many a reader's eyes to glaze. One might quibble with his suggestions for liturgical music reform (we should *sing* the Mass, not *sing at* Mass). And he doesn't devote enough attention to Catholic intellectual life in secular disciplines, especially the social sciences. Acknowledgment of the role evangelical Protestantism has played in fostering Evangelical Catholicism also would have been welcome.

Still, this book deserves to be read by any serious thinking Christian. Evangelical Catholics are not blind to the manifold failings of the church, but they know and love it too much to give up on Christ's bride. Though protected by the Holy Spirit, the church is composed of sinners, constantly in need of renewal by a more radical discipleship of Christ. As Weigel notes, "Evangelical Catholicism calls the entire Church to holiness for the sake of mission." John Paul II and Benedict XVI both knew this. The next bishop of Rome will as well. ♦

BCA

Crescendo in C

An unexpected ending for Manchester's Churchill.

BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD

This magisterial three-volume biography of Winston Churchill, begun by William Manchester nearly 30 years ago, has at last reached completion, though the path to its finale took a circuitous trip through the wilderness, reminiscent of Churchill himself. *The Last Lion* is doubtless the most popular Churchill biography; its lyrical adulation for the subject comparable to Carl Sandburg's six-volume Lincoln biography.

A literary approach to a political figure is distinctly out of fashion in our revisionist and egalitarian age. Manchester's transparently heroic rendering of Churchill is today rejected by everyone except . . . readers. For a decade after the publication of the second volume, which took the story up to Churchill's arrival at 10 Downing Street in May 1940, readers were demanding to know when the third and final volume would appear with the abiding interest of youngsters awaiting the next Harry Potter installment. Rumors began to circulate that Manchester was having difficulty, that he was scaling back the third volume to cover just the war years, or that he was, most implausibly of all, suffering writer's block.

He took a strange detour in 1993 with a middling-sized book about the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, whose appalling factual errors and haphazard organization caused it to be poorly received. Then came the news in the late 1990s that, due to poor health—Manchester suffered a series of strokes—he would be unable

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The Last Lion

Winston Spencer Churchill:
Visions of Glory, 1874-1932
by William Manchester
Little, Brown, 992 pp., \$50

The Last Lion

Winston Spencer Churchill:
Alone, 1932-1940
by William Manchester
Little, Brown, 816 pp., \$50

The Last Lion

Winston Spencer Churchill:
Defender of the Realm, 1940-1965
by William Manchester and Paul Reid
Little, Brown, 1,232 pp., \$40

to write the third volume. Perhaps a collaborator would be selected to complete the project; but despite a series of rumors and false starts, no successor was chosen until shortly before Manchester died in 2004, when Little, Brown announced that Manchester had at last settled on a writer to complete the last volume: Paul Reid.

No one had ever heard of Reid, a former feature writer for the *Palm Beach Post* who had taken up journalism as a second career in his late forties. He knew little about Churchill, and had never written a book before. Thus, the third and final volume is in some sense two stories: the continuation of the Churchill narrative, and the suspense drama of how it would turn out under another hand. Could a novice biographer possibly emulate Manchester's gripping but sometimes overwrought prose ("Churchill's feeling for the English tongue was sensual, almost erotic") and satisfy demanding Churchillians at the same time?

In hindsight, whatever faults and

foibles Manchester may have had, his choice of Reid appears inspired. Coming to Churchill with fresh eyes, Reid has produced a volume about the climax of Churchill's career which ably captures the fullness of the story but with many departures from Manchester's style and assessment of Churchill. Reid's narrative of Churchill during and after World War II is straightforward, well written, and compelling; above all, it surmounts what would have been the likely problems of the third volume had Manchester lived to write it himself.

It turns out that Manchester did, indeed, suffer writer's block after he arrived with Churchill at Number 10, and for a simple reason: The Churchill story becomes much more difficult to tell starting in 1940, because he is now in charge of the scene rather than a prophet in the wilderness. The cast of characters enlarges, the decisions are numerous and difficult to evaluate, even now—though a legion of revisionists are on hand today to point out Churchill's shortcomings and blunders.

It is easy to see how the last third of Churchill's life was harder for Manchester to fit into the purely heroic mode of the first two volumes. The strongest aspect of those volumes—his vivid recapturing of the social and political context surrounding Churchill—was either unnecessary or inappropriate for the last volume. The “overtures” of the first two volumes—the first describing Victorian England, the second the fever swamp of Depression-era Britain—could not find their symmetrical match for the third volume. Manchester's talent as the biographical equivalent of a landscape painter became a disability when the canvas required portraiture. His muse deserted him.

Even Churchill's unabashed champions—of whom I am one—sometimes find Manchester's treatment out of proportion, or incommensurate with his true greatness. Manchester thought him the greatest Englishman since King Arthur (or since Disraeli, he says in the second volume)—an odd comparison since Arthur is partly a mythical figure while Churchill is a real one. Not satis-

fied with King Arthur, Manchester also compared Churchill to King David and Leonardo da Vinci, while adding the infelicitous judgment that “he had the temperament of a robber baron.”

Manchester rightly offered that “an American is struck by the facility with which so many British intellectuals slight the man who saved their country.” Yet he comes close to doing much the same thing with the unconscious way he embraces an essentially historicist approach to Churchill himself. Manchester's most questionable assessment



William Manchester, 1967

is that Churchill is to be explained and understood as a figure emanating from the “parochial grandeur” of the Victorian era, that his greatness in the struggle against Hitler is due precisely to his being wedded to obsolete, even reactionary values. In fact, without Hitler to summon “enormous stores of long-suppressed vitality within him,” it is not clear Manchester would have found Churchill interesting or admirable. In many other respects, Manchester sides with the current conventional wisdom that Churchill was an unthinking racist, imperialist, and anti-Communist.

Churchill's Victorian roots are what make Churchill, for Manchester, the *last* lion, whose like we can't expect to see on the world stage again. But it is an all-too-easy trope: Peter Canellos called Senator Edward Kennedy the *Last Lion* in his 2010 biography. Moreover, the suggestion that Churchill is some kind of remnant of a bygone age does readers a disservice. To be sure, Churchill had his own doubts about the possibilities of heroic virtue and high statesmanship in

the 20th century. But for all of Manchester's fulsome admiration for Churchill and his magnificence in describing Churchill's life, his premise is wrong. Roy Jenkins has said that explaining Churchill as a product of Victorian aristocracy is “unconvincing. . . . Churchill was far too many faceted, idiosyncratic and unpredictable a character to allow himself to be imprisoned by the circumstances of his birth.” And another biographer, John Lukacs, adds: “Contrary to most accepted views we ought to consider that [Churchill] was not some kind of admirable remnant of a more heroic past. He was not The Last Lion. He was something else.”

The “something else” at the root of Churchill's greatness in 1940 derived not from his being a Victorian man, but from his being, in a larger sense, an *ancient* man—the kind of “great-souled man” contemplated by Aristotle, among other classical authors. Manchester doesn't go back far enough in explaining Churchill, and deprives readers of reflecting on the eternal nature of courage, greatness of soul, and practical judgment that are the summa of statesmanship in any age.

Paul Reid's summary judgment in this third volume is more sound: “He may have been born a Victorian,” writes Reid, “but he had turned himself into a Classical man. He did not live in the past; the past lived on in him.” This is just one, though the most important, of Reid's departures from Manchester's Churchill. And while Reid has produced a more restrained and disciplined narrative, it is nonetheless stirring reading because of the subject matter. Reid's contribution is worthy of a place among the best Churchill books. Despite the subtle confusions and runaway grandiosity of Manchester's first two volumes, they remain resplendent reads—so long as readers remember not to take the “last” part of the title literally.

As Reid reminds us, Churchill said that the British people had “the lion heart.” Churchill himself only supplied “the roar.” So long as the British, or any, people still have a lion heart, there will be statesmen capable of giving a suitable roar. ♦

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Resounding Yes

From Chile, of all places, a political movie that works.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

As a general rule, movies about electoral politics are so awful we should all be glad there are so few of them. Elections are wildly dramatic events, but the drama unfolds over a long time. Thus, naturally impatient moviemakers insist on stuffing them with transparently absurd melodramatics or ludicrous comic confrontations. The evildoers in these movies are invariably amoral political consultants who are out to corrupt the idealists. They are the serpents in Eden.

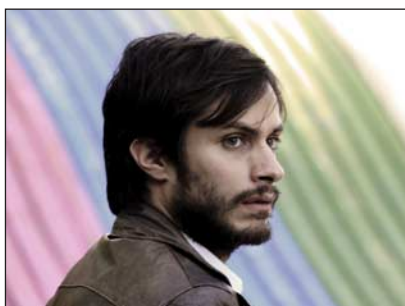
The reason political films are so bad is that this is a dreadfully uninteresting perspective, and it is a lie besides. Politics, like humanity, is infinitely shaded. But the movies abhor shading. That is what makes a new film called *No* such a triumph: It is the first movie about a political campaign worth seeing in forever.

No is the story of a hip, cynical advertising man who is recruited to help run a political campaign. He insists that the message be a positive one, which upsets the deeply principled people for whom he is working. They are outraged by events, and they want the advertising to be an expression of their outrage. He insists on using images and songs that convey a brainless optimism about the future.

They attack him. They accuse him of being pernicious, unserious. They are ideologues—fanatics, even—while he seems not to believe in much of anything. But he does believe in one thing these true believers do not: that they can win the election if the overall message is one of hope, cast in the form of a hyperactive Coke commercial. He

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No
Directed by Pablo Larraín



Gael García Bernal in '*No*'

is right and they are wrong. The anti-intellectual, anti-cerebral, and entirely cynical appeal to emotion is exactly what is needed to win. They are awash in loser's rectitude; they need the cynic to achieve their idealistic aim.

No is a film from Chile, and its subject is the 1988 referendum called by Chile's junta, the country's first plebiscite since the 1970 election that led to the disastrous presidency of the Marxist Salvador Allende. The choice put before the public was simple: to say yes or no to a seven-year presidential term for the junta's leader, General Augusto Pinochet, who had run the country since leading a coup against Allende in 1973. The Pinochet regime had been both brutal and wildly successful, trampling on human rights while at the same time adopting free-market policies that gave Chile the continent's only boom economy in the 1980s.

The junta craved the legitimacy denied to it by its seizure of power—legitimacy that its economic success seemed to demand almost organically. The referendum came to be, in part, due to pressure from the Reagan

administration, which had navigated a successful transition away from dictatorships in Central and South America—and in the Philippines—throughout the 1980s. As the movie begins, the ad man, played by the charismatic Mexican actor Gael García Bernal, is told by an old family friend (who is a leader of the coalition seeking to oust Pinochet) that the Americans are backing the “no” side. This is the first and last we hear of American involvement, but it is already enough to give *No* a surprising flavor.

The story is fictionalized, but the conflict that the movie portrays is very real. The “no” side is given 15 minutes of television time a night to make its case—the first time there will be a wholly uncensored television broadcast since the coup. The leaders of the “no” campaign want their efforts to focus solely on the evil that Pinochet's regime has committed, and to preach a leftist message. They presume the election will be stolen in the end, so the only thing for them to do is to use the TV time to raise awareness (and propagandize).

Saavedra, our consultant, sees a possibility. The public does not share the coalition's loathing of all things Pinochet. Things are undeniably getting better in Chile. Preaching a message of despair and gloom does not match the national mood. The trick is to harness the national optimism that should get Pinochet elected and, in effect, steal it from him.

How that happens is the meat of the movie, which is marvelously well-wrought by director Pablo Larraín and screenwriter Pedro Peirano. Larraín made the risky decision to photograph the entire movie using video equipment from the 1980s, which gives viewers the feeling of looking at vintage clips from MTV on YouTube. It's jarring, but effective.

No gets at the most devilishly interesting aspect of politics: how the views of the elite, which drive policymaking, must always share space with nakedly populist appeals to emotion of the sort that elites despise. It's a smart and unusual and sophisticated film, and I loved every minute of it—even though that is a nakedly emotional response to a rather cerebral movie. ♦

"John Kerry has suffered his first gaffe as the new U.S. secretary of state, inventing the nation of 'Kyrzakhstan.'"

—Telegraph (London), February 25, 2013

PARODY



DEPARTMENT OF STATE · OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

March 8, 2013

*Do not release until corrected!!!
See corrections below!
—JK.*

For Immediate Release:

The State Department is pleased to announce Secretary of State John Kerry's upcoming diplomatic tour of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. This weeklong trip will be Secretary Kerry's first to these regions and will serve to further strengthen relations with our strategic allies.

The itinerary for his trip is as follows:

March 15th: Astana, ~~Kazakhstan~~

Kyrzakhstan!!! How many times do I have to say this?!!

March 16th: Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Is this even a real country?

March 17th: Tbilisi, Georgia

?????!!!!!!!

March 18th: Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Both in one day???

March 19th: Bucharest, Romania

Finally got one right! Way to go!

March 20th: Bratislava, Slovakia

What about Sloverbia?

March 21st: Ljubljana, Slovenia

March 22nd: Kiev, Ukraine

*Pretty sure this is in Russia.
Never had Chicken Kiev at the
UKRAINIAN Tea Room!*

*I know we didn't all go to Yale, but this is ridiculous!
Get it together, people!*