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GEOFFREY NORMAN

THE GAZA WAR: WHO WON, WHO LOST?

BY ELLIOTT ABRAMS

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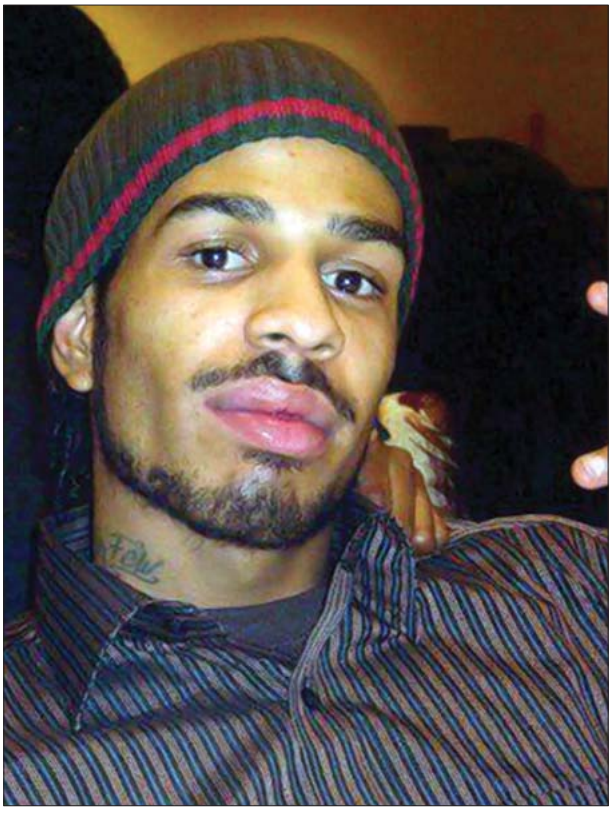
Not So Innocents Abroad

One of the stranger episodes of recent weeks is the reported death of an American who died fighting in Syria with the Islamic State. Stranger still is the *Washington Post* profile of this homegrown jihadist, Douglas McAuthur McCain, whose unlikely name was probably the most interesting thing about him.

McCain, so we learn from the *Post*, had led a life that was "one slice of Americana after another: He followed the Chicago Bulls, was a fan of Michael Jordan, watched 'The Simpsons' and developed an affinity for Pizza Hut. . . . 'He was a goofball in high school,' one classmate told NBC News."

But of course, not every fan of *The Simpsons* runs off to Turkey to join up with terrorists in Syria and kill infidels. McCain's slice of Americana seems to have turned sour some years ago, Pizza Hut and the Chicago Bulls being traded for chronic truancy and unemployment, persistent run-ins with the law, and, in due course, radical Islam. Sad to say, this is not an unfamiliar trajectory in the Age of Terror: Aimless, feckless, angry young men, devoid of adult guidance or marketable skills, soon find themselves vulnerable to their darker impulses. In McCain's case, those seem to have been an alienation from his native land and attraction to jihadist violence.

All of this appears to have been reflected in social media, where McCain's growing allegiance to radical Islam is faithfully recorded on Facebook and Twitter. "Ya allah," he tweets at one point, "when it's my time to go have mercy on my soul have mercy on my bros." And on another occasion: "It takes a warrior to understand a warrior. Pray for ISIS."



Late Pizza Hut aficionado Douglas McAuthur McCain

What intrigues The Scrapbook is the *Post*'s perspective on all this. Reporter Terrence McCoy seeks to describe the convert's devotion to Islam and his rising fervor for jihad. But he does so by characterizing McCain's Twitter evolution in this way: "His tenure . . . began innocuously with a late 2012 dispatch."

The operative word here, in The Scrapbook's opinion, is "innocuously," for here's what the abovementioned "dispatch" had to say:

> I'm not feeling this Twitter sh— . . . wallahi I wants fried chicken. . . . Watching the Help [a movie] starting to make me hate white people. . . . Ok its official f— white people.

This is innocuous? We can only guess at what the *Post* would say if somebody else's Twitter feed revealed a racial animus expressed in such unmistakable terms. There is nothing innocuous about such racism, especially when so easily provoked by a movie. And so while the *Post* may not see it, Douglas McAuthur McCain's journey from Twitter bigot to real-life terrorist was appropriately swift. ♦

Kennedy Update

In the event of nuclear war, only three things are expected to survive—cockroaches, Twinkies, and the political ambitions of the Kennedy family.

With the announcement that William Kennedy Smith is running for local office in Washington, D.C., it's becoming apparent that something needs to be done to stop Zombie Camelot once and for all.

It's been long enough that perhaps a William Kennedy Smith refresher is in order. On Good Friday in 1991, William Kennedy Smith was out carousing in Palm Beach with Uncle Ted and his cousin and future congressman Patrick Kennedy. Smith picked up a girl at a bar, and the foursome went back to the local Kennedy house. Smith and the girl went for a walk on the beach, where the woman says he raped her. The ensuing trial—which happened three years before O. J. got his day in court—

received round-the-clock media attention and helped make cable news the cesspool that it is today. Though two other women came forward and said they had also been raped by Smith, their testimony was not allowed, and he was acquitted. Besides, with character witnesses like Uncle Ted—who just a few years prior had been caught on the floor of a D.C. restaurant engaging in the type of congress they don't show on C-SPAN—it would be hard not to credit the Kennedy family's well-known reputation for chivalry.

A good many people still have a dim recollection of the Palm Beach saga, but few people have followed Smith's exploits since then. After graduating from Georgetown medical school, he spent years trying to rehab his image by working with various charities. Other notable career highlights include settling sexual harassment lawsuits with two different employees, one of whom was very pregnant. Smith's excitement over her, uh, condition is detailed in an excruciatingly icky 40-page legal complaint. Today, Smith owns a medical software company and lives—where else?—in the Watergate.

But the family business beckons! Smith is now running for Advisory Neighborhood Commission seat 2A04, "representing a sliver of Washington's Foggy Bottom area that includes the Watergate complex and, yes, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts," according to the *Washington Post*. He's one of two people who are vying for the position in the November election, and, tellingly, his name will be listed on the ballot in its streamlined version, "William K. Smith."

As a general rule, if you're ever thinking about voting for a Kennedy, The Scrapbook would suggest reevaluating your major life choices to determine where it all went wrong. It's a cliché to say someone shouldn't be elected dog catcher, but in the case of Smith we'd be concerned for the dogs. It may seem that William Kennedy Smith is running for something inconsequential in the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, but you can never be too careful when it comes to the Kennedys. ♦

New Orleans on the Potomac

The *Washington Post*'s Philip Rucker reported last week that Senator Mary Landrieu, currently fighting for her seat in a tough reelection bid, may not actually reside in Louisiana. In January, she told the Federal Election Commission she lives in Washington, D.C. But she claimed her parents' address in New Orleans as her own to qualify for the ballot in Louisiana. The GOP is now considering legal action to challenge her residency.

The Scrapbook is not Pollyannaish about the professional demands placed on senators. For better and for worse, they are in Washington most of the time. However, The Scrapbook is also well-acquainted with the impressive edifice on Capitol Hill that Landrieu calls home. Even by the standards of Washington, D.C., real estate, the home is imposing, valued at $2.5 million, possibly more. Real estate in Louisiana, in comparison, is extremely affordable, and Landrieu and her influential family do not want for money. How hard

would it be for Landrieu to maintain a modest residence in her home state? It would be a fiction that she lives there, but at least she wouldn't be lying to state officials when they ask for her residency.

We're afraid the reason she doesn't do this is that, like many other creatures of Washington—including Republican senator Pat Roberts, who was recently caught failing to maintain his Kansas residency—she's so entitled she simply thumbs her nose at the humblest requirements for holding office. ♦

Annals of Spin

President Obama, at roughly 4:30 P.M. on August 28, referring to the terrorists of the Islamic State: "I don't want to put the cart before the horse. We don't have a strategy yet." Obama press secretary Josh Earnest, less than an hour later: "In his remarks today, POTUS was explicit—as he has been in the past—about the comprehensive strategy we'll use to confront ISIL threat." Our conclusion: Never try to put lipstick on a horse before the horse is before the cart, or something. ♦

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Fighting Irish

Twice now, as I enter my forties, I have picked up a new sport. First I took up tennis, which I have always enjoyed watching and is known to be a game one can play well into the gray-haired years. And a couple months ago I started playing Gaelic football, a bruising, I hope not bone-crushing, but definitely high-speed, um, melee more than an actual sport, which perhaps no one of any age should play and about which I knew almost nothing.

I would plead sentimental reasons for taking up an Irish sport, except that I am not at all sentimental about my ethnicity. And yet as I recently limped home from practice, foreseeing a bruise spreading across my ribs in the shape of my friend Tom's arm, exactly as it had struck me during a ball-handling exercise, a popular saying about my ancestors came to mind. From a poem by G.K. Chesterton, it says the Irish are the ones "that God made mad, for all their wars are happy and all their songs are sad."

Gaelic football is a game for happy warriors.

The rules might have been devised by someone who kinda liked soccer but had trouble staying awake. In addition to moving the ball with your feet, you can catch it with your hands and pass it by punching it or drop-kicking it. When running with the ball, you must, every four steps, drop it down to your toe and kick it back to yourself or bounce it. It's not required that you punch, strike, or molest other players, but it seems to happen a lot.

During the first few practices, I froze whenever I got the ball. The summer heat made it tough going, but even more so the presence of these men, a couple of whom might be chest models for superhero comic book illustrators. Most are several years my junior, one or two still wearing jerseys from college football or wrestling programs as they claw at my arms and knock me with their rock-hard shoulders.

And the moves of this sport were completely unfamiliar. I felt like someone who, while getting mugged, tries out a self-defense technique he read about in the Sunday paper. Often I wondered why I came back for more.

DAVID CLARK

I said I was not sentimental about my ancestry, but some things do get me. Crazy old Irish guys who call grown men lads and spout terrific nonsense without pause, all while dispensing canny advice—that kind of thing, I admit, does get me.

Our club had one, it turned out. When I showed up for my first official game, he was standing on the side of the field with a stringy mane of gray hair, a curious handlebar mustache, and a hand extended in my direction. "That's a champion smile you got there," he said in a thick brogue. "Protect it at all costs. It's your most dangerous weapon."

It was a big day for the club. For the first time ever, we were fielding a full 13 players. Only we had no substitutes; still, it was a milestone.

Our captain is this thin, handsome guy, very organized, a fine athlete, but who always seems a tad pensive as he goes about building his team. His brother came that day, surly, yelling at the refs, and speaking in a mock Irish brogue when the other team's captain called him out for throwing elbows. And we had a fan. The captain's redheaded girlfriend, dressed perhaps for cocktails in the Hamptons, stood alone on the sidelines cheering absurdly even as we were many points down.

The most I can say for myself is that I kept my defenders too busy to help double-team any of the better players on my squad. And though I was intimidated by one opponent who put his thick fingers to my Adam's apple in a deft show of gratuitous malice, I took great pleasure in the sight of him, during the second half, wrestling on the ground with one of the brawlers from my own team.

My smile remained more or less intact; my 41-year-old body less so. I learned that I need to be the cat burglar of footballers, sneaky, fast, and light on my feet, because I am not going to overcome anyone with my strength, and I really don't like getting punched.

The best part is that while I am dodging giants and screaming for the ball I am totally undistracted. The needling questions that poke and prod at my fragile ego—Will I succeed professionally? Will my wife and kids continue to love me? Am I wearing enough sunscreen?—are on the sidelines with my cell phone and car keys.

The worst part is that my days as a Gaelic footballer are probably numbered. So it is fortunate that I also like tennis.

David Skinner

the weekly Standard

'We Don't Have a Strategy Yet'

'Rooting out a cancer like ISIL won't be easy and it won't be quick," President Obama told the American Legion's annual convention in Charlotte on Tuesday, August 26. He repeated the thought in his pre-Labor Day weekend press conference on August 28. A week before, the day after the murder of James Foley, Obama had remarked, "From governments and peoples across the Middle East there has to be a common effort to extract this cancer, so that it does not spread."

These expressions of alarm at a malignant cancer in the Middle East are an improvement over Obama's cavalier dismissal, earlier this year, of ISIL as the junior varsity of terrorists. But salutary alarm doesn't automatically result in sound policy. And—not to make a mountain out of a metaphor—Obama's comparison of the Islamic State to a cancer doesn't give one confidence that he'll come up with a sound policy.

In search of a strategy: leaving the August 28 press conference

NEWSCOM

Here's the problem: Cancer is a disease. The Islamic State is an enemy. There's a difference.

Cancer develops, as it were, naturally. We counter it as best we can through human art and invention. Medicine or surgery sometimes succeeds in checking the disease and even freeing the body of it. But a terrorist movement does not develop naturally. The Islamic State was brought into existence by certain human beings acting according to a certain intention, an evil and destructive intention to be sure, but an intention nonetheless. To counter the Islamic State—to defeat it—we need to grasp and frustrate and overcome our enemies' intention. Treating cancer is a task for surgery. Fighting the Islamic State is a task for strategy.

But, as President Obama acknowledged in his August 28 press conference, "We don't have a strategy yet" to deal with the Islamic State. That's kind of unfortunate. Especially because an American president who was serious about marshaling and mobilizing the elements of national power behind a strategy for victory could, we suspect, defeat the Islamic State more quickly and more easily than President Obama thinks. But President Obama doesn't have such a war strategy because he still doesn't want to accept that we're at war. He believes, after all, that "the tide of war is receding." So even when he deploys some of the mechanisms of war, he does so hesitantly, defensively, and haphazardly. To organize for war, to articulate a strategy, to commit to victory—all of this would make the Obama presidency a war presidency. But being a war president doesn't comport with Barack Obama's self-image. And for Barack Obama, self-image trumps reality.

Sometimes Obama acknowledges the reality that human agency is, so to speak, behind our troubles abroad. But even so, his formulation of what we should do is oddly passive. For example, after saying to the American Legion that "rooting out a cancer like ISIL won't be easy and it won't be quick," Obama continued: "But tyrants and murderers before them should recognize that kind of hateful vision ultimately is no match for the strength and hopes of people who stand together

for the security and dignity and freedom that is the birthright of every human being." It would be nice if tyrants and murderers recognized all kinds of things. But they tend not to. And exhorting them to do so tends not to have much effect. That's why we need to defeat tyrants and murderers. That's why we need to achieve victory over our enemies. Yet the words "enemy" and "victory" nowhere appear in Obama's remarks after the murder of James Foley, nor in his American Legion speech, nor in his August 28 press conference.

Neither The Weekly Standard's imprecations nor reality's ministrations are likely to lead Barack Obama to become the war president we deserve. But in America we're not governed by one man alone. We have public officials who take an oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic" and who have a responsibility not just to the president but to the public. We have a Congress elected by the citizenry. We have an opposition party. We have members of Barack Obama's own party who could discover minds of their own. And we have men and women of ambition who seek to succeed Barack Obama in the presidency.

All of them have a role to play in making the final two years of Barack Obama's presidency better than it would otherwise be. Obama believes in leading from behind. These other American leaders can form a parade of which Barack Obama can bring up the rear. And they can lay the groundwork for the arrival of a new president who will lead from the front.

The effort to limit the damage of the Obama presidency won't be easy. Recovery from the Obama presidency won't be quick. But what that is worthwhile has ever been quick and easy?

—William Kristol

What Would Hillary Do?

Despite the attention paid to Hillary Rodham Clinton's criticism of President Obama's foreign policy as lacking an "organizing principle," there wasn't much new in her interview with the *Atlantic*'s Jeffrey Goldberg. Mostly the exchange covered issues on which her differences with the president are well known, such as arming the Syrian opposition and supporting Israel and Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Hillary Clinton and Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi in 2011

NEWSCOM

This leaves room for Clinton to distance herself from the president on Burma policy, in which she has played a major role, and where optimism about a democratic transition seems increasingly misplaced.

In 2010, Burma's dictatorship began to take small steps suggesting an interest in reform. Aung San Suu Kyi, the pro-democracy leader, was freed from house arrest. The following year, her party, the National League for Democracy, nearly swept elections to fill 46 seats in parliament, gaining a toehold in the body. Political prisoners were released, albeit slowly and conditionally. Burma's press began to operate more freely, and pre-publication censorship was ended.

Undeniably, the United States needed to respond. The Obama administration, however, went too far too fast, restoring full diplomatic ties, lifting most economic sanctions, and exchanging presidential visits before vital constitutional changes and military reforms were undertaken. Business flocked to gauge investment prospects. Suddenly, it was hard to get a hotel room in Rangoon.

It's probably not a coincidence that Burma has regressed. Press freedom has chilled. Burma's notorious military is still fighting ethnic minorities. Violence and bigotry against Burma's Rohingya and other Muslims, led and stoked by some monks, is tolerated by the regime and, it must be said, much of Burmese society. Land seizures have increased, as have arrests of farmers and land rights activists. Burma will hold national elections in 2015, but under the current military-drafted constitution, they won't be free and fair. One provision bars Suu Kyi from running,

and another gives the unreformed military a large presence in parliament.

Still, the administration remains unaccountably upbeat. Sure, officials make caveats, but the message of self-congratulation is clear. In June, the president told graduating cadets at West Point, "If Burma succeeds we will have gained a new partner without having fired a shot. American leadership." This was a monumental gaffe considering the regime's long history of violence against its citizens. President Obama's scheduled visit to Burma in November provides another opportunity for the administration to adjust its policy to Burma's circumstances.

The Obama administration used Suu Kyi's support to justify lifting major sanctions, but now seems to have much less time for her. On his visit to Burma in early August, the *Irrawaddy* magazine reported that Secretary of State John Kerry "kept Suu Kyi waiting at her Rangoon home well into the night because he was busy all day in [the political capital] Naypyidaw, talking with the president and other government officials."

In her memoir *Hard Choices*, Clinton makes much of a bond she says she forged with Suu Kyi in the former's kitchen in Washington and the latter's home, the site of her nearly two decades under house arrest. Now Suu Kyi needs her friend to press hard for a tough U.S. line if the Burmese government fails to make changes to ensure the integrity of the 2015 elections and reverse the backsliding on press freedom.

Hillary Clinton recognizes Burma's "outsized" strategic importance. A "meaningful reform process," she writes, "would be a milestone of our pivot strategy, give a boost to democracy and human rights activists across Asia and beyond, and provide a rebuke to authoritarian government. If we failed, however, it could have the opposite effect." That is quite right. Burma's approximately 55 million people welcome a U.S. and European presence as a counterweight to neighboring China. And they see pressure from Western countries as essential to helping draw their government toward the rule of law and political and civil liberties and away from corruption.

The Obama administration is eager to declare Burma a success and upgrade ties with its unreformed military. To do so before a free and fair election ushers in a civilian government in 2015 would betray the Burmese and upend decades of bipartisan American policy.

Hillary Clinton's comments on the threats America faces in the Middle East suggest she is preparing a run for president. A presidential candidate needs a coherent foreign policy strategy. Burma provides the perfect test of hers.

—Ellen Bork

Small Ball in Wisconsin

After the high drama of a recall, Scott Walker runs a low-key reelection campaign.

BY JOHN MCCORMACK

West Allis, Wis.

Scott Walker looked relaxed. Dressed in light blue Levi's jeans, a navy polo shirt, and white and gray Nike sneakers, the Wisconsin governor had just finished speaking at a Sunday morning program honoring veterans, his fourth public event at this year's Wisconsin State Fair. Walker lingered after the speech, shaking the hand of each active duty servicemember in attendance and snapping photos with well-wishers who had lined up to meet him. "I've had corn, and potatoes, and a cattleman's sandwich, and a Saz's sandwich, deep-fried chocolate chip cookie bites—just about everything out here," he said, recounting all that he had indulged in over the past week.

During his last campaign, such simple acts of public politicking were nearly impossible. An angry mob hounded Walker wherever he went. "They shut things down so you couldn't even hear us during the opening ceremony," Walker recalled of the state fair in 2011, his first year as governor. These were the same protesters who occupied the capitol building in Madison for weeks. They picketed outside of his family's home in the Milwaukee suburbs. They even interrupted Walker's speech honoring the Special Olympics.

But now things are different. Since Walker decisively beat back a recall campaign in 2012, the protesters have retreated. The issue that riled them up—Walker's battle with public employee unions—has faded almost entirely from public debate. Walker's Democratic opponent Mary Burke describes herself as a "fiscal conservative" who approves Walker's decision to require public teachers to pay more toward their pensions and health care in order to balance the state's budget. When asked, she says she supports restoring collective bargaining rights to public employee unions, but she tries to avoid the issue, and it's easy to see why.

When I caught up with Burke following her speech to the Manitowoc Chamber of Commerce on August 11, I asked if she could talk about public schools that were harmed by Walker's collective bargaining reform, passed in 2011 as Act 10. Burke replied with an anecdote about a single school district. "I am concerned about whether we are going to be able to attract and retain and keep good people in our schools," she said. "And I do see this. A man I talked to not too long ago, Jim from Neenah, was telling me about his daughter who graduated from UW-Eau Claire in education. She had two job offers: one in a school district in Minnesota, one in her hometown of Neenah. Guess which one she's taking?"

Burke didn't explain what was so bad about the schools in Neenah, a city of 25,000 people about 40 miles south of Green Bay, but the district certainly isn't having a hard time finding good teachers in the Walker era. "We probably get a couple hundred applications for every opening," John Lehman, vice president of the Neenah school board and a Republican, told me. "After Act 10, we increased our starting salary from $34,000 to $40,500."

Because of Act 10, Lehman said, the district reopened two elementary schools that had been closed after earlier budget cuts. Budget constraints were forcing the district to lay off 10 to 12 teachers each year. How many teachers have been laid off since Walker's Act 10? "None," said Lehman. The middle school has even begun offering Chinese language courses.

Neenah's story is typical of districts across the state: Walker's reform gave administrators the freedom to make modest changes to benefits and work requirements—most of which Burke says she supports—so they could balance their budgets without firing

GARY LOCKE

John McCormack is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

teachers, raising taxes, or hurting students. It's little wonder Burke has dropped the issue of Act 10: The law is working.

Despite the fact that Democrats have given up on attacking Walker's signature legislation—or perhaps because they've given up—Walker is now facing the most challenging race of his life. In the absence of a big fight over his successful reform, the campaign has focused almost entirely on personalities and the past. And it seems to be working in Burke's favor. At the end of August, the *Real Clear Politics* average of polls showed Walker and Burke dead even at 47.3 percent each.

Burke's campaign has relentlessly attacked Walker for falling short of a 2010 pledge that Wisconsin would create 250,000 jobs during his first term. The unemployment rate has dropped to 5.8 percent, but only 100,000 new jobs have materialized. Walker countered by pointing out that when Burke was secretary of commerce under the previous Democratic governor, the state lost 133,000 jobs.

So far, Burke hasn't detailed how Wisconsin would create more jobs under her leadership. Her "Invest for Success" jobs plan includes such deep insights as the following: "As a businessperson, I know that businesses create jobs." The 38-page plan is full of vague corporate-speak about how Mary Burke will "strengthen partnerships among companies and local industry associations to drive a cluster-wide strategy," "leverage our existing international relationships," "help industry grow and innovate by adopting new technologies," and "institute continuous improvement initiatives." Burke never really gets around to saying what legislation will help her accomplish all of this leveraging and innovating. The only new measure she called for during her speech to the Manitowoc Chamber of Commerce was raising the minimum wage to $10.10 from $7.25.

There have also been plenty of character attacks. Walker's TV ads hit Burke, a wealthy former executive of her father's bicycle company, Trek Bicycle Corporation, for hypocritically shipping jobs to China, where employees work for $2 an hour. Meanwhile, Burke and the media have used details of a campaign finance investigation to raise a cloud of suspicion around Walker.

Following the 2012 recall election, a Democratic prosecutor launched a secret investigation into whether groups that supported Walker had illegally coordinated in violation of state campaign finance law. The investigation, which included predawn raids and the collections of thousands of emails, had so little merit that a federal judge shut it down in May before the prosecutor had decided whether to file any charges. "The theory of 'coordination' forming the basis of the investigation, including the basis of probable cause for home raids, is not supported under Wisconsin law and, if it were, would violate the United States Constitution," wrote Judge Rudolph Randa.

In the absence of a big fight over Walker's successful reform, the campaign has focused almost entirely on personalities and the past. And it seems to be working in Burke's favor. At the end of August, the *Real Clear Politics* average of polls showed Walker and Burke dead even.

The prosecutor spearheading the investigation even issued a statement saying, "At the time the investigation was halted, Governor Walker was not a target of the investigation." Nevertheless, the local and national media continue to report breathlessly and ominously on each new batch of documents released as the decision to halt the investigation is appealed before a panel of judges on the Seventh Circuit.

Before the documents started to emerge in May, Walker led Burke by 3 points among likely voters in the Marquette University Law School poll. By August, Burke led Walker by 2 points among likely voters in the Marquette poll but trailed Walker by 3 points among registered voters—a somewhat headscratching result.

"Conventional wisdom and the evidence is that midterm electorates, and in Wisconsin particularly, are less favorable to Democrats," Marquette professor and pollster Charles Franklin told me. "So anything that shows registered voters more Republican and likely voters more Democratic is an interesting surprise."

Maybe Walker will regain his edge as voters become more engaged after Labor Day. But it's also possible that some of his supporters are actually discouraged—by the campaign finance investigation, the defensive aspects of Walker's campaign, or both.

Walker and his campaign have been pretty much silent on Obamacare, which Wisconsin voters oppose by a 17-point margin. To the extent that the topic is broached, it's Burke who has taken the offensive, criticizing Walker for rejecting federal funding to expand Medicaid under Obamacare, an issue on which the Democrat enjoys a 29-point advantage.

"I don't think it becomes a primary issue, but we're looking at ways to address it, tying it in," Walker told me during an August 22 interview in Madison. "I think it's tough for anyone, not just me, in a gubernatorial race" to tie a candidate to Obamacare who neither voted for the law nor can vote to repeal it, he added.

Walker said he hasn't run ads on the Medicaid issue because it's an argument Burke has mostly prosecuted in the media, not in her own ads. "If they put points behind it, we'd probably counter back," Walker said. "We'd point out two-fold: one, that Mary Burke wants to dramatically expand Obamacare, which I think would fly in the face of most voters here. Secondly, that if anybody actually thinks the federal government's going to fulfill a commitment on Medicaid when they have $17 trillion debt, they already have a track record with seniors of reneging on commitments, they're living in an alternative universe."

It's a tough fight to win, given the

Democratic tilt of the state, which Obama won by 14 points in 2008 and 7 points in 2012. Almost every other Republican governor of blue or swing states—including Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Florida, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—supported Obamacare's Medicaid expansion.

But Walker has a positive story to tell on Medicaid. By pushing about 57,000 Wisconsinites above the poverty level onto the Obamacare exchanges, the state was able to cover more than 97,000 people below the poverty level who had been denied Medicaid coverage because of a cap. "The Kaiser Family Foundation, which is certainly not conservative, fairly reputable on health care, said that Wisconsin's the only state in the country that didn't take the Medicaid expansion that has no insurance gap," Walker said. "For the first time ever, we're covering everyone living in poverty."

While a counteroffensive on Obamacare from the Walker campaign remains uncertain, the governor insists that an effort to revive the debate over property taxes and Act 10 is on the way. "The only real reason that most people's property taxes have gone down is our Act 10 reforms," Walker said. "The only way those Act 10 reforms are repealed outright or chipped away is if Burke is elected."

The tax issue would certainly provide a needed illustration of what's at stake in this race for Wisconsin voters. Burke claims she's a fiscal conservative whose "goal is to lower property taxes" and that she's "particularly concerned about the very high property taxes across the state." But following her Chamber of Commerce speech, Burke suggested that Wisconsin's property tax caps are "strangling our communities" and signaled she would work to raise the caps if elected.

"Property taxes in Wisconsin are high. And what we need to do is look for how we're going to, again, grow our economy. That's the best way to bring taxes down. But also strangling our communities isn't actually going to make sure that we're competitive," Burke said. She did not indicate how much she would raise Wisconsin's tax cap on municipalities and counties, saying only that she would "work with our communities to understand what is a reasonable level."

During Walker's first term, property taxes went down for the first time in over a decade, and Walker has pledged that if reelected, "property taxes on a typical home will be lower in 2018 than they are this year (which means they will be lower than they were in 2010)."

If Walker wins his third gubernatorial election in Wisconsin this November, he will be well positioned to be a serious contender for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination. He's admired by both the Republican base and the donor class for his fight against public employee unions and hasn't angered any particular faction of the GOP yet. His position on immigration is still vague and his foreign policy not fully formed.

Walker seems understandably reluctant to wade into divisive federal issues in the midst of a state election. He didn't take a stance on congressional reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank, for example, which many conservatives see as a prime example of crony capitalism. Walker said he has "concerns" about President Obama's potential executive amnesty of 5 million illegal immigrants, but didn't have much else to say about the issue.

When I asked him what should be done about the Islamic State, he didn't provide any specific answers. "I think it points to the larger question that many of us are concerned about, that we don't have an adequate place of leadership in the world," Walker said. He then began talking about Ronald Reagan's firing of air traffic controllers as an example of leadership and the "beginning of the end of the Cold War, because our allies saw this guy was serious and they could count on him. And our adversaries saw this guy was serious and they're not going to mess with him."

Walker remains undecided on more recent historical events. Was it a mistake for the United States to pull out all troops from Iraq? "I know not to make observations without having the full access to the generals," Walker said. "I don't know that I could make a qualified judgment without having a larger base of knowledge."

Walker will, of course, have plenty of time to discuss how he'd lead the country if he seeks the presidency. He's already clearly given some thought to common critiques of a potential Walker candidacy.

Walker has said many times before that Republicans need to nominate a governor for president in 2016. But as the world falls apart, won't voters want someone with experience in foreign policy? "I think the two senators who handled foreign policy in this administration, the president and the former secretary of state, both did an abysmal job of handling foreign affairs during this administration," Walker replied, adding, "that Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton came out of the Senate suggests to me that it didn't provide any value."

"It's really about leadership. Any of these things boil right down to leadership," he declared.

So is the Wisconsin governor poised to become a compelling leader on the national stage? One common knock against him is that he lacks charisma. Earlier this summer, Walker told donors in New Jersey that the 2016 presidential race has to be about issues and ideas, not personality. "If it's a personality race, you got a third Clinton term," Walker told the crowd, according to *National Review*'s Eliana Johnson.

But isn't it true, I asked Walker at the end of our interview, that the more charismatic presidential candidate almost always wins? Walker didn't dispute the hypothesis, but argued that charisma is about much more than one's oratorical skills. "In any election, be it for mayor, governor, anything else out there, I think there's a certain appeal that people have for candidates who are authentic, people who have a passion for ideas and who believe in things," he said. "We say what we mean, we mean what we say. I think that's certainly appealing. I hope in this election that's true. And I hope it's true in other elections." ♦

Democrats Take the Low Road

Going all-negative, all the time against Tom Cotton. BY FRED BARNES

Conway, Ark.

"Tom Cotton voted against preparing America for pandemics like Ebola," a TV ad in Arkansas declared last week. The ad came from Democrat Mark Pryor, who is running for reelection to the Senate. Cotton, a House member, is his Republican opponent in the November 4 election. The ad failed to mention that after voting against an early version of the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act, Cotton voted *for* the bill once a provision he objected to was removed.

Last spring, Senate majority leader Harry Reid's PAC said in an ad: "Before Congress, Cotton got paid handsomely working for insurance companies." The claim was untrue, as was the ad's insistence that Cotton "wants to end Medicare's guarantee, giving billions in profits to insurance companies." The *Washington Post*'s fact checker gave the ad "four Pinocchios," calling it "as phony as a three-dollar bill."

In June, a 30-second ad by the Arkansas Democratic party said Cotton opposes disaster relief. It featured a scene of damage caused by tornadoes in Arkansas on April 27, insinuating that Cotton was against aiding the victims. He wasn't. His votes were against the pork-laden bills after Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast in 2012.

In August, the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee aired a TV spot accusing Cotton of having voted against federal funding for Arkansas Children's Hospital. But Cotton's opposition to the legislation didn't cost the hospital any funding. On the contrary, he voted in favor of funding the two agencies that do aid the hospital.

Tom Cotton

Mark Pryor

By now, you should have gotten the drift: Democrats are going to extreme lengths to protect Pryor and demonize Cotton, his Republican challenger. And they're taking nearly as combative an approach to defend Democratic incumbents in three other red states—North Carolina, Louisiana, and Alaska.

But there's a special intensity to the attacks on Cotton, along with a glaring disregard for the truth. This is probably because Pryor, 51, has been viewed as the most vulnerable of the four incumbents.

Cotton, given his background, appears to strike fear in the heart of Democrats. He's from Dardanelle, a small town an hour's drive from Little Rock. And he not only is a graduate of Harvard and Harvard Law, he joined the Army after 9/11, went to OCS, and served in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. He's a conservative with a uniquely attractive set of skills and experience.

Six months ago, Cotton, 37, was the favorite in the race. But the attack ads have taken a toll, causing Cotton to fall narrowly behind Pryor in polls and briefly driving his approval rating into negative territory. He's recovered since then, and today the race is essentially tied.

The truth-defying ads are only part of the TV assault on Cotton. Other ads consist of generic, if stale, criticism of Cotton as eager to slash Medicare and Social Security benefits. Cotton disputes this, but he's aired TV rebuttals only to the palpably false ads.

The most captivating of his rebuttals stars the burly sheriff of Faulkner County, Andy Shock. When the tornado hit, "Tom Cotton stood with us every step of the way," Shock says. "Shame on anyone who uses our tragedy for their own political gain. It's just wrong. Senator Pryor, start focusing on the real issues. Leave our community and our tragedy out of your campaign."

The Cotton campaign relies on a single theme: Pryor and Obama are one and the same, politically and ideologically. "I look for those elusive Arkansans who agree with President Obama 93 percent of the time," Cotton says facetiously. "I can't find them. I never can find them. I have to go to D.C. to find Mark Pryor, the only Arkansan who agrees with Obama 93 percent of the time."

Since winning an open House seat in 2012, Cotton has improved as a candidate. His stump speech is a succinct 10 minutes, followed by

COTTON, NEWSCOM; PRYOR, AP / DANNY JOHNSTON

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handshaking and picture-taking. He travels the state in a van with his wife Anna—they were married in March—and their dog Cowboy. Cotton won a contested primary two years ago, then defeated Democrat Gene Jeffress, 60-37 percent. He was unopposed for the Senate nomination this year after two House colleagues, Tim Griffin and Steve Womack, declined to run.

Some Republicans are privately critical of Cotton for going his own way on some House votes. He voted against the farm bill, the Violence Against Women Act, and Sandy relief. Arkansas is an agricultural state, but Cotton thinks his opposition to the farm bill won't hurt against Pryor. He says many Arkansans don't like the farm bill.

John Goodson, a prominent Democrat from Texarkana, is a friend of Pryor and his father, David Pryor, a one-term governor and senator for 18 years. Goodson serves on the University of Arkansas board of trustees with the elder Pryor. He says the Pryors are "fine men."

But the "people of Arkansas have changed a little to the Republican way of life," he says. Obama has "hurt the Democratic party . . . and that's got to be tough to turn around." Goodson supports Cotton and thinks he'll win. "What's made the race as close as it is," he says, are the Democratic ads against Cotton.

Yet Mark Pryor is hardly a lightning rod. Several of his TV commercials are personal. With his father at his side, he endorses two health care provisions without mentioning that they're part of Obamacare. In another ad, he holds up a Bible.

"I'm not ashamed to say that I believe in God and I believe in His word," he says. "This is my compass, my North Star. It gives me comfort and guidance to do what's best for Arkansas. I'm Mark Pryor and I approve this message because this is who I am and what I believe."

He hasn't revealed if it was the Bible that led him to accuse Tom Cotton of leaving Arkansas vulnerable to the Ebola virus. ♦

Derangement in Moscow

Russia's virtual reality.

BY CATHY YOUNG

'Maybe it's all a matrix and we're all like programs written by somebody else. . . . And none of us really exists, just the matrix. The program works, you live your life and think everything's fine. Here you are drinking coffee right now. But there is no coffee—it doesn't exist." So mused Fyodor Berezin, the middle-aged sci-fi writer turned "deputy defense minister" of the Donetsk People's Republic—the self-proclaimed state of the Russian-speaking insurgents in eastern Ukraine—in an August interview with a reporter for the still-surviving independent Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*.

Putin, smug at 84 percent approval

"The matrix," the concept from the 1999 cult film of the same name in which reality turns out to be an illusion generated by human-enslaving computers, was a recurring theme in Berezin's conversation with *Novaya Gazeta*'s Pavel Kanygin. Berezin even deflected queries on the whereabouts of suddenly elusive rebel commander Igor Strelkov-Girkin with the deadpan suggestion that Strelkov-Girkin might not actually exist—though he grew testy when Kanygin countered by asking whether the Donetsk Republic might not exist, either.

This bizarre exchange encapsulates the surreal quality of the war in eastern Ukraine, where Russia's undeclared involvement is the world's biggest open secret. Russian soldiers are already getting killed in what official reports describe as accidents during military training. But the local separatist insurgents have been led mostly by Russian citizens—notably a battle-reenactment hobbyist (Strelkov-Girkin) and a political spin doctor (former Donetsk Republic prime minister Alexander Borodai). The theater of the absurd has even spread to Russia itself, where "the matrix" is a rather apt metaphor for the virtual reality propounded by the official media and uncritically absorbed by much of the population.

The Russian media landscape in the last six months has been dominated by nearly wall-to-wall coverage of Ukraine—or, rather, lurid propaganda masquerading as coverage.

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Writing in the independent online journal *EJ.ru*, Moscow journalist Anton Orekh noted with amazement that a major subway accident in Moscow in mid-July—a train derailment that killed 24 people and injured dozens more—did not rate a single mention in the weekly news wrap-up on Rossiya, the country's leading news television channel, just days later: Once again, it was all Ukraine.

The grotesque pseudo-journalism that has become the norm in the official Russian media was starkly illustrated by the sensational story of the crucified boy. On July 12, a week after the previously rebel-controlled city of Slavyansk was taken by Ukrainian troops, Russia's TV-1 aired an interview with a refugee named Galina Pyshnyak, who told a bloodcurdling tale about the execution of an insurgent's child before a crowd of Luhansk residents in the city's main square. "They took a little boy, 3 years old . . . and nailed him to a billboard like Jesus," Pyshnyak told the reporter; the child's mother, she said, was forced to watch and listen to his screams until she fainted, then was herself tied to a tank and dragged unconscious around the square. The story was widely ridiculed by Russian bloggers and debunked by *Novaya Gazeta* reporter Evgeny Feldman, who interviewed Slavyansk locals and found that no one had heard of this horrific deed. Pyshnyak was later identified as the wife of an ex-member of Berkut, the special security squad of the deposed pro-Russian president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych. TV-1 never retracted the story.

Even token dissenters are now gone from Russian TV, where the spectrum of opinion ranges from patriotic fervor to patriotic derangement. The latter is reliably represented by member of parliament Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who, in a recent appearance on the popular TV-1 talk show *Sunday Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*, capped a rant about the world's eternal war on Russia with the declaration that "Hitler only killed Russians." On another *Sunday Evening*, Solovyov himself not only lobbed the standard charge of "genocide" at the Ukrainian government but claimed that Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko had "frankly declared that he is under the direct control of the USA." One of the guests, political analyst Semyon Bagdasarov, stressed that helping the separatists in Ukraine was a life-and-death priority for Russia: "After all, [Kiev's] goal is very specific—it's not just to crush Donbass [the Donetsk region], it's to destroy the Russian Federation by bringing down its government and dragging us into civil war. That's what's at stake!" The other panelists nodded approval, while the studio audience burst into applause.

'Journalist' Vladimir Solovyov: accusing Ukraine of genocide

The derangement extends beyond current events. *EJ.ru*'s media watch columnist Igor Yakovenko notes that TV commentary on the World War I anniversary was so heavy on rhetoric blaming the war on American machinations that the uninformed viewer could easily assume that the United States was Russia's main adversary in that conflict. TV-1 also aired a "documentary" exploring the "alternative" theory that Archduke Ferdinand was actually killed by a British sniper acting at the behest of an international conspiracy of Freemasons bent on world domination, which later also engineered the Russian Revolution to prevent Russia from emerging as one of the war's victors.

In this toxic climate, the free media live on as small and embattled enclaves. Chief among these is the radio station Ekho Moskvy, which remains an outlet for dissenting viewpoints and censored news despite being owned by Gazprom Media, an arm of the state-controlled natural gas giant. In case Ekho's editors were not aware of their precarious position, they got a recent reminder from Gazprom Media chairman Mikhail Lesin. In an interview with the Russian edition of *Forbes*, Lesin complained about the "rude" and "snarky" tone of Ekho's liberal commentators but allowed that, at least for now, he did not regard the station as a "problem asset." If that changed, he concluded, "it would be overhauled tomorrow, and there would be a music station called Ekho Moskvy. They'd sing, and that's it—what's the problem?"

Open calls to shut down the Russia-haters are now part of the mainstream. In early August, *Izvestia* columnist Sergey Roganov wrote that Russia was getting fed up with "all the empty chatter in the social networks and the mass media" and generously offered to sacrifice his own freedom of speech for a strong hand that would put an end to this "Russophobic babble." The very next day, the paper ran a guest column by writer Vladimir Lowenthal, who opined that Russia's "Maidan-type" dissenters were clearly impervious to reason and should therefore be treated like sick people or members of dangerous cults—that is, stopped from preaching or spreading the virus to others.

So far, the Kremlin hasn't acted on these threats; but while Ekho and other islands of dissent are allowed to exist, they are regularly and openly assailed as traitors. In late June, a news program on the NTV channel aired an interview with a masked, armed insurgent in Donetsk who said that the insurgency was setting up a "chapter" in Moscow in order to fight the "fifth column," particularly Ekho Moskvy, which was spreading "lies" about eastern Ukraine. In comments liberally

peppered with bleeps and accompanied by menacing gestures, the insurgent told Ekho's staffers that their days were numbered and that they would soon be looking death in the face. More recently, NTV aired a program titled *13 Friends of the Junta*, in which prominent Kremlin critics including novelist Dmitry Bykov, satirist Victor Shenderovich, and singer Andrei Makarevich were depicted as Judases ready to sell their souls for Ukrainian or American money.

From such rhetoric, it is a short step to physical intimidation. In late August, an Ekho Moskvy reporter was assaulted while covering a pro-Ukraine rally in St. Petersburg; a few days later, journalists from *Novaya Gazeta* and the struggling independent news channel TV Rain were attacked and threatened while covering the funeral of two Russian soldiers apparently killed in Ukraine.

Today, polls by the independent Levada Center find that 70 percent of the Russian population gets all of its news from television and trusts the official media. Vladimir Putin's approval rating, meanwhile, stands at 84 percent. Will this change if Western sanctions and Russian countersanctions start causing real pain to the population—and if more Russian draftees start dying in mysterious accidents? Or will the "zombie box," as Russian dissenters call state television, persuade them to blame the perfidious West and the domestic "fifth column"?

While many dissenters cautiously hope that Putin's support is not as widespread or as deep as the polls suggest, one would be hardpressed to find optimists among them. In a verse commentary in *Novaya Gazeta* inspired by Berezin's interview, Bykov wondered with bitter sarcasm if the post-Communist "Russian spring" had ever been real. For Russians who greeted the fall of the Soviet Union almost a quarter-century ago, the free country they welcomed is now gone, replaced by a bizarre would-be hybrid of a smaller Soviet Union and the czarist Russian empire. Virtual reality, indeed. ♦

What If There's No There There?

Obama's 'vision thing.'

BY JAY COST

Does someone have the nerve to question my vision?

Toward the end of Ronald Reagan's second term, a friend of Vice President Bush encouraged him to think carefully about what a Bush presidency should look like. According to *Time*, Bush responded, "Oh, the vision thing." Fairly or unfairly, this phrase came to characterize the Bush 41 tenure. Despite his impressive résumé spanning three decades in government, he seemed not to have a clear view of what he wanted to do.

When Barack Obama campaigned for the White House in 2008, that hardly seemed like his problem. Obama would take in the whole sweep of American history in his speeches to suggest that his candidacy was its culmination. His heavy-handed propaganda—from the Greek columns to Shepard Fairey's "Hope" poster—suggested a man with a vision surplus.

In the sixth year of his presidency, it is clear that Obama does not have much of a vision at all. Sure, he is a man of the left and possesses a commitment to its goals; he thinks government should grow larger and taxes should increase. Beyond that, he does not seem to have a firm sense of the reforms he should implement, how to implement them, how he fits into the constitutional schema, what a sensible U.S. foreign policy should be or how to execute it.

This is not to say that the White House does not offer positions on the issues. We are inundated with Obama positions. We are also treated periodically to longer "think pieces" from sycophantic authors granted extraordinary access to reinforce the point

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that this is a president deeply engaged in the issues of the day, struggling to bring order from chaos.

Yet the constant positioning and propagandizing belie deep-rooted ambiguities in this administration, which—it must be noted—has taken flak from left and right for years. Radical academic Cornel West recently suggested that Obama is a corporatist stooge, while Rand Paul fretted about the "socialist nightmare" the president is creating. Some might think these critiques accidentally demonstrate that the president is down-the-center. More likely they point to the absence of "the vision thing." Sometimes he's a corporate crony, sometimes a socialist; it all depends on what side of the bed he wakes up on.

Consider health care. If any issue might suggest an Obama vision, this would be it. But what, really, is Obamacare? It is quite unlike Medicare or Social Security. Both programs—despite their shortcomings—are conscientious mixes of policy ideals and political realities, crafted by men with clear visions. Look carefully at both programs, and you can see that vision, not only of what the proper policy is, but how to get it through Congress and build public support.

Obamacare exhibits none of these qualities. It is a bizarre Rube Goldberg contraption with no clear idea at its core. The exchanges are intended to promote competition while the Medicaid expansion doubles down on single payer. It reins in the insurance companies while the risk corridor program shovels billions to them in bailout cash. It expands coverage for prescription drugs for seniors while simultaneously granting drug companies some exceedingly generous rents.

It is almost as if it were written with no White House input except, "Get me a bill to sign!" The historical record suggests that was more or less the case; apart from tasking his aides to run interference with industry insiders, the president was notably aloof from the proceedings on Capitol Hill. For instance, in a summer 2009 conference call with left-wing bloggers, the president was asked if people would be able to keep their existing insurance. His answer: "You know, I have to say that I am not familiar with the provision you are talking about." Exactly.

It might in fact be more accurate to call it Pelosicare or Baucuscare. House speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Finance Committee chairman Max Baucus were the two most important agents in getting a bill to the president's desk. Disengaged from most of the policy details as well as the legislative horse trading, Obama considered his main task to sell the legislation to the country—a task at which he failed miserably.

How about the president's relationship with Wall Street? On the stump, he often bashes the largest financial firms. Yet since his earliest days in national politics, he has been ready, willing, and able to accept their largesse. In 2008 he outraised John McCain in the financial services industry by more than 40 percent. Signed by Obama in 2010, the Dodd-Frank financial reform bill provided a huge payoff to these supposed evildoers by enshrining "too big to fail" into the law. According to Ron Suskind, Obama initially wanted to break up Citi as a lesson to the rest of the banks, but his corporate-friendly advisers—above all Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner—never followed through on this order, and the president did not pursue the matter.

How about the DREAM Act? Can the president offer amnesty to the children of illegal immigrants? In 2011, he said he could not. In 2012, he initiated the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which did exactly that. Now, there is reportedly a bigger amnesty in the works, even though he just recently disclaimed that power.

The president has shown ambivalence even toward relatively small budget items. Take the Export-Import Bank, which some conservatives have targeted for repeal. Is it "little more than a fund for corporate welfare," as Obama said in 2008? Or is it a vital program that is "creating all kinds of jobs," as he said this year?

How about his role in the constitutional system? As a candidate, Obama harangued George W. Bush for presidential overreach, so we might have expected a limited executive footprint. Yet from signing statements, to a congressionally unauthorized air campaign against Libya, to ad hoc rewrites of Obamacare, this president has not been demure. Except when he has been. How else to explain his sudden commitment to congressional authorization for a strike on Syria last summer? Then again, the administration has recently suggested it might not need a go-ahead from Congress to bomb Syria after all!

A key difference between Obama and his two most liberal predecessors—FDR and LBJ—is this: All three mastered the flowery and vague rhetoric of political campaigns, but FDR and LBJ followed through with specific programs and smart legislative strategies to turn their rhetoric into law. Neither FDR nor LBJ was a wonk—they outsourced the details to experts like Rex Tugwell and Wilbur Cohen—but they were quite involved in the process from beginning to end, and the final results bear their unmistakable imprimaturs.

Obama does not possess such strong opinions about the whats and hows of public policy. Public option in the health care bill? Take on the big banks? Executive amnesty? FDR and LBJ would have had strong opinions on these questions. Obama's answer often comes back: *definitely maybe*. Little wonder that the so-called Obama Doctrine is framed in the negative: *Don't* do stupid stuff. A statement about what the country should do is beyond his vocabulary.

Oftentimes, pundits blame rigid party polarization for the lack of compromise in Washington, but what if the problem is really Obama's inability to see how both sides could work together? A president does not need outsized congressional majorities to get a few big things done. Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton demonstrated that all it takes is a leader with the vision and skills to make the most of existing common ground. Reagan worked with Dan Rostenkowski to reform the tax code in 1986, while

Clinton worked with Newt Gingrich to reform welfare, cut taxes, and restrain Medicare spending.

The current thinking is that common ground has given way to the vile partisanship of House Republicans, but this view withers under scrutiny. Both sides agree on the need for tax reform, and are not that far apart on a framework. Virtually no disinterested observer likes the vast array of farm subsidies; these could be reformed, as they were in 1996 under divided government. Conservative Republicans have recently turned their attention to corporate welfare, which has long been a bane of the left. Further, members of Congress are always bashful about their ties to special interests; a little presidential pressure on this front might yield some long-overdue reforms of the legislative process.

Why couldn't Obama take the lead on any of these issues? If the country is stalemated on whether the government should grow or shrink, there is still an opportunity to build coalitions on reforming it. This would be good for the liberal project that Obama generally supports. One reason people do not want larger government is that they believe it does a bad job with its current assignments. If Obama spearheaded a campaign to improve various functions of government, people might become amenable to a larger federal presence. Why not go for it?

The answer is "the vision thing." It includes a mix of traits that Obama does not seem to possess: taking ownership of a public problem, holding fast to core principles, guiding experts toward a solution, making the most of one's legitimate role in the constitutional system, and building a legislative coalition to transform rhetoric into law. In six years as president, has Obama ever once done that, start to finish?

In the final analysis, Obama's vision seems to have been for Barack Obama to be in the White House, which he accomplished more than five years ago. No wonder he has so much time to go golfing these days. ♦

Call It Impeachment-Lite

The case for censuring the president is being bruited about in Washington. BY TERRY EASTLAND

Really, Mr. President, I think 'shameless, reckless, and indefensible' sums it up pretty well.

In case you've not been paying attention, an issue for House Republicans as the midterm elections draw near is what to do about a president they believe has offended the Constitution by usurping legislative power and failing to carry out his duty to faithfully execute the law.

Speaker John Boehner has said the House won't pursue impeachment. But House Republicans feel they have to do something. So the House has voted—with only five Republicans against—to sue President Obama for not implementing the employer mandate in the Affordable Care Act in 2014, as that law provides, but delaying its enforcement until 2016.

Neither the House nor the Senate has ever sued a president, and there are serious questions about whether the courts will even hear the suit soon to be filed. Is there a more promising way to respond to Obama's unilateral presidency?

One idea now bruited about in conservative legal and political circles is "censure"—meaning that the House would pass a resolution censuring the president for abuses of power.

Doubtless the best-known effort to censure a president occurred in the case of President Bill Clinton. Following his impeachment in the House, Senator Dianne Feinstein, the California Democrat, proposed a resolution censuring Clinton for "shameless, reckless and indefensible" conduct. The resolution failed, but not before triggering debate over whether the Constitution's punishment-for-impeachment clause permits the Senate to impose a lesser

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sanction (censure) than it explicitly provides—"removal from office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States."

The Clinton impeachment is the rare one in which a censure resolution has actually been proposed and voted on at some point in the process. As a report by the Congressional Research Service makes clear, censure has not traditionally been part of the impeachment process. It has, you could say, its own history.

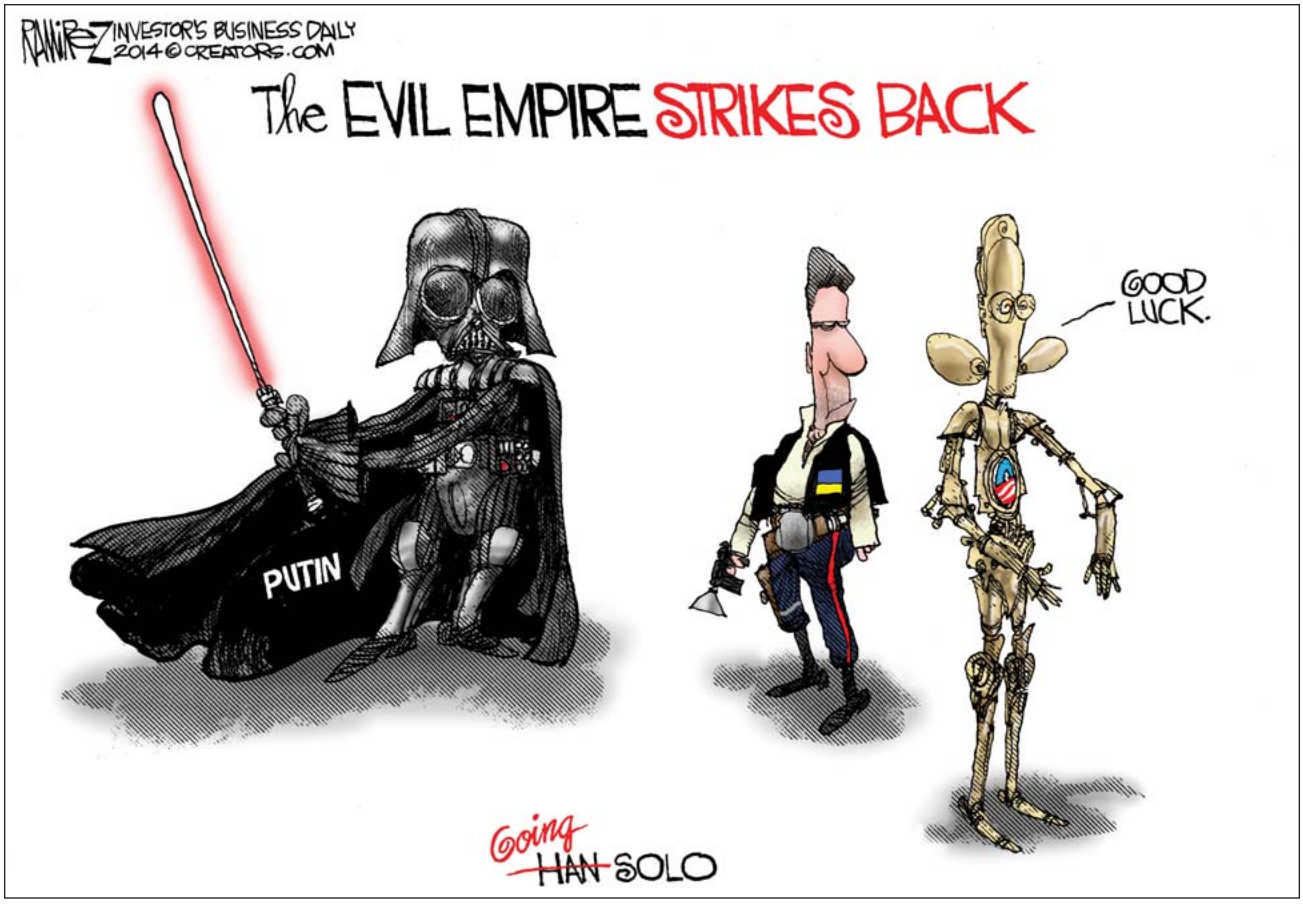
Censure of presidents (or other civil officers, including judges) does not have an express constitutional basis. But neither does the Constitution prevent either house of Congress from adopting a resolution expressing its opinion of a civil officer's conduct of office, including disapproval. With that gate left open, there have been efforts since the early 19th century to censure civil officers, among them presidents.

In 1834, the Senate passed a resolution rebuking President Andrew Jackson for conduct of office "in derogation" of the Constitution. In 1842, the House adopted a report from a select committee (not always has a simple resolution been used) that condemned President John Tyler for "gross abuse of constitutional power and bold assumption of powers never vested in him by any law" and for having "assumed the whole Legislative power to himself." And in 1860, the House adopted a resolution censuring President James Buchanan for conduct deserving of "reproof." Other censure efforts, including those in the cases of John Adams, James K. Polk, and Richard Nixon, in addition to Bill Clinton, did not pass.

In an interview, University of North Carolina law professor Michael Gerhardt, who has written extensively on impeachment, told me there is no distinct process in either house that would govern an effort to censure a president (or any other civil officer). Simply getting the censure written and voted on seems to be the sum of what's involved.

And to what effect is a censure? Censure is a political act only, with no legal or constitutional consequences flowing from it (as is not true of an impeachment conviction, under which the convicted officer is removed from office, among other punishments). Also, and again unlike an impeachment, a censure may be expunged (by a successor to the body that did the censuring; Jackson's was expunged in 1837). Of course, an expunged censure cannot erase the political effects of a censure, whatever they were at the time.

Of any proposal to censure Obama, a House Republican could fairly ask: Why bother, since the censure resolution would simply be echoing a view of the president already held by a House majority? One answer is that a carefully crafted resolution of censure



could lend a certain formality to the process and help shape the debate over Obama's abuses of power.

Among those arguing the case for censuring Obama is Charles J. Cooper, the appellate lawyer who headed sup the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel during the second Reagan term. Whereas Boehner's lawsuit concerns one matter only, Cooper's resolution—the one he recommends, that is—would target the entirety of the problem, as Republicans see it. Obama, said Cooper in a recent speech, "has violated his oath of office *comprehensively*, for he has done that which the Constitution forbids him to do, and he has not done that which the Constitution requires him to do." (Emphasis is Cooper's.)

In the latter category—not doing what the Constitution requires—are derelictions of duty in implementing the Affordable Care Act, says Cooper, such as the delays in the employer mandate, the subject of the House's lawsuit against the president. But it is an example that Cooper places in the first category—doing what the Constitution forbids—that is his strongest, pitting Obama against himself.

In 2011, Obama said he couldn't "just suspend deportations through executive order" because there are "laws on the books by Congress . . . [and] for me to simply through executive order ignore those congressional mandates would not conform with my appropriate role as president." But when Congress didn't pass legislation that would have achieved his policy preference—exempting from deportation up to 1.76 million illegal aliens who were children upon arrival in the United States—Obama made the law on his own, by executive order.

To judge by his caustic views of the Republican House, it's doubtful that Obama would take seriously a House effort to censure him. More likely, just as he invited the House to "sue me" when those plans were announced, he would now say, again with attitude, "Censure me." And, as he does often, the president would doubtless criticize Congress for failing to act on various issues and offer that as justification for his unilateral action.

Obama's argument from congressional inaction, which for him is an argument from necessity, may have less sympathy in the media than Obama realizes. In an editorial earlier this month, the *Washington Post* urged Obama not to make yet more immigration law by executive order. That "Congress is a mess . . . doesn't grant the president license to tear up the Constitution," said the *Post*.

House Republicans may or may not consider a censure resolution. What is certain is that a plausible predicate for one is showing no signs of going away. ♦

Slowing the Rise of the Oceans

It can be done, but not the way the environmental left proposes. BY ELI LEHRER

Partying while the streets are still dry: Mardi Gras revelers in New Orleans

NEWSCOM

From Al Gore to the leadership of groups like the Union of Concerned Scientists, environmentalists long have warned that global disaster is certain unless we do something about rising sea levels. The "something" that most on the left want is to remake our energy economy and increase government control over energy use in order to cut down on human emissions of greenhouse gases that cause the thermal expansion of ocean water and the melting of polar ice sheets.

A look at the facts reveals a less alarming, although still disconcerting, environmental picture. When it comes to combating and adapting to rising sea levels, many of the factors most within our control are not directly associated with the climate.

The environmentalists deserve

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some credit. It is beyond dispute that greenhouse gas emissions are the most important factor behind the *global* rise in sea levels. Releasing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, largely from burning fossil fuels, traps heat from the sun. Over the past two decades, global sea levels have been rising at a rate of slightly more than 0.11 inches per year.

But projections about the future extent of the trend remain too imprecise to be of practical use to policymakers. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that the "most likely" case is that global sea levels will rise between one and four feet over the next century. A continuation of the trend of the last 20 years (roughly twice the average rate most scientists believe seas rose over the 20th century) would result in total sea-level rise near the low end of the IPCC projections.

Although many models indicate the rate will accelerate, whether it does, and by how much, will make an enormous difference. A one-foot rise would be reasonably easy to deal with in many places, while four feet could be catastrophic. And complex climate models have a dismal record of predicting the future.

It's also important to note that greenhouse gas emissions are not the only factor in climate change, and that climate change is not the only cause of rising sea levels. In North America, relative sea levels are changing not only because of rising waters, but also because of sinking landmass. The East Coast has been slowing sinking for thousands of years. The intersection of these two phenomena, rising seas and sinking landmass, could make sea-level rise doubly destructive in certain parts of the country.

For instance, along the Gulf Coast of Louisiana, sea-level rise appears to be happening at nearly a dozen times the global rate: nearly an *inch* a year. The reasons are complicated, but relate to tectonic shifts in the ocean floor. The consequences could be disastrous. Much of southern Louisiana may be inundated in the next century, and parts of Texas may not be that far behind. And, if the projections are right, controlling greenhouse gas emissions would do almost nothing to change things.

Development has made an already severe natural problem worse. A century-long project to control the Mississippi-Missouri River system and prevent flooding has reduced the amount of silt the river carries. This results in "silt starvation" that is slowly eating away at the land in the Mississippi Delta.

Also contributing to this kind of erosion have been the heavily subsidized National Flood Insurance Program and local economic incentives to build in river valleys and along the coasts. Other causes are more bizarre. The nutria or "river rat," a South American critter that fur farmers brought to the United States in the 1940s, has no natural predators here and feasts on the plant life of coastal marshes. Along the Chesapeake Bay and other areas, river rats eat so many plants that the land is left bare and gets washed away.

For the regions most likely to face dramatic impacts from rising sea levels in the near future, no amount of emissions control will make a major difference. In fact, for some, the only solution may be to relocate people and property away from the coast.

At a minimum, in our most densely populated hurricane-prone areas, like the New York/New Jersey and Miami metropolitan areas, large investments in "structural mitigation," seawalls and the like, is almost certainly going to be necessary to protect lives and property. Spending several billion dollars to protect Manhattan from rising seas and hurricane-driven storm surges will almost certainly offer a very good return on investment, even if 21st-century weather patterns aren't significantly different from those of the last century. A vigorous nutria control and eradication effort is also in order, as are local zoning standards that take potential sea-level rise into account.

In many cases, however, government would do best by simply getting out of the way. Subsidies for flood insurance, which Congress recently voted to extend, need to be eliminated, as do all other federal and state programs that provide implicit and explicit subsidies to build in low-lying areas. A comprehensive review of Army Corps of Engineers river control projects, with an eye to reducing silt-starvation, is long overdue.

Climate change presents its own set of challenges on the global level, and we will need ways to respond to that, as well. Some changes to energy policy are likely justified. But the favorite policies of many environmentalists—heavy-handed regulation of carbon dioxide emissions and subsidies for trendy alternative energy sources like wind and solar power—are not effective ways to help the areas of this country most threatened by rising seas and falling coasts. Policymakers can deal with sea-level rise. But they don't have to follow the environmental left's playbook to do it. ♦

A Peorian Makes Sense of Turkey

Growth trumps (nearly) all.

BY IKE BRANNON

Resort sprawl on Lara Beach, Antalya, Turkey

In my quest to write an article about my family vacation to Turkey and thereby write off part of the cost, I came up with an observation I deemed worthy of David Brooks or Malcolm Gladwell. It turned out to be dead wrong.

I had taken my wife, children, and in-laws to an all-inclusive resort on the shores of the Aegean for two weeks. My wife's from Turkey, and her parents still live there. Our holiday was marvelous—the place had pristine beaches, great pools, nightly entertainment, activities for the kids, and amazing food, as well as bars with free drinks by every pool and beach. It was far and away the most expensive vacation of my life, but being able to afford it represents the only thing I've ever done that has impressed my in-laws.

Late one night, while my wife and I sat in the outdoor bar with other parents and a smattering of teens, I noticed that there was a distinct absence of drunk people in the resort. Given that the price of the booze was zero and that there were a number of couples sans kids in the place, it didn't make sense to me. Having been trained as a social scientist, I concluded it was because of the virtues of those of us who could afford such a resort. What constitutes a pricey vacation for an American represents something much more exclusive for families in Turkey, where average incomes are a fraction of what they are in the United States.

No one was getting drunk because all of us coffee achievers must be self-abnegating individuals who have sacrificed a lot to attain our station in life. We got where we are by being able to think rationally and drink sensibly, I reasoned.

While I was patting myself on the back for my acuity, my wife noticed something more obvious: The resort watered down the drinks. After a few rounds of tequila shots with no ill effects, I had to agree that my theory was all wet.

That this possibility never occurred to me has something to do with my background. My family once operated a drinking establishment in my hometown of Peoria, and I have friends there in the industry. Tampering with the booze is not countenanced.

Last year I met up with some old Peoria friends, who clued me in on the goings-on of a former neighbor of ours. He had opened a bar that had become quite popular, in part because of its incredibly low drink prices—$1 shots of top-shelf liquor. A bartender at his establishment told one of my drinking companions—who's in the booze business himself—the secret: He was putting cheap liquor into high-end bottles.

My friend was aghast. Back in the day, this was a sin that wasn't merely settled by the liquor board: Bad people who packed heat would mete out justice themselves. The days of goons taking matters into their own hands may be largely gone, but my friend was worried for our old neighbor and had stopped off at his bar to advise him to cool it.

A few weeks later the bar burned down, and our old neighbor's remains were found in the ruins, his body riddled with knife wounds. Eventually, a culprit was found, tried, and convicted. The ostensible motive was a different peccadillo altogether, but the sordid affair reinforced my notion that there are still iron rules—a ban on watering-down drinks being one of them.

While I can blame my bum call on the lack of drunks at our Turkish resort on my hometown

IMAGES: NEWSCOM

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experiences, I'm not the only Peorian who has misunderstood goings-on in Asia Minor. In the early 2000s Roy Gardner, an influential economist from my hometown and an expert on the European economy, published a well-received paper entitled *The Enlargement* that captured the perspective of most European Union watchers. He suggested that Turkey's population and piddling economy at the time made its entry into the EU impractical.

Gardner, a good friend who passed away in 2012, argued that the EU worked only insofar as its members were similar in population, economic might, and general orientation, and that Turkey's standard of living and 70 million-plus population were vastly dissimilar from the rest of Europe. For Turkey's accession to make sense, he averred, its economy would need to grow at 6 percent a year for at least a decade, which he wrote off as impossible.

But it did precisely this, with its economy quadrupling in size during a period in which the EU's economy practically stood still or—in the case of its neighbors Greece and Cyprus—contracted. Of course, the latter two remain adamantly opposed to Turkey's joining the European club, and Turkey has lost enthusiasm for it as well in the wake of its boom decade.

In the 1990s Turkey suffered through a decade of high inflation and economic malaise, and as a response Turks jettisoned the corrupt ruling party in favor of the Islamist party headed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who many feared was more concerned with reducing the secularization of society than with growing the economy. But as prime minister, Erdogan delivered growth—plenty of it—and as a result millions of Turks joined the middle class. And not a few of the middle class became wealthy enough to spend a week or two at a pricey resort on the Aegean.

In a conversation shortly before his death, Gardner admitted his failure to anticipate the Turkish economic boom but pointed out that there is so little precedent for what Turkey accomplished that few could have conceived it would enjoy such a prosperous decade while the rest of Europe stagnated.

Our resort—one of a number of new hotels constructed in the last few years in the vicinity—would have made no sense even a decade ago, before Turkey's economic renaissance. It employs a couple of hundred people: chefs, bartenders, lifeguards, servers, maids, and a raft of other positions.

My father-in-law is an ethnic Tatar, and we were quickly befriended by one of his fellow Tatars who worked at one of the beach bars. Having a friend at a bar where everything is free isn't much of a boon, but he clued us in on a few things, one of which is that there is a labor shortage in Turkey's resort industry. Wages are steadily rising, and new resorts are going up every month, each nicer than the last. Entry-level servers are making almost $1,000 a month, which slightly exceeds the median household income for the country.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, center, at the ribbon-cutting for a high-speed train in Istanbul in July

Our new friend did make sure we got seats for the entertainment highlight of our stay: a concert by a popular Turkish singer that took place a couple of days before Turkey's first presidential election. Erdogan, bumping up against his party's term limits for parliament, was stepping down as prime minister to run for the post, with the intent of making the position, heretofore ceremonial, a more muscular one.

At the conclusion of the concert the singer exhorted the crowd (I was virtually the only non-Turk there) to make sure to vote against Erdogan. Erdogan was as popular with the people at the resort as George W. Bush would be at a Weezer concert in Brooklyn. His record on human rights leaves something to be desired (Turkey has dozens of journalists in jail) and his push to give religious fundamentalists more power and influence has angered many in Turkey's middle class. But I suspect many of our fellow vacationers went home and cast their lot with the man once again, for a basic reason: Strong economic growth excuses a whole host of flaws in a government.

Erdogan won't be in power forever: At some point the Turkish economy will pause for one reason or another and voters will assign blame—rightly or wrongly—to the government and hand the reins over to someone else to fix it, along with all the other problems that would suddenly become more glaring in the absence of strong growth. But until that happens his government is safe.

A couple of nights after the concert, a traveling acrobatic troupe rolled into town, and after dinner we headed towards the amphitheater for the performance. In the middle of the show an emcee stepped up to the microphone during a pause to announce that Erdogan had won the election, which was met with little reaction—I suspect because all of us were too busy wrangling children to pay close attention to the announcements. But the other mitigating factor was that nearly everyone in attendance was a beneficiary of Turkey's exceptional decade, and no one wants it to end. An Erdogan presidency gives hope that the prosperous times—and vacations by the beach—will continue.

During the second act my wife and I picked up our sleepy daughters and carried them back to our rooms, joining a steady stream of other families doing likewise, each of us feeling tired and content and slightly astounded at our good fortune. ♦

'The Fog of Cease-fire'

Who won the Gaza war?

By Elliott Abrams

For the moment, the Gaza war of 2014 is over. Anyone trying now to figure out who won and who lost should recall the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. Then, Israelis had a great sense of letdown because they had not "won." They had not destroyed Hezbollah, and the organization loudly claimed a triumph: "Lebanon has been victorious, Palestine has been victorious, Arab nations have been victorious," said Sheikh Nasrallah. An estimated 800,000 Hezbollah supporters gathered in Beirut for a rally celebrating the "divine victory."

But Nasrallah later said he would not have started the war had he understood how strong would be the Israeli reaction, and he has kept the Israeli-Lebanese border quiet for eight years now. Looking back, it's clear that Israel won that 2006 exchange, which lasted 34 days.

This round with Hamas lasted longer, 50 days, and it's fair to say that "who won?" can best be answered in retrospect some years from now. As Daniel Polisar put it, it's difficult right now to see through the "fog of cease-fire." But there is ample justification to say that Israel won, for three reasons.

First, a good measure of who won is who achieved their war aims. Israel's key goal was to restore "quiet for quiet," and that is what this cease-fire deal does. Even Jodi Rudoren in the *New York Times*, whose biases against Israel are so clear in its coverage, had to acknowledge that Hamas "declared victory even though it had abandoned most of its demands, ultimately accepting an Egyptian-brokered deal that differs little from one proffered on the battle's seventh day." Hamas's goals had been far greater, and it rejected that first Egyptian cease-fire proposal over a month ago precisely because those goals were not met. But in the deal just agreed on, there is no airport, no seaport, no "end to the blockade," no freeing of Hamas militants rearrested by Israel (after their release months ago as part of agreements with the Palestinian Authority).

What has Hamas gained by continuing the war another month? Israel agrees to extend the Gaza fishing grounds from three to six miles, and agrees to cooperate in efforts to ease humanitarian conditions inside Gaza. The former isn't a very big deal; the latter is Israeli policy anyway. Throughout the conflict Israel kept the Erez crossing between Gaza and Israel open, kept on supplying the people of Gaza with electricity, and kept up a flow of trucks into Gaza carrying food and other necessities. Hamas may have gotten some promises from Egypt to keep the Rafah crossing from Gaza to Sinai open more often and allow freer passage of people and goods. This would benefit Gazans, but how much it benefits Hamas depends in part on whether Rafah and other crossings are henceforth manned by Hamas's enemy, the Palestinian Authority (see below on that rivalry). And it depends in part on whether, to what extent, and for how long Egypt keeps those promises. Even a betting man would not wager much on General Sisi's tender mercies.

If the cease-fire lasts, meetings in Cairo will begin after one month of quiet to address the "blockade" of Gaza. This will be difficult, as the United States found out when we unsuccessfully addressed the same issues in the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access that we negotiated between Israel and the PA. Today it will be even harder, because Hamas and not the PA controls Gaza. To take one example, concrete will be needed to rebuild damaged or destroyed structures in Gaza, but who will monitor its use so that Hamas cannot divert some to rebuild its attack tunnels? Who, on the ground in Gaza, will be reliable and honest and will resist Hamas threats? Posit that an EU mission will be offered, and think it through: Will the EU's functionaries live in Gaza? Then how will they be immune from the creeping alliance with Hamas that the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) so clearly displays? Will they instead live in Tel Aviv or Cairo and travel to Gaza each day to work? Is that practical?

The idea of a seaport in Gaza presents similar practical

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problems: Who will police it reliably and prevent its use by Hamas to import weapons from Iran? An airport in Gaza, another Hamas goal, should be dismissed out of hand. If countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland have trouble assuring airport security, an airport in Hamastan is an invitation to disaster. In fact there is a defunct airport in Gaza: It is called Yasser Arafat International and was opened by President Clinton in a gala ceremony in 1998. During the intifada in 2001, Israel "decommissioned" the place, and it remains a ruin, but its name is a reminder that terrorism and airfields cannot be allowed to mix.

The second reason to give this round to Israel is the damage that appears to have been done to Hamas as an organization. Militarily, it used up or saw Israel destroy the bulk of its rockets and missiles. Importing replacements from Iran will be much harder now that Egypt has closed the smuggling tunnels from Sinai, as will importing some of the materials needed to build more at home in Gaza. Hamas rocket fire was largely blunted by Israel's Iron Dome defense system. Hamas's great secret weapon, the attack tunnels into Israel, is gone. The known tunnels have been destroyed, and Israeli technology will soon be in place to discover any new tunnels being built. Perhaps a thousand Hamas soldiers were killed, perhaps more, among them several key leaders. And a good deal of Hamas's physical infrastructure (warehouses, workshops, headquarters) was destroyed as well. Its top military leader, Mohammed Deif, may have been killed or badly wounded by an Israeli attack on August 19 and has not been heard from since that day.

A Gaza building destroyed in the fighting

NEWSCOM

Politically, it's clear that the PA will have some role in Gaza henceforth. It will at least be the Palestinian face in all the border passages, something Hamas has prevented since it seized control of Gaza in 2007. While it is unlikely that the PA can take great advantage of this and fully rebuild its own position in Gaza, its presence is a blow to Hamas that the organization is willing to accept (like going into a national unity government with the Fatah party in June) only when there is no alternative.

The harder question to answer is the political impact of the war on Hamas's popularity in Gaza. The claims of triumph from Hamas leaders and activists tell us nothing about what everyone else in Gaza thinks. Why did Hamas lead them into war? Was it worth the sacrifice? By what right did they make this decision? And who is "they" anyway: Khaled Meshal, who lives in Qatar? Hamas military leaders? The consensus opinion was that Hamas's popularity was on the decline in Gaza before the war, partly because of its failure to ameliorate Gaza's terrible economic problems and partly because of the heavy (and Islamist) hand with which it ruled. During the war it executed people it called collaborators, often in ghoulish public ceremonies, a move unlikely to win it more real support among the many Gazans who are not backers of Hamas or the other terrorist organizations.

One factor that led Hamas to start the war was precisely that it saw no other way to change its deteriorating situation. Today it is telling Gazans that the sacrifices were worthwhile because their situation will soon change and aid will flow. Promises will lift the public mood for a while, but what if they do not come true? What if life in Gaza next June looks no different than it did this June, before the war—except for the deaths and damage the war caused? Hamas will of course blame Israel, and perhaps to some extent Egypt, but what will Gazans be saying then about their rulers? Whether the war was a political defeat for Hamas remains to be seen, but the taste of its "victory" may turn sour fast for most Gazans.

A third reason to believe that Israel won the war is the focus now on how Hamas turned Gaza into a war machine. Henceforth the border crossings may be open longer hours for genuine commerce and the passage of Gazans whose business is not terrorism, but that has never been a Hamas goal. The 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access was never implemented in good part because Hamas fired mortars at the crossings, leading Israel to close them down. Last September, Gazan students rioted at the Rafah crossing because Hamas was preventing their access to Egypt and through Egypt to schools abroad. During this war Hamas continually attacked the Erez crossing, delaying delivery of humanitarian supplies and movement of wounded Gazans to Israeli hospitals—and stopping Gazans planning to study abroad from traveling through Israel to Amman and on to their destinations. Hamas's ability to control the legal and illegal passages into Gaza, from international crossings like Rafah and Erez to smuggling tunnels into Egypt, has been declining and will now decline more.

Hamas's use of mosques, schools, hotels, and hospitals to shelter its leaders, shoot rockets, and store war matériel has been vastly downplayed in the international press—but has not been absent. It will be harder now for Hamas, not easier. The culpability of UNRWA, whose

schools were repeatedly used by Hamas, is now apparent. Of course, nothing will change unless some countries—Canada and Australia, maybe, if the Obama administration backs away?—demand change, but Congress will likely take a hand here. The open secret of UNRWA's collaboration with Hamas will now be much harder to avoid or deny, a good example being the fact that its employee union in Gaza is a Hamas front.

How much will change henceforth is impossible to know, because the energy and courage—and strategy—of many parties, including Israel, would have to be estimated. When Israel left Gaza in 2005, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said that any rocket fire out of Gaza would instantly be met with a tough military response. After all, Israel was getting entirely out, the occupation was over, and there was absolutely no justification for one single rocket. But Sharon did not do it. Prior to his first stroke in December 2005, rocket and mortar fire had resumed, at low levels, but Sharon did not act. In 2006, 1,247 rockets and 28 mortars were fired at Israel from Gaza.

That's a lesson Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu should keep in mind: Zero tolerance must be enforced or it will quickly erode. Speaking soon after the cease-fire was announced, Netanyahu pledged as much: "We won't tolerate even a sprinkle of rocket fire at any part of Israel. We would respond even more vigorously than before." He should keep his word. On the civilian side, many international actors will be seeking compromises rather than strict enforcement of any deal that's made. "After all," we will hear from many governments, "the crossings into Gaza can't be policed as if they were Zurich and Singapore; end-use inspections can't be done as if this were Toronto; UNRWA does such important work and complaints can't be allowed to interfere." Down that road lies Hamas rebuilding and another round of war.

But if the objective facts suggest that Hamas gained nothing from this war and suffered great losses, that's not to say Israel paid no price. International criticism of Israel has been fierce, especially in Europe. The death toll, mostly IDF soldiers, is 70. The mobilization of 85,000 reservists disrupted the Israeli economy, as did the cancellation of many visits by tourists. Ben Gurion Airport was briefly abandoned by almost all international carriers (and whether one blames Hamas for that or the American FAA, the war was the occasion). Israel suffered the perplexing blow of being unable to stop Hamas rocket and mortar fire. And even if almost all the rockets that might have done damage were shot down by Iron Dome, mortar fire meant that many border towns became ghost towns and repeated alerts had hundreds of thousands of Israelis running to shelters day and night. The fact that there is a serious debate about who won the war means that Israel paid a price many Israelis think was far too high.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and IDF chief of staff Dan Halutz never recovered from the Lebanon war in 2006. Speaking a year later of the fact that the war had lasted a whole 34 days, Halutz said, "Without a doubt I recognize that at the end of the day that was the most blatant non-achievement or failure." The Gaza war of 2014 lasted more than two weeks longer. Halutz resigned just months after the war with Hezbollah ended; Olmert hung on for several years but his popularity ratings remained in single digits. That's a bad portent for Netanyahu, and a recent survey showed a gigantic drop in his own numbers. On July 23 his approval rating was 82 percent; last week it was 38 percent in one poll.

This is not surprising. Netanyahu avoided the trap Olmert created for himself in 2006 by announcing fantastic war aims (crushing Hezbollah and removing it from southern Lebanon); instead Netanyahu said what he wanted was quiet, meaning an end to rocket fire. Still, the war lasted far longer than Israelis anticipated, the IDF death toll was six times higher than in Operation Cast Lead in Gaza in 2008, and Hamas survived to hold street celebrations and claim victory. Netanyahu will pay a price, especially because there was another path and he rejected it.

The Israeli journalist Haviv Gur put it best:

> At the conclusion of Operation Protective Edge, it is fair to say that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu unequivocally won the war he set out to fight—but not, perhaps, the war the Israeli public expected him to fight. . . . Netanyahu's strategy has much to commend it. It recognizes and addresses the challenges posed by terrorism and irregular conflict—the civilian toll, the political traps, the importance of the psychological battlefield.
>
> But it may suffer from one overwhelming flaw: in the minds of Israelis, it doesn't look like war. It is hard to explain to millions of Israeli voters under rocket fire, to the families of dead children and dead soldiers, to a nation that expects decisive action from its leaders in wartime, why an enemy as derided and detested in the Israeli mind as Hamas can sustain rocket fire on a country as powerful as Israel for 50 days.
>
> This gap is starting to have political consequences for Netanyahu. The growing chorus of critics, and the plummeting of Netanyahu's approval rating, show the extent of the disparity between the government's Gaza strategy and the nation's expectations.

Several members of Netanyahu's coalition cabinet, led primarily by Economy Minister Naftali Bennett and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, urged a massive ground attack on Gaza that they said would destroy Hamas once and for all. Israel would reoccupy and rule Gaza and root out the terrorists. Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yaalon (a former IDF chief of staff) chose instead to prosecute an air war with minimal ground elements. It's possible to

say that the "reoccupy and crush" route would have been nuts, that ruling Gaza would have been an endless headache and cause of IDF fatalities, and that the damage done in Gaza while conquering and ruling it would have elicited a tidal wave of international criticism, but you can't prove it because Israel did not take this route. Lieberman, Bennett, and many in Netanyahu's own Likud party will continue to claim that he has proved to be a weak leader, unwilling to crush Hamas when he had the chance. Netanyahu didn't put this new cease-fire to a vote in his cabinet, perhaps for fear he wouldn't have a majority. Even if most Israelis disagree with the hard-line criticism, Netanyahu is the leader of Israel's right, not its left or center or center-left, and he will now have plenty of trouble with his own base. Sharon faced similar difficulties when he left Gaza, and in the end he quit Likud over them.

Netanyahu discusses the cease-fire, August 27.

Polls in Israel today are mixed, and if one showed Netanyahu at 38 percent, several others put him above 50 percent still. This won't help him sleep better if all the "yes" responses are coming from supporters of the left while his own base is unhappy. But polls taken before the war showed that if Bibi was not widely loved, no other figures got within hailing distance of him when Israelis were asked who should be prime minister. That remains his ultimate strength: no really credible challengers. The interesting political question is whether the war changed that, and changed it permanently.

From the left in Israel, Netanyahu is being attacked not because he didn't prosecute the war fiercely enough, but on the ground that had he reached a peace agreement with the Palestinians the war would never have happened. Labor party leader Yitzhak Herzog is calling for new elections and arguing that Netanyahu must show the "diplomatic courage" to negotiate peace with the PLO.

But if Netanyahu faces possible political danger from the outcome of the war, one other casualty is less debatable: the "peace process." A comprehensive peace requires, after all, that Israel pull out of the West Bank—or at least most of it. Considering the ability of Hamas to launch rockets into Israel from Gaza, how many Israelis are willing to risk Hamas control of the West Bank—from which it could easily lob rockets and mortars into Ben Gurion Airport, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem? It's about 11 miles from the West Bank to Tel Aviv, about 5 miles from the border to Ben Gurion Airport, and basically zero miles from the West Bank to Israel's seat of government in Jerusalem, where the Knesset and prime minister's offices are.

Why would it be easier to negotiate peace now, after the Gaza war, than it was when Secretary of State John Kerry's efforts collapsed? Are issues like the future of Palestinian "refugees" and the so-called right of return easier now, or is the future of Jerusalem? Is PLO chairman (and PA president and Fatah leader) Mahmoud Abbas more likely to accept compromises he and Yasser Arafat have been rejecting since the Camp David talks in 2000? In fact, the end of the Gaza war may present some opportunities, but those would be to jettison such utopian hopes and work on realistic opportunities to improve life: in Gaza, if Hamas will permit it, and in the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority conducted itself responsibly during the war, engaging in a rhetorical contest with Hamas at times to see who condemned Israel more fiercely but doing all it could to prevent violence from erupting in the West Bank. Could this be the predicate for better political, security, and economic cooperation between the PA and Israel? There are plenty of steps that could be taken, if the Israeli left (or what remains of it), the EU, and the Obama administration could turn away from dreams of comprehensive peace deals and toward practical improvements.

For now, it's clear that Hamas achieved nothing of value in this war while imposing a huge cost on Gaza. It may be possible to help Gazans, and help the PA, while preventing Hamas from rebuilding its military strength, if the relevant parties make up their minds to do that. We can pretty much count on Egypt and Israel to be committed to that outcome. The real worry is Paris, Berlin, London, and Washington. Will we in the West be tough enough to demand that UNRWA be unwrapped from Hamas's clutches, crossings closely watched, travelers and cargo in and out of Gaza closely inspected, construction materials carefully recorded and kept out of Hamas hands—month after month, year after year, despite Hamas pressures and demands and crocodile tears on behalf of the poor Gazans?

That's unclear. So the best answer to "who won the Gaza war of 2014"—Hamas, Israel, the PA, Palestinians, Gazans, Abbas, Netanyahu, the IDF, terrorism—is probably "ask me in six months and then again in six years." For now, that "fog of cease-fire" is impenetrable. ♦

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On the Origin of ISIS

Why has a terrorist state blossomed in Syria and Iraq?

By Lee Smith & Hussain Abdul-Hussain

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, the terrorist army many thousand strong now rampaging through the Levant, embraces such an extreme, violent ideology that it makes even al Qaeda squeamish, argue many Western experts. On this reading, al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri was forced to distance himself from ISIS's bloody practices. In reality, the notion that ISIS's gory campaign turns the stomach even of an arch-terrorist, America's public enemy number one, is colorful but inaccurate.

To be sure, ISIS—or the Islamic State, as it now calls itself—is an extremist movement, attracting militants from all over the world eager to help build the new caliphate. Given the thousands of foreigners—including Chechen snipers, Saudi car bombers, and Western misfits like American Douglas McAuthur McCain—who have signed on to fight alongside ISIS, security officials are right to fear that the United States will become an ISIS target. The group kidnaps and murders American journalists. It threatened the existence of the Yazidi community in Iraq, and it slaughtered at least 700 members of the Sheitat, a tribe in Syria, last month. It regularly employs the vicious *hudud* punishments to enforce *sharia* law in the areas it controls in Syria and Iraq.

None of this, however, is outside the norms of a region where governments regularly incite hatred of America and Israel, wage wars against their own populations, and kidnap, imprison, and kill foreign nationals. Cutting off the hands of criminals, as prescribed by *sharia*, is hardly out of the ordinary; the Islamic Republic of Iran hangs gay teenagers from construction cranes, and the legal authorities of Saudi Arabia—an American ally—regularly separate accused criminals from their heads in public executions in what is popularly known as Chop-Chop Square.

What's extraordinary about ISIS is not the violence. Indeed, the reason Zawahiri denounced the group was not its cruelty but its refusal to follow his orders and merge with another extremist organization. In other words, the dispute between ISIS and al Qaeda was not about the conduct of the former but about who was in charge, a regular feature of regional power dynamics.

Nor are ISIS's money-raising schemes especially novel in the Middle East. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported last week, the organization's key source of income is oil, especially in the Syrian provinces of Deir al-Zour and Raqqa and the Iraqi province of Nineveh. "They sell it to opposition groups, to the tribes, back to the Syrian regime, or on the Iraqi black market," says Faysal Itani, an ISIS expert at the Atlantic Council. The other main source of revenue is taxation, or rather, extortion. As one source in the city of Raqqa, ISIS's so-called capital, explained to us, merchants pay 3,000 Syrian pounds (close to $20) every two months. The kidnapping of foreigners or wealthy Syrians for ransom also brings in millions.

And yet it's true that ISIS is not exactly what we've become accustomed to seeing in the Middle East of late. "This is not a classic insurgency," says Itani, "or a non-state actor. Rather, it's a state-building organization." ISIS's effort right now is to secure borders and lines of communication. Comparing ISIS's project with al Qaeda's, Itani notes that bin Laden's logic was to draw the United States into conflict with the Muslim world in the hope of making the people so disgusted with their regimes that al Qaeda could take over. ISIS is different: It aims to take territory, hold it, and build a state. That is, at a moment when much of the rest of the Middle East is moving toward chaos, the Islamic State is consolidating.

ISIS's leader, Ibrahim Awwad al-Badri, is the self-proclaimed caliph, also known as Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi, a 43-year-old jihadist from the Iraqi city of Samarra. During the American occupation, he was arrested on unclear charges, but deemed a low security threat and released after six months. Once out of jail, he joined Al Qaeda in Iraq, then under the leadership of the Jordanian Abu Musab al Zarqawi. Long before he proclaimed his caliphate, Baghdadi came to understand something that was lost on Zarqawi. As a member of the Banu Badr clan, Baghdadi saw that he needed to court the tribesmen on both sides of the Iraqi-Syrian border.

His strategy was greatly facilitated by the Obama administration's December 2011 withdrawal from Iraq and the anti-Sunni policies pursued by the Shiite-dominated

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government in Baghdad. ISIS's project was further aided by the Syrian uprising, which began in March 2011. Over the last three and half years, it has evolved into a civil war in which Syrian president Bashar al-Assad has slaughtered Sunnis. The White House and the rest of the international community have done nothing to stop him.

In other words, any policy addressing ISIS also has to address the root problem: What gave ISIS room to take hold and blossom is the Iranian-backed order of the Levant, consisting of Hezbollah in Lebanon, Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and Nuri al-Maliki and his successor, Haidar al Abadi, in Iraq. All these are sustained by the Shiite Islamic revolutionary regime in Tehran. And the White House has virtually signed onto this regional security apparatus. It is the tacit agreement the Obama administration has made with Tehran that has not only galvanized ISIS but also made foes out of former allies. Sunni Arab tribes that sided with the United States during the surge to defeat Al Qaeda in Iraq less than a decade ago are now joining the Sunni extremists of ISIS.

Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi

Western commentators often marvel that ISIS, unlike other terrorist organizations, is capable of mounting serious military campaigns. For instance, in a June 10 blitzkrieg, ISIS units stormed Iraqi military bases and police stations in the country's second-largest city of Mosul. The fighters swept through Nineveh, most of Salaheddine, and parts of Diyala provinces. They linked up with tribal fighters from Anbar Province who had been in revolt against the government of Nuri al-Maliki for months. The reason ISIS and its allies seem to operate like a real army is that their military council is made up of former officers from an Arab army—Saddam Hussein's.

Accordingly, it might be most useful to see the current sectarian conflagration tearing through the Middle East as an extension of the Iran-Iraq war. After that nearly decade-long conflict (1980-1988), Saddam Hussein, ever fearful of coups, liquidated senior army officers who'd emerged from the war as heroes. One such officer was his cousin, childhood friend, and brother-in-law, Defense Minister Adnan Khairallah Talfah. Having thus hollowed out the Iraqi army, Saddam built special units, like the Republican Guards and Fedayeen Saddam, that were well trained in espionage work and explosives. After the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, some of these officers, along with others from Saddam's M4 directorate of the Iraqi intelligence service, joined the insurgency against coalition forces and Iraq's new Shiite-dominated ruling order, which from their perspective was a collaborative American and Iranian affair.

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On the other side, Tehran's first order of business in 2003 after Saddam had been toppled was to take revenge on the Iraqi military and intelligence personnel the Iranians had fought in the 1980s. Many of Iran's allies in Iraq—including, some say, former prime minister Maliki—formed death squads to go after these officers. Saddam's onetime officer corps went into hiding and used their expertise and money to wage war against the regime that had replaced them. When the United States, in partnership with major Sunni tribes, defeated the Sunni insurgency, American officials pleaded with Maliki to stop hunting the former Baathists and allow them to resettle peacefully in a post-Saddam Iraq. Maliki didn't, nor did his allies. Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps officers like Quds Force commander and Iran-Iraq war veteran Qassem Suleimani as well as Iranian-backed militias like Asa'ib ahl al-Haq continued to prosecute their war against Iraq's Sunni community. Eventually the Sunnis came to see ISIS as one of their few lines of defense against this Shiite persecution.

Today, some of these former Iraqi officers constitute ISIS's core military leadership. As the *New York Times* reported last week, the last two heads of ISIS's military council were officers under Saddam, as was the current head of ISIS's military operations, Adnan al-Sweidawi, also known as Abu Ayman al-Iraqi, who worked as a colonel in Saddam's air defense intelligence unit. Other former Saddam loyalists have fought alongside ISIS. They include Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqah al-Naqshbandiyah (JRTN), a well-trained group of former Iraqi intelligence and army officers, led by Ibrahim Izzat al-Douri, a former high-level Baath party official. Douri was the king of clubs in the U.S.-led coalition's deck of playing cards of most-wanted Iraqi officials, yet he evaded American forces. It was reportedly JRTN that provided the main muscle in ISIS's takeover of Mosul in June.

The other key players in the ISIS-led Sunni rebellion are the Arab tribes on both sides of the Syrian-Iraqi border. Indeed, the map of ISIS's new caliphate, with its so-called capital in Raqqa and encompassing Deir al-Zour in Syria and Nineveh, Anbar, Salaheddine, and Diyala in Iraq, overlays a much older map of tribal lands forming a contiguous territory with a total area of around 168,000 square miles, bigger than Great Britain (143,000 square miles). To see how ISIS has succeeded, it is of paramount importance to understand the tribal politics behind its achievement.

ISIS's first success in tribal politics was in Raqqa, which it snatched from the hands of the Assad regime and turned into its capital. Until the middle of 2013, Raqqa remained

loyal to Assad. Although few Syrian security forces were present in the city, and the capital, Damascus, is nearly 300 miles away, making it virtually impossible to maintain communications and supply lines, Raqqa remained in Assad's control because the city was run by the Sharabeen tribe.

In the tribal world, the Sharabeen are not part of the elite. They are a cattle-raising tribe, considerably less prestigious than, say, the camel-raising Shammar, one of the biggest tribes in the Middle East, whose members are known for their valor. When the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, Abdul-Aziz Ibn Saud, defeated the Shammar in 1910, the tribe pledged allegiance to him. Even as the British and French forced Ibn Saud to relinquish much of the Shammar territory he'd won, the Saudi king issued many Shammar Saudi passports.

Former Syrian president Hafez al-Assad, father of Bashar, well understood the significance of the ties between the Shammar and the Saudis. To counter Saudi influence in Raqqa, he propped up the Sharabeen, funding them, arming them, and giving them government jobs. All this came at the expense of the Shammar, many of whom picked up and moved to Saudi Arabia. When the anti-Assad rebellion erupted in 2011, Riyadh sent some Shammar tribal leaders back to Syria, like onetime head of the Syrian National Council Ahmed al-Jarba. The potential return of the powerful Shammar became a pressing concern not just for the Sharabeen, but for other tribal groups as well, which is what prompted 14 Raqqa clans to pledge allegiance to ISIS in November 2013. This is how Raqqa turned, quickly and peacefully, from an Assad stronghold into ISIS's capital.

Baghdadi repeated the same exercise in Syrian border towns like Al-Qaim and Bou Kamal, as well as Al-Omar, which is Syria's largest oil field, in Deir al-Zour Province. The Iraqi native had an even easier time with tribal politics on the Iraqi side of the border.

When British diplomat Gertrude Bell assembled modern Iraq, it was with an eye to securing a pipeline that linked the oil fields of Basra, in southern Iraq, to the Port of Haifa, in northern Palestine. This required integrating the Dulaim, an enormous tribe of around three million people today, and its territory, Dulaim Province, into Iraq. The Dulaimis would produce two Iraqi presidents, the last of whom was deposed by the Baathists, who changed the name of Dulaim Province to Anbar. Between 1993 and 1996, the CIA reportedly encouraged the Dulaimis to revolt against Saddam, which they did, and, losing, paid dearly. Nonetheless, one of the leading clans of the Dulaim, the Abu Risha, came to ally itself with the United States during the occupation, and without them, the coalition forces almost certainly would not have won the surge.

Maliki alienated the tribes that the surge had won over. He refused to share power with them. After the Obama administration's December 2011 withdrawal, the tribes—including the Dulaim—defied Maliki by holding anti-government rallies inspired by the Arab Spring. When Maliki cracked down on protesters and his forces ejected Sunni leaders from the government, the tribes went into open revolt.

To be sure, not all the Iraqi tribes have pledged allegiance to the new caliph, though they are fighting government forces alongside ISIS. Even as Baghdadi tried to woo some clans from the Dulaim, the tribe's leader, Sheikh Ali al-Hatem, a former Awakening Council member and a staunch opponent of the Iraqi government, stood up to Baghdadi and kept him out of most of Anbar's towns, including the biggest, Ramadi.

Perhaps eventually, the various components of the Sunni rebellion—the Dulaim, the Shammar, JRTN, ISIS, and the rest—will turn on each other. Already clashes have erupted between them, over booty or territory. But it is still too early for them to fall into open conflict. With ISIS spearheading the effort, the Sunni rebellion will likely continue to grow.

Last week President Obama announced that the White House has no policy to deal with ISIS. The revelation came as no surprise since it was the administration's handling of Iraq and Syria that gave ISIS room to grow. Before tackling the problem of Sunni extremism, the administration needs to address the pro-Shiite, pro-Iranian extremism that led to it. Even if the administration wanted to address the root causes of the Sunni rebellion, it has little power to affect facts on the ground: It took its troops and went home in 2011. The Iranians, by contrast, through their allies and through the military assets they are willing to use, from Hezbollah to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, have lots of leverage. Iraq's new prime minister, Haidar al-Abadi—named to the post by Quds Force commander Suleimani—is every bit as much an Iranian asset as Maliki was.

But the reality is that Obama doesn't want to change the equation. As the president has explained in a series of interviews over the last year, he wants to build a new geopolitical equilibrium that would bring Iran back into the community of nations. And to do that, the White House has to respect Iranian regional interests—which amounts to signing off on Iranian hegemony across the Levant, at the expense of America's traditional regional partners, the Sunnis.

What's most extraordinary about the Middle East at present isn't ISIS and the rest of the Sunni rebellion. Rather, it's the Obama administration's inability to formulate a policy that would protect American interests by pushing back against Iran's project for the region. Instead, the White House is squared off against traditional American allies in a way we've never seen before—with the Sunnis now galvanized by a 4,000-year-old tribal code and led by a caliph. ♦

September 1914

Before the trenches

By Geoffrey Norman

The Great War did not begin in the trenches, in rain, mud, and dark futility. At first, the fighting was out in the open under blue skies and late summer sunshine. There were bugles and drums, and sometimes the troops even sang when they charged. French officers leading these attacks wore white gloves.

On the whole, Europe welcomed the war. One of England's finest young poets, Rupert Brooke, wrote in gratitude

> *Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,*
> *And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,*
> *With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,*
> *To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,*
> *Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,*
> *Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,*
> *And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,*
> *And all the little emptiness of love!*

At the other end of the spectrum, Austrian malcontent Adolf Hitler listened to a mobilization announcement in the public square of Munich. He was, he later wrote, "not ashamed to acknowledge that I was carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment and . . . sank down upon my knees and thanked Heaven out of the fullness of my heart for the favor of having been permitted to live in such a time."

Brooke died on a hospital ship, of sepsis from a mosquito bite. Hitler survived the trenches and wept through eyes blinded by gas when he learned of the armistice.

There had been no major land war in Europe for a generation and, in truth, nearly 100 years of peace had been interrupted only by the Franco-Prussian conflict of 1870. That war had left France craving vengeance and Germany filled with a sense that it was destined for much greater things. Both nations could be said to have anticipated the war not with dread, but eagerly.

When the armies were mobilized and loaded on trains and carried to the front, the nearly universal belief was that it would be over, as the phrase had it, "before the leaves fall." The thing would be short, glorious, and conclusive.

There were a few who sensed, with dread, that it might be none of these things. "The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our life-time," British foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey said, looking out of his office window on August 3, the eve of Britain's declaration of war, as street lamps were being lit below.

And there had been at least one lone, scholarly voice predicting the coming catastrophe. I. S. Bloch, a Polish economist, wrote, several years before the war, his sense of things to come:

> At first there will be increased slaughter on so terrible a scale as to render it impossible to get troops to push the battle to a decisive issue. They will try to, thinking that they are fighting under the old conditions. . . . The war, instead of being a hand-to-hand contest in which the combatants measure their physical and moral superiority, will become a kind of stalemate. . . . The spade will be as indispensable to a soldier as his rifle.

But Bloch was no soldier, and the generals saw the coming war in terms of the last. British general Douglas Haig still believed in the horse and was certain that cavalry charges and flashing sabers would carry the day. He called the machine gun "a much overrated weapon." In 1915, he assumed overall command of the British troops in France, and, in John Keegan's chilling words, "On the Somme he . . . sent the flower of British youth to death and mutilation; at Paschendale he . . . tipped the survivors into the slough of despond."

The French, who considered themselves Europe's premier soldiers, drawing their inspiration and ideas from Napoleon, believed in the bayonet and disdained the defense. As their field manual put it, "From the moment of action every soldier must ardently desire the assault by bayonet as the supreme means of imposing his will upon the enemy and gaining victory."

The nation's foremost intellectual general, Ferdinand Foch, had no more use for, or understanding of, the effect of new weapons and technology on the battlefield than did Haig. Of the new technology with the most potential, Foch said, "Aviation is fine as a sport. But as an instrument of war, it is worthless."

Ignoring the generals, the war soon made the case for the machine gun and the airplane. It lived by its own rules and according to its own grim logic.

The glamour began to fade and the certainties to

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fail when German forces in Belgium rounded up civilians and executed them by firing squad. This was done, according to the German command, in reprisal for acts of resistance to the invasion. The Germans insisted it was all proper and lawful when their armies burned the university town of Louvain and its library, which contained thousands of priceless, irreplaceable manuscripts. The action was defended by eminent German intellectuals in a letter bearing the title "Call to the World of Culture."

The "Rape of Belgium" became a postdated justification for the war and was, eventually, propagandized to excess. In 1914, the validity of the maxim "Truth is the first casualty of war" was established before the phrase was first used, by Philip Snowden in 1916.

But Belgium was not the point for the Germans. It was merely ground that needed to be crossed on the way to the objective. This was the encirclement and destruction of the French Army and, as collateral, any British forces that might be in the vicinity. An enormous army of 750,000 men had been raised for the accomplishment of this objective. Huge siege guns had been designed and transported, by rail, to the front for the purpose of leveling Belgium's frontier forts. And there was a plan.

Volunteers outside a British recruiting office, 1914

It was the brainchild of Count Alfred von Schlieffen, and he had worked over it from 1905 until his death in 1913. He had honed it and refined it and given it a precise (not to say German) timetable. The encirclement and defeat of the French Army would be accomplished sometime between day 36 and day 40 of the war.

If Haig and Foch were still in thrall to obsolete weapons, Schlieffen worked out his plan under the spell of long-dead generals. Some historians (conspicuously Barbara Tuchman in her masterful *Guns of August)* consider Hannibal's monumental victory in the battle of Cannae to be Schlieffen's model. This is understandable since Schlieffen had written a much-studied treatise on Hannibal's double envelopment of the Roman Army, which crushed both its flanks and drove its legions into a pocket from which no escape was possible. Cannae was a battle of antiquity (216 B.C.), but the numbers were impressive even by what came to be the standards of the Great War. The Carthaginians killed some 50,000 Roman soldiers according to writings of the time. Some modern scholarship puts the number much lower, in the area of 15,000. Still, this was before gunpowder. All the killing was done with edged weapons, blunt force, and bare hands. Too much, almost, for the mind to comprehend.

Schlieffen was probably not considering slaughter on this magnitude. He would have been content, no doubt, with the surrender of entire French armies.

The Schlieffen plan also did not call for a true double envelopment. The old general's last words were supposedly, "Only keep the right wing strong." He planned to come around the French left, encircling the enemy and pinning it against a stationary line that had been established and held on his own left. A single envelopment, in other words. According to military historian J.F.C. Fuller, a more accurate model would be Frederick the Great's triumph at Leuthen.

All this is of academic interest. In the event, as opposed to the theory, Schlieffen's plan failed. The failure due, unsurprisingly, to the human element. Hannibal and Frederick the Great were not available for duty in 1914. The German armies were under the command of Helmuth Johann Ludwig von Moltke, also known as Moltke the Younger, a nephew of Field Marshal Count Moltke, the victor at Sedan and conqueror of France the last time around. It was up to him to execute Schlieffen's plan. His nerve failed and he did not keep the right strong.

If the Germans had a strong plan that failed because of weak leadership, the converse applied for the French. Their plan was strategically incoherent but the general who oversaw it never lost his nerve.

Plan XVII, for the defeat of Germany, came down, in the end, to . . . *attaque.* French armies were trained and French leaders indoctrinated in the spirit of the offense that, it was believed, suited the national temperament. There was something Bergsonian about it, this belief in the *élan vital* that would carry the French infantryman, dressed in conspicuous red trousers, in a bayonet charge over open country against an enemy that might be concealed, dug-in, and equipped with machine guns. French doctrine even disdained heavy artillery since it might tend to slow down the irresistible advance of the infantry.

When the moment came, in early August, the French attacked. The drums pounded, the banners flew, and

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the soldiers sang the Marseillaise. They were cut down by the thousands in what came to be known as the Battles of the Frontiers. The numbers are appalling—some 250,000 French casualties—and the individual stories tragic. General Foch had a son and a son-in-law, both cavalry lieutenants, killed on the same day. When one of his contemporaries, General Castleneau, was informed that his son had been killed, his staff was silent for a moment. Then, the general said, "Gentlemen, we will continue."

In the Battles of the Frontiers, the French had attacked the weaker section of the German line, the portion that Schlieffen saw as the anvil against which the hammer of his right wing would fall, crushing the French Army. But the armies on what was the left of the German line were so successful in defense that Moltke, in violation of the Schlieffen plan, put them over into offensive action against their weakened enemy. He may have been seduced by the vision of a true Cannae or, more prosaically, lacked the will to resist the pleas of his subordinates that they be allowed to attack.

Joseph Joffre

Alexander von Kluck

For the French, whose attack had been decisively broken, it was now time to learn to fight on the defensive, and for their leaders to find a way of preventing a retreat from turning into a rout. The French Army had lost the battle—several of them, in fact—but not the war. But there had to be a new plan and, above all, there had to be strong leadership. Otherwise, the massive right wing of the German Army would swing around the French left, perhaps sweeping up Paris along the way, and win the war according to the plan and the 40-day timetable.

The new plan for the French Army was obvious enough and dictated by events. It must break contact and withdraw until it could establish a new, shorter, stabilized line, one that would allow it to reinforce along what military theorists call "internal lines." And then it would wait for an opportunity to counterattack the enemy, whose lines would be long and much weakened.

As for leadership, the French were under the command of General Joseph Joffre, as unlikely a national savior as it is possible to imagine. Joffre was a large man with an ample belly. "Portly" would have been the charitable description. He was no intellectual or military theorist. He was given to silences, and when he did speak, what came out of his mouth was enigmatic if not inarticulate. There was a famous story told about him which had a colonel of artillery coming to Joffre with some urgent matter. The man spoke passionately and Joffre listened calmly. Then he stood, patted the man on the shoulder, and said, "You always loved your guns. That's excellent."

Douglas Haig once wondered, in a letter, if Joffre even knew how to read a map. Most likely he did and knew that his job didn't require skills of that sort. What it did require was absolute mastery of his command and of himself. Stonewall Jackson once said to a panicky subordinate, "Do not take counsel of your fears." Joffre, who had more than enough reason, after the Battles of the Frontiers, to give in to his, never did. He was also merciless in dealing with subordinates who, in his estimation, lacked sufficient will. In the first few weeks after the Germans crossed into France, he relieved 2 of 5 army commanders; 10 of 20 corps commanders, and 42 of 74 division commanders.

When he wasn't visiting his various commands and dealing with this necessary business, he drew up orders for the continuation of the long retreat. He went to bed early and slept long hours. He also ate regularly and well, and absolutely nothing interfered with his meals.

But if Joffre had the authority and the will to deal ruthlessly with his countrymen, he was powerless when it came to the nations upon which France depended for its survival, Russia and Great Britain.

The Russian front was far away and utterly independent. But if the czar's armies could push the Germans and compel them to shift resources to that front, it could slow down the ponderous German advance into France just enough. And at first, the news was good. The Germans retreated ahead of a Russian offensive, so much that their general in command was relieved. The new team consisted of Field Marshal Paul von Hindenberg, who was mostly a figurehead, and General Erich Ludendorff, who was quite the other thing—able, energetic, and brutal. Within days of assuming their duties, the new leaders secured a victory of colossal proportions in the Battle of Tannenberg. The Germans destroyed Russia's 2nd Army, inflicting almost 80,000 casualties and taking some 90,000 prisoners in the process. When the magnitude of his defeat became apparent, Russian general Alexander Samsonov went off into the forest and shot himself in the head.

But prior to Tannenberg, the situation on the Eastern front had appeared uncertain enough to trouble Moltke, who may have been excessively concerned by the prospect of Russian boots on Prussian soil. So he ordered reinforcements sent east, with the units to be taken from those that had been committed to the invasion of France. This, by definition, weakened the right, in violation of Schlieffen's

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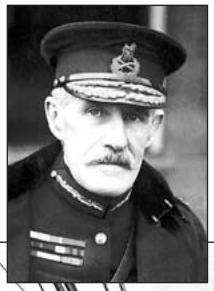
dying order. Ludendorff had told headquarters that he did not need the additional men. But they went anyway, and their absence on the Western front contributed much to the deliverance of France.

Joffre may have been unaware of how much events in Russia would bear on the crisis in France. He had more immediate concerns with that other nation on whom France was depending, and the British were a problem. One that might very well be fatal.

The British Expeditionary Force was a small unit made up, when it landed in France, of four infantry divisions and one cavalry division, organized into two corps. This force was positioned on the French left, which, as it turned out, was perhaps the most critical point on the line. The British faced the German 1st Army, of 14 divisions, commanded by Alexander von Kluck, and the Tommies took some pleasure in singing, while on the march, a little ditty that (cleaned up a bit) went:

Kaiser Bill is feeling ill,
The Crown Prince, he's gone barmy.
We don't give a cluck for old von Fluck
And all his bleeding army.

The fight against Kluck's superior numbers was another, deadly serious, thing. The BEF's soldiers were professionals, many of them veterans of the colonial wars, and they knew how to shoot and to hold a defensive position. They did this, most conspicuously at Mons, where their disciplined, rapid, and well-aimed rifle fire had the Germans thinking they were facing machine gunners. The fight slowed Kluck down. But not much. And while the battle was a credit to British arms, the commander of the BEF saw it as something else.



Above, John French. Below, the British Expeditionary Force, with mounts, crossing the Channel

Field Marshal John French felt as if he and his men had been hung out on their own, against superior enemy forces, by their ally. France's 5th Army, positioned to the right of the BEF, had been in some of the heaviest combat during the Battles of the Frontiers. It had taken frightful casualties and its commanding general, Charles Lanrezac, had believed from the beginning of hostilities that he was in danger of being overrun by superior German numbers. He was correct, but his own superiors, including Joffre, did not agree. Lanrezac's withdrawals were, in Joffre's estimation, premature at best, and evidence of a lack of offensive spirit at worst. In the eyes of John French, they were a betrayal. He and his men had, he believed, been abandoned.

So while, in the late days of August, he was in retreat like the French units, his intention was not necessarily to stop in a few days, when a new line could be established, and then resume the offensive. Field Marshal French intended for the BEF to withdraw much further and, perhaps, even to leave the continent. He needed time to rest and reorganize, and he had come to distrust Frenchmen in general and to hate Lanrezac in particular.

High-level staff meetings and a face-to-face encounter between the British field marshal and the French general did nothing to repair the breach and, indeed, may have widened it.

It would have been catastrophic for the British to leave the fight, and Lord Herbert Kitchener, the war secretary, at his office back in London understood this when he read a cable from the field marshal suggesting that he might do so. Kitchener took a fast cruiser across the channel and met the next morning, in Paris, with the field marshal. He made it clear that the British government did not believe the BEF, under any circumstances, should quit the fight. The field marshal should continue to conform with the movements of French forces.

But Kitchener gave Field Marshal French an out by adding that "you will be the judge" when it came to where, precisely, the BEF should be in the line. It could not, of course, have been otherwise.

John French was a sulky, prickly, proud man who might well have resented being called in by Kitchener in the first place. He was probably in over his head, and he would soon be relieved by Haig. But for now, as the retreat slowed and developments on the German side began to make Joffre's planned counterattack appear possible, he continued to insist on the independence of his command and his men's need to retreat, rest, and resupply. He remained uncooperative, and thus the presence of the BEF in any counterattack was . . . uncertain.

While Field Marshal French dithered, other generals moved. In Paris, the military governor Joseph Gallieni had been preparing the city against the arrival of Kluck's army. This included urging the government to leave for Bordeaux, which it did on September 2. The city had already become a target for some of history's first air raids. On August 30, a German *Taube* flew over the city and dropped a bomb that killed two civilians. It returned for the next few days, precisely at six in the

evening, the hour of the *apéritif,* to drop a bomb or two and add to the sense of crisis that loomed over the city.

Gallieni designated bridges for destruction and also the Eiffel Tower, to deny the enemy its use for radio transmissions. He also went about assembling forces of his own, scraping together whatever units he could. Joffre was not willing to give him the three corps that he insisted he needed to mount a proper defense of Paris, but Gallieni knew how to get things done, and he found troops, though not as many as he wanted.

Gallieni had been Joffre's superior officer at one time in their careers. He had, in fact, been in line for the job that became Joffre's and was clearly the more dynamic of the two men. But pleading age and ill-health, he had resigned from the army. He had been called back in the crisis and given the assignment of saving Paris. He had no higher ambitions, and he held politicians in contempt. His place in the chain of command and, indeed, in the political structure was ad hoc and unclear. He was shrewd and decisive and a wild card in the battle for France. The closer Kluck came to Paris, the better prepared and more determined Gallieni became to defend the city and, if possible, to strike.

Above, Joseph Gallieni. Below, a French line awaiting assault during the Battle of the Marne

Kluck provided the opportunity. As he continued his march across France, Kluck maneuvered his army so that it would pass to the east of Paris. His objective was not the city but the French 5th Army, which had been Lanrezac's until he had been relieved by Joffre and replaced by General Louis Franchet d'Espèrey. In Kluck's mind, the 5th was a beaten foe, and by moving his army around its left, he could accomplish its encirclement and destruction.

There were two weaknesses with this plan. One took the form of intelligence; the other of tactics. Kluck believed he was pursuing a beaten foe, and it was true that the 5th Army had suffered grievously at the battle of Charleroi and been in retreat ever since—more than two weeks—fighting as it withdrew. But the unit had lost neither cohesion nor its will to fight. For this, credit belonged to the toughness of the French soldier and the firmness of the French Army's top command, especially Joffre. There was no panic. Joffre, Gallieni, and the *poilus* they commanded were waiting for their moment.

As Kluck wrote after the war, his miscalculation in this regard came down to underestimating the extraordinary and peculiar aptitude of the French soldier to recover quickly. That men will let themselves be killed where they stand, that is a well-known thing and counted on in every plan of battle. But that men who have retreated for ten days, sleeping on the ground and half dead with fatigue, should be able to take up their rifles and attack when the bugle sounds, is a thing upon which we never counted. It was a possibility not studied in our war academy.

Kluck erred tactically when he began his move east and across the Marne River. When he did this, he exposed his own right flank to Paris and the forces that Gallieni had been able to accumulate there. This included a hastily assembled army, the 6th, of which Gallieni was in nominal command. But Joffre remained in overall command and so, in theory, could overrule any order from Gallieni. But in this uncertain command structure, the prior senior status Gallieni had held over Joffre and the man's energy and moral force allowed him to force Joffre's hand and order the counterattack when Joffre might have wanted to wait another day or more.

From ground contacts and observation from airplanes, the French saw their opportunity, and Gallieni was first to seize it. If the newly formed French 6th Army and the forces he had assembled in Paris could attack from the west against Kluck's flank, and if the BEF could be counted on to take its place in the line . . . but there was the rub.

As late as the afternoon before the counterattack was to begin, Field Marshal French was still determined to keep the British force out of the battle and, in fact, to put more space between it and Joffre's new line. This might save the BEF, but it would almost certainly doom the counterattack.

At this point, it was up to Joffre to convince Field Marshal French to turn the BEF around, take its place in line between the 5th and 6th Armies of France, and, if things went well, turn back the German offensive—even, if things went very well, defeat the Germans in a major battle, encircling them as they had threatened to encircle the armies of France, and win the war. But the BEF had to be there, and someone had to change its commander's mind. His own government, in the form of Kitchener, had done what it could, and still the field marshal was not persuaded.

It fell to Joffre, who understood intuitively and completely what had to be done. So he ordered up a car and a

IMAGES: NEWSCOM

driver and set out from his headquarters to those of Field Marshal French over 100 miles away. After the obligatory stop for a good lunch, Joffre reached his destination at about two in the afternoon, on September 5. In the morning, the battle would begin, and the British were far back of the proposed line. Much—not to say everything—depended on how things went in this meeting. In Barbara Tuchman's telling, it went something like this:

Field Marshal French was expecting Joffre and waited with his staff to hear what he had to say. Which, for once, was quite a lot. And he spoke with passion of how "the supreme moment" had arrived.

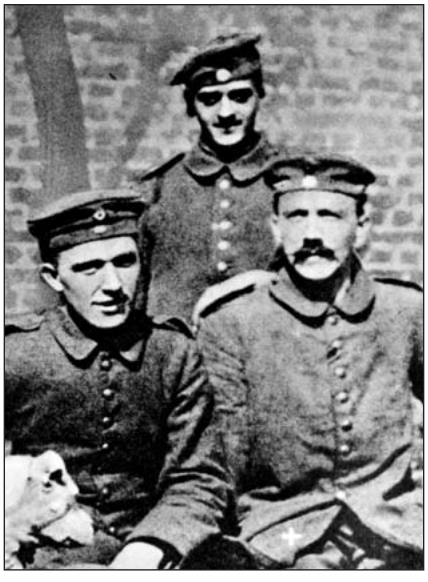
At stake in the coming battle were "the lives of all French people, the soil of France, the future of Europe."

He could not believe, Joffre said, that "the British Army will refuse to do its share in this supreme crisis."

Pounding a table, he concluded, "*Monsieur le Maréchal*, the honor of England is at stake!"

At this point, the Field Marshal's eyes began to fill. He did not speak French and probably had not made out more than a word or two of what Joffre had just said. But he plainly understood. To one of his staff who could translate, he said, "Damn it, I can't explain. Tell him we will do all we possibly can."

The officer looked at Joffre and said, simply, "The field marshal says, 'Yes.'"



At lower right: Adolf Hitler during WWI

And so, at the moment of maximum peril, in what was shaping up to be the decisive battle in the greatest war in modern history, the issue was decided in a personal encounter between two inarticulate generals who did not speak each other's language.

With the British in the offensive, if not yet in line, all was ready. Joffre returned to his headquarters and announced to his staff: "Gentlemen, we will fight on the Marne."

The order went out to the armies, including a passage that made things utterly plain: "A unit which finds it impossible to advance must, regardless of cost, hold its ground and be killed on the spot rather than fall back. In the present circumstances no failure will be tolerated."

On the German side, there appeared an unlikely player whose contribution did much to determine the outcome of the Battle of the Marne and, thus, the war. This was a colonel from Moltke's staff who had come to Kluck's headquarters to observe and report back. But in the German system, he also had considerable authority and could issue recommendations that might as well have been orders. Colonel Richard Hentsch wanted Kluck, whose army had crossed the Marne, to begin a withdrawal to protect its exposed right flank and to tighten up the German lines, which had become overextended. Kluck would need to recross the Marne.

The order may have come at precisely the worst possible time for the Germans. And if Kluck, who had been disregarding Moltke's instructions with some frequency, had refused this one, which came from a mere colonel, after all, and continued his pursuit, the Battle of the Marne might have turned out differently.

But the French Army and the BEF attacked as the Germans were withdrawing. The BEF advanced into a gap between the German 1st and 2nd Armies, threatening to envelop Kluck—even, perhaps, on both flanks, thus accomplishing what Hannibal had at Cannae and what Schlieffen held up as the sine qua non of generalship.

But the Marne was not that tidy. It was, in fact, several battles across miles of front with all of the usual chaos of war in play. It went, almost, the way Foch, who was fighting in the center of the line, put it in an order he never sent but that became, nevertheless, immortal: "My center is yielding. My right is retreating. Situation excellent. I am attacking."

And as he attacked, the Germans retreated, with the French and the British in pursuit, looking for the enemy's exposed right flank the way it had grappled for their left. This was the "Race to the Sea," which ended in stalemate and trenches. The war that I. S. Bloch had predicted had come to pass. Moltke, who had run the war as though he were a kind of chairman of the board, suffered an emotional breakdown with the failure of the Schlieffen plan. A better prophet than general, he wrote to his wife: "Things have not gone well. The fighting east of Paris has not gone in our favor, and we shall have to pay for the damage we have done."

Actually, the world paid, and is still paying, for the damage done. And the world had already paid dearly. As awful as the years in the trenches were, they were not as bloody as those few months when armies fought in the open. No year matched 1914 for ferocity, and when it was over, there cannot have been many who still thanked Providence for the favor of being born into those times.

Hitler, perhaps. But, then, the war made him. ♦

Deep Frieze Meaning

What is the Parthenon telling us? BY A.E. STALLINGS

The Parthenon represents, for many, a golden age in human achievement: the 5th-century B.C. Greek flowering of democracy, sciences, and the arts. But what if its chief ornament, the Parthenon frieze, turned out to be not an embodiment of reason and proportion—of stillness at the heart of motion, quiet piety, and enlightened civic responsibility—but (or, rather, also) something darker, more primitive: a representation of the critical moment in an ancient story of a king at war, a human sacrifice, and a goddess's demand for virgin blood?

The Parthenon Enigma
A New Understanding of the World's Most Iconic Building and the People Who Made It
by Joan Breton Connelly
Knopf, 512 pp., $35

That's the argument at the heart of *The Parthenon Engima*. The plot involves not only ritual murder and burial, but fragments of a lost play of Euripides found on mummy wrappings. Even the title suggests a Dan Brown thriller.

Joan Breton Connelly's theory is not so much far-fetched as it is heretical. Art history and classical civilization courses tend to teach us that the frieze represents the "Panathenaic procession." The Great Panathenaia occurred, like the Olympics, every four years; it was a festival of athletic games and poetry and music competitions, culminating in a procession to the temple of Athena, goddess of weaving, war, and wisdom. Her statue was then presented with a new *peplos*, a robe woven by the women of Athens.

Thus, the frieze, with its horses and horsemen, youths and elders, men and women, and animals being led to sacrifice, represents Periclean

BARCEX

A.E. Stallings, poet and translator, is the author, most recently, of Olives: Poems.

Athens and a cross-section of 5th-century Athenians. The central panel on the eastern frieze, which depicts three women of assorted heights and a man and a child handling a bundle of cloth, is read as the culmination of the festival. The tallest woman is seen to be Athena's priestess.

Interestingly, this theory is not as old as you might think. It was proposed, tentatively, only in the late 1700s by the Englishmen James Stuart (an artist) and Nicholas Revett (an amateur architect) after an expedition to Athens for the Society of Dilettanti. We have no ancient accounts whatsoever of what the frieze represents. For much of the common era, during which the temple was repurposed as a Christian church and then a mosque, observers have been uncertain what they were looking at.

The Stuart-Revett proposal has, over time, calcified into received wisdom, even though this would be a singular and unheard-of case of Greek temple art depicting a present-day moment rather than a mythological or legendary event. Indeed, the rest of the sculptures on the Parthenon, the pediments and metopes, depict myths from Athens's founding and prehistory, from the contest between Athena and Poseidon for the city's patronage to the battle of the Lapiths against the Centaurs. A. W. Lawrence, brother of T. E. and chairman of classical archaeology at Cambridge, wrote in 1951 that if the frieze did depict a contemporary event, "this must have verged on profanation."

Many of the elements we might expect to see in a typical Panathenaic procession are conspicuously missing. Why so many horses but no hoplites, the backbone of the 5th-century Athenian Army? What's with the anachronistic chariots, a relic of Bronze Age warfare? Where is the wheeled ship-cart that transported the *peplos*, which was rigged to it like a sail? Why is a man handling the *peplos* in the climactic panel? (The *peplos* was woven by female hands for a virgin goddess.)

In 1991, Connelly was working on a book about Greek priestesses and reading up on myths of early Athens. She was electrified by the strange tale of Erechtheus, an early king of Athens. (There is a temple to him known as the Erechtheon on the Acropolis. It's the one with the caryatids.) At the same time, Connelly realized that whole new passages of Euripides' lost play on the subject had, in recent decades, come to light from Hellenistic mummy wrappings.

The myth is basically this: King Erechtheus sprang directly from the Attic earth. He had a wife, Praxithea, and three daughters. (The Athenian royal houses ran to daughters.) When Eumolpus, king of nearby Eleusis, threatened a siege of the city, King Erechtheus got an unpleasant oracle from Delphi: He must sacrifice one of his daughters to Athena to save the city. The queen, rather than cringing in horror at the idea, embraced it as patriotic duty. (Praxithea, whose name means "she who acts for the goddess," delivers a rousing speech in the Euripides play.) Meanwhile, the three girls have vowed that if one dies, they all will—so the two who are not chosen insist either on being sacrificed as well or on killing themselves, possibly by jumping from the Acropolis. Athena then declares that the heroic girls are to be buried in a single tomb and that there should be a sanctuary and sacred rites established in their honor. Erechtheus, who dies in the battle, will have a tomb on the Acropolis and a sacred precinct. Athena makes Queen Praxithea her priestess, and Praxithea will be in charge of a single altar to serve both shrines.

Peplos—or sacrificial robe?—changes hands.

Suddenly, upon looking at the "enigmatic *peplos* incident" of the eastern frieze, Connelly felt that she understood it for the first time: This was a family unit—mother, father, and three daughters of different ages—the family of Erechtheus. The cloth that the father and the youngest child (who must, Connelly decides, be a girl; the gender of the semi-nude child in the frieze is a subject of debate) are handling is not the *peplos* but a sacrificial robe.

Furthermore, Connelly makes a valuable argument about the purpose of the temple as a visual memento of the invisible past—the trauma of the Persian invasion, for instance—and the centrality of the Erechtheus myth to Athens's sense of itself, the willingness in a democracy to give one life for the good of the many, and for even the city's leadership to make the supreme sacrifice.

Connolly is also good on the Parthenon itself and the landscape that it both dominates and is integral to. To possess the Sacred Rock is to hold Athens, and all of Greece, under your sway. (This symbolism played out under German occupation in 1941, when two young Greeks, Apostolos Santas and Manolis Glezos, climbed the rock and tore down the Nazi flag, becoming national heroes.) The temple and its decoration are entirely of local Pentelic marble, prized for its pure whiteness and golden glow in sunlight. Like King Erechtheus, the building is autochthonous, sprung from the Attic earth.

Restorers of the Parthenon remark how, as the light moves over the structure, it seems almost to be breathing. The many small refinements of its architecture mean that the temple's seemingly straight lines are all optical illusions: The side walls and peristyle lean slightly inward; the columns taper upwards and bow out at the middle (an adjustment called entasis); the corner columns are thicker than the central ones to give a sense of solidity; and so

MARIE-LAN NGUYEN

on. The chief Acropolis restoration architect, Manolis Korres, has discovered that the granules of marble in separate blocks of the temple have actually fused into one another. The separate pieces are, over time, becoming a single entity, masonry morphing back into mountain.

It is consistent with the conventions of Greek temple art for a frieze to depict a foundational myth of the city and her cults. To me, Connelly's theory is attractive and plausible, and is backed by a considerable breadth and depth of scholarship—archaeological, visual, and textual. Not everyone will be persuaded, and the absolute certainty of the author will be off-putting to some; but her ideas cannot be dismissed out of hand. At the very least, her explanation, though beset by the disadvantage of novelty, is no less problematic than the Panathenaic procession.

As Samuel Butler put it when espousing his own contrarian classical theory, "Men of science, so far as I have observed them, are apt in their fear of jumping to a conclusion to forget that there is such a thing as jumping away from one." ♦

B&A

Turning Against Israel

The downward trajectory of global prestige.

BY RONALD RADOSH

When Joshua Muravchik wrote this book, he could not have known how timely it would turn out to be. He would not have been surprised, however, by the worldwide condemnation of Israel for its "disproportionality" and "lack of restraint" in response to recent Hamas rocket attacks. He writes that "Hamas' unyielding avowal of intent to eradicate Israel, made real by a barrage of rocket fire over the border, prompted Israel to … launch recurrent strikes at terrorists and their facilities," and, next, to launch Operation Cast Lead (2008-09), "an invasion of Gaza aimed at crippling Hamas' offensive apparatus." The response was a rebuke of Israel by such figures as Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and Kofi Annan, as well as by the British press, the U.N. Human Rights Commission, the worldwide left, and the infamous Goldstone Report (later repudiated by Judge Goldstone himself). In fighting back against Hamas, so the narrative went, Israel alone was guilty of "war crimes."

Making David into Goliath
How the World Turned Against Israel
by Joshua Muravchik
Encounter, 296 pp., $25.99

The subject to which Muravchik devotes *Making David into Goliath* is why and how the world turned against the Jewish state. At its beginning in 1948, Israel had broad global support; in America, both Republicans and Democrats, including the entire liberal/left-wing community, supported it. Israel's story became familiar to Americans when, a decade after the country's birth, Leon Uris's novel *Exodus* became a worldwide sensation and bestseller that outsold even *Gone with the Wind* and was subsequently adapted into a movie starring Paul Newman. Uris's depiction of the heroic struggle of Palestine's Jews to build a state out of the existing Yishuv in Palestine moved people all over the world, creating great sympathy for Israel, especially in the United States.

The question Muravchik raises is: Why did this positive feeling erode, both here and in Europe? After Israel's victory in the 1967 war, the narrative that was quickly adopted was not that of 1948, in which beleaguered Israel valiantly fought for its survival as a state against the Goliath of invading Arab powers. It was replaced by the opposite: Israel had been transformed into Goliath, using its superior power to defeat and destroy Palestinians who were fighting for their own people. Suddenly, the Arab powers had become David, standing against the Israeli behemoth.

What had happened to create this new paradigm? First, the Arab cause became that of defending the right of Palestinians to create their own state. This narrative developed because of the fight waged by Yasser Arafat, who created the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to represent Palestinian Arabs, and who forged an alliance on its behalf with the Soviet Union as well as China. As Muravchik writes:

> The Arabs, notwithstanding their regressive social and political practices, nor their recent [World War II] alignment with the fascist power, now, in the guise of the Palestinians, assumed a place among the forces of virtue and progress while the Israelis were consigned to the ranks of the villains and reactionaries.

The Arabs were now allied with the new totalitarian powers, represented by the Communist states; but this did not harm the Arab cause, since progressives on the left believed these nations to be on the right side of history. Hence, a hero like Nelson Mandela became a friend and supporter of the opponents of Israel, as well as a supporter of Fidel Castro and Latin leftists who saw Israel as an oppressor of their brothers in the Middle East.

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Ronald Radosh is the coauthor, with Allis Radosh, of A Safe Haven: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel.

Adding to this new counternarrative was Israel's stunning military victory in 1967, which resulted in Israel controlling what had been Arab territory in the Sinai, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the Golan Heights. The Arab states, which continually rejected Israeli offers to negotiate the disposition of these conquered territories, now condemned Israel—the victor in the war—as "occupiers and of having entered a new phase of colonial settlement and oppression." The international left, previously sympathetic to Israel, now joined the Arab states in viewing Israel as the sole impediment to peace for refusing to give back land won in battle and not accepting all Arab demands. Israel, they argued, was the only power standing in the way of the creation of a new Palestinian state.

Among the most important sections of this book are those that offer critiques of intellectual and political celebrities who have given legitimacy to the Arab cause and whose posturing has become an effective tool for the growing chorus against Israel. The most important one discussed here is the late Edward Said, a member of the Palestinian National Council of the PLO and whose *Orientalism* (1978) gave intellectual credibility to this new portrayal of Israel. Muravchik's discussion of Said is a tour de force: He meticulously analyzes the errors, weaknesses, and obfuscations of Said's celebrated work and reveals how, to the leftist academy, he succeeded in his task of moving the left away from a class-struggle analysis to a portrayal of Arabs and Palestinians as the truly oppressed group, while their opponent, Israel, represented the imperialist and racist West.

Muravchik's chapter on how the Western left, in particular, moved against Israel concentrates on the key role of the late Austrian chancellor, the Social Democrat Bruno Kreisky (1911-1990). A vice president of the Socialist International (of which the Israeli Labor party was a member in good standing), Kreisky worked to move the SI against Israel. He invited Arafat to address the group, and he brought in anti-Israeli movements, such as Nicaragua's Sandinistas. Working closely with West German chancellor Willy Brandt, he not only managed to turn Europe against Israel, but, as Muravchik writes, he used his own Jewish lineage "as a shield allowing him to take on the Jewish world with a fierce pleasure that would have been impossible for a gentile politician."

Muravchik also argues that the election of Menachem Begin as prime minister in 1977 worked to alienate many former supporters of Israel. Under Begin, "the image of Israel . . . was shorn of features that had made the country appealing to many outsiders," and the 1982 Lebanon war caused a further decline in Israel's prestige. (Muravchik's critical appraisal of Begin's policies, by the way, shows that he is not an indiscriminate apologist for Israel.) Within Israel, the emergence of a leftist academy from which the anti-Israel "new historians" emerged in the 1980s revealed that, as in the United States, a leftist group of historians could provide a pro-Palestinian narrative in support of the theory that Israel and Zionism were born in sin. Their books and studies became an arsenal used by the Western left to show that Israel was no progressive force in the world, and in the United States, the remnants of the New Left worked to support the Palestinian narrative and helped turn many mainline Protestant denominations against Israel.

Now, Muravchik concludes, it is Israel that is in the dock, and this important book is the best source available to show readers how and why Israel is seen as a victimizer and oppressor, not as a David facing a vast array of Arab reactionaries. ♦

B&A

Where Was I?

The loss of distinction in the end of community.

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

If ever a topic was born familiar, this book would qualify. The paradox is easily explained. The title of this collection of essays embodies a truth that would have been undeniable before the age of technology swept over us. At the obvious level, there is the eternal human need for familiar settings in which we feel rooted, our own "briar patch," recalling Br'er Rabbit's crafty escape from the clutches of Br'er Fox. Or, at a loftier level, what Edmund Burke called "little platoons":

> To love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of all public affections . . . the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love of our country and to mankind.

Edwin M. Yoder Jr. is the author, most recently, of Vacancy: A Judicial Misadventure.

Why Place Matters
Geography, Identity, and Civic Life in Modern America
edited by Wilfred M. McClay and Ted V. McAllister
Encounter, 304 pp., $25.99

The fading distinctiveness of American places offers contributors of every specialty material to chew on here. The collection ranges from the fancied dangers of global positioning satellites to the vanity of highway building—that is, from the obvious to the eccentric. It originated at a 2010 colloquium at Pepperdine University's School of Public Policy.

The coordinates of spacial identity are, in principle, obvious—a complex web of kin and kind: family, education, ancestry, race (in its less toxic sense), and spoken accents—before Valley Girl patois blotted regional phonetics.

(Once, on a visit to Canada years ago, my mother drew a crowd in a hotel lobby when she asked directions in the liquid accents of central Georgia. It was a scene unimaginable today.) Television and "globalism" might have been expected, meanwhile, to acquaint even the untraveled with unfamiliar ways of speech or the beauty of manicured landscapes, as in rural England.

But so far, the trend is perverse. As an accompaniment of our fabled mobility (it is said that 30 million Americans change residence yearly), we move much too fast, and too frequently, to pause to savor landscapes or avoid disfiguring clutter. Every American city worthy of the name (or pretense) boasts an "international" airport, approached by a sprawl of jerry-built joints so stereotyped that if you came upon it blindfolded you could hardly distinguish Baltimore from Buffalo, or Charlotte from Kalamazoo. Even guidebooks and souvenir postcards, one essayist suggests, offer dull pristine perceptions of great spectacles such as the Grand Canyon.

Walker Percy once wrote that "the thing is no longer the thing as it confronted the Spaniard: it is rather that which has already been formulated—by picture postcard, geography book, tourist folders, and the words Grand Canyon. . . . If it looks just like the postcard, [the tourist] is pleased; he might even say, 'Why it is every bit as beautiful as a picture postcard.'"

In any discussion of place, towns and cities—what they look like and how we fit into them—are paramount. Half a century ago, a novice critic of "urban renewal," Jane Jacobs, published her seminal *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. It is much mentioned here. Jacobs was alarmed by the wanton surgery being performed on organic and functioning city neighborhoods. After a wave of scornful dismissal from the urban planners she targeted, the book proved her to be a prophetess, a Cassandra of the city, and quickly became a classic. Urban renewal in the 1950s and '60s was a well-intended form of social engineering that too often failed to take account of the hidden virtues of city neighborhoods.

This writer, inspired in part by Jacobs's eye-opening book, once described a typical sterilization of urban landscape which he had personally witnessed.

> Another cityscape . . . is Greensboro, North Carolina, in the 1940s when I was a boy growing up nearby. Often on Saturday my parents would drive into the city to shop, to see movies, to visit friends and relatives. Our route passed through the eastern reaches of the city, then as now a mainly black community. Colorful masses of people, many in Saturday finery, spilled from the shops into the sidewalks and . . . into the streets, celebrating the week's end. A white family felt no fear, no sense of distance, in their midst. But it was not much more than a decade later that this teeming cityscape . . . was designated a "slum" and for the very best of civic reasons subjected to "clearance" and "renewal." What had been a rich and varied scene . . . was transformed into a planned scene of green spaces, new buildings, and busy auto arteries. But in the process the rich life had vanished . . . [and] some sort of antiseptic blight had been produced. Streets were deserted and a vague apprehension seemed to hang in the air.

Harlem pedestrians (1940)

An abiding concern and another foe of civic integrity is rootlessness, so often the consequence of displacement. Simone Weil identified it years ago: "The French mystic," wrote Russell Jacoby, "devoted a book to the subject, *The Need for Roots* (1949). She saw the 'disease of uprootedness' as an ailment of the modern age." Whether it is nostalgia for homely landmarks or a state of spirit once known as accidie, "uprootedness" is a price that America pays for the social dynamism we cherish—the dynamism that Frederick Jackson Turner celebrated in extolling the frontier as the defining engine of American peculiarity.

But it is a running theme of these essays that we pay a price for the latest mechanism with the care and feeding of automobiles. At a certain tipping point, traffic overwhelms highway expansion, requiring ever more frantic efforts to keep up, exemplified by episodes of road rage on the choked commuter routes that are estimated to cost drivers a week's worth of time every year. Drive south from Washington in the early morning on Interstate 95—surely among the most hated interstates of all—and witness a congestion stretching halfway to Fredericksburg, 40 miles away. It is merely one of many.

The sum and substance of *Why Place Matters* is the idea that, while Jane Jacobs and other prophets of the perils of displacement have taught us to be wary of facile nostrums, there are always complications. They are the domestic counterparts of foreign venturers, high-minded and eager but sometimes oblivious to the difficulties that exist where strange customs and unfamiliar histories lurk. We are perennially surprised to find ourselves bereft of community spirit, "bowling alone," with old ties to "little platoons" frayed. Like a patient in the doctor's office, we can readily identify the complaints, the aches and pains of a dynamic age. The diagnosis is often obvious. But the prognosis and cure need work, and lots of it. ♦

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B&A

Jewel in the Crown

The sun never set on Winston Churchill's allegiance. **BY ROBERT WARGAS**

"Imperialist" is a dirty word, one of many clubs with which to beat one's opponents beyond the margins of society. And it is too easy to forget, in our solipsistic age, that the language of empire once aroused pride and dignity rather than guilt and shame. Lawrence James, a historian of unusual fairness, is in masterful form with this study of Winston Churchill's adoration for (and service to) the British Empire.

Its subtitle might seem an affront to those who want to remember Churchill as a statue of untarnished bronze, free from the taint of any taboo. This is, oddly, particularly true of Americans: I have heard several Britons say that one is more likely to find a Churchill devotee in the United States than in the United Kingdom. Even if this is hyperbole, it still reveals an important bit of truth: Churchill remains as much a figure of myth as of history.

Though the book contains no Marxist "anti-imperialist" posturing—the author holds much sympathy for the British Empire, a subject on which he has written several well-received volumes—James does not hide his subject's warts. Nearly all of Churchill's political views would, today, make him an untouchable public figure. His patriotism derived at least partly from his belief that the white race was specially endowed to civilize the world. Belief in one's necessary righteousness, of course, usually entails some necessary cruelty. Churchill, for instance, was prone to tirades about "worthless" Arabs and Indian "baboos." His time as an imperial servant included suppressing rebellions in places like Iraq, though James gives the lie to those who insist that Churchill gassed the Kurds as Saddam Hussein did.

Robert Wargas is a writer in New York.

Churchill and Empire
A Portrait of an Imperialist
by Lawrence James
Pegasus, 448 pp., $28.95

Churchill in India (1896)

"Liberal imperialist" would be the most accurate term for Churchill, who once wrote that the Raj had rescued India "from ages of barbarism, tyranny and internecine war." It was a distinctly Victorian view. As a writer and historian, Churchill betrayed a Whiggish belief in the empire's historical role as a vessel of liberty. An aspiring master strategist, he read the necessary literature: Edward Gibbon on imperial decline, Alfred Thayer Mahan on the importance of naval power. After a stint as home secretary, he became first lord of the Admiralty in 1911—a powerful position that afforded him control over the empire's external security. It was also the position in which he suffered one of the worst defeats of his career, as the author of the Gallipoli campaign.

It would take another world war to immortalize Winston Churchill as the tenacious, bulldog-jowled leader of Great Britain. He became prime minister in May 1940, on the same day the Germans invaded France and the Low Countries, and he immediately made himself minister of defense. This allowed him to circumvent the "backstairs intrigue" and "cancerous bickering" (as James calls it) of Britain's military commanders. In the author's estimation, two decisions by Churchill, made early in his premiership, were "war winners." One was his rejection of a negotiated peace with Hitler—a favorite point of contention among isolationists and revisionists—and the other was to court the United States for assistance, a necessity considering Britain's dire finances.

To the half-American Churchill, the United States was connected to Great Britain through shared blood and tradition. But the "special relationship" was then merely a suspicious one. Americans were not keen on helping the British Empire, and Franklin Roosevelt was ultimately motivated by realpolitik: The United States could not afford to see Hitler swallow Europe or the Axis control the Atlantic and Pacific with acquired Royal Navy assets. The Lend-Lease Act, passed by Congress in March 1941, ensured that Britain had the means to fight on; it also ensured that true defeat for the British Empire would come not in war but in peacetime.

The fall of Singapore to the Japanese in February 1942 was a humiliating loss for Britain and for Churchill, who called it "the greatest disaster to British arms in history." For many around the world, the episode meant that British imperialism was (in Walter Lippmann's words) "obsolete and obviously vulnerable." Japan would soon take over Borneo, the Gilbert Islands, Papua and New Guinea, and other British possessions.

American naval assistance in the Pacific helped repel Japanese task

NEWSCOM

forces, most famously at the Battle of Midway. More losses for the Axis would follow: Hitler's push to take Stalingrad, a move which would have secured a route through the Caucasus to precious Middle East oilfields, failed in February 1943, when 90,000 German troops surrendered. The empire was still alive, but for how long? Lend-Lease, after all, was not a charity program, and James is relentless in making sure the reader knows just how raw a deal it was for Britain. By the war's close, in 1945, the British owed a fortune, with many imperial assets, including gold reserves, having already been sold.

Throughout all this, Churchill remained fiercely protective of the troubled empire; reading about it is like watching a man frantically trying to steer an out-of-control car. In one of this book's finest chapters, James documents Churchill's attempts to hang on to the Raj. The chaos of world war had only emboldened the Indian independence movement, forcing Churchill to contend with Mohandas Gandhi, who was prepared even for Japanese occupation if it meant casting off British rule. One senses Churchill's desperate rage in these moments, summarized well by Leopold Amery, the secretary of state for India: "Winston . . . hated the idea of giving up all his most deeply ingrained prejudices merely to secure more American, Chinese and Left Wing support." Dependency breeds resentment, and even the pro-American Churchill seethed over what he saw as American attempts to steer British policy in India.

By the time of his death in 1965, Churchill had become an anachronism. The empire, the leitmotif of his passion and existence, had disappeared. In his nine decades of life, he had clung to the Victorian ethos of his youth, in which Britain took pride in its dominion. But the modern world had come to regard empire as a cruel and oppressive construct, and James's account of the public's staid reaction to Churchill's death makes it clear that, while he was indeed regarded as a brave national leader, his passion for imperial greatness had already become an embarrassment. ♦

B&A

Honey Trap

The buzz about bees is not necessarily good.

BY TEMMA EHRENFELD

Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee, / And live alone in the bee-loud glade, wrote W. B. Yeats while living in London. Nearly a century later, Sylvia Plath, who kept hives with her husband, composed five poems about bees in the very same house. To these Londoners, bees represented nature; yet at a time when bees are endangered around the world, they are thriving in big cities.

Among the curious facts recorded here is that Berlin (followed by New York) holds the world record for abundance and diversity of wild urban bees: Two hundred species forage in parks, botanical gardens, community and backyard gardens, window boxes, and weed-infested lots and roadsides. You'll also learn that bees can be solitary, that giant orchid bees make a deafening noise in tropical jungles, and that some bumblebees can fly through snowstorms.

But when we think of bees, we most often think of honeybees. Their hives are like cities: complex systems of many moving members that require constant coordination and food from far-flung terrain. Like all urbanites, honeybees appreciate a variety of food, and, as is the case with other kinds of bees, cities now offer them more kinds of plant life for foraging than suburbs and farmland do. That's fortunate, because the urban eco-chic taste for local food has created a boom in city beekeeping. The Paris Opera House keeps hives on its roof, and restaurants are rolling out signature dishes infused with rooftop honey. Yields are higher in Paris than in hives in the nearby countryside, probably because city flowerpots provide a rich diet: An analysis of pollen in Parisian honey revealed more than 250 different floral sources, compared with 15 to 20 in batches from rural areas.

Outside cities, honeybees (and other bees) are dying fast. In the spring of 2006, many beekeepers around the globe went out to their apiaries and found that the adult worker bees had mysteriously vanished and presumably died. The trouble, now called "colony collapse disorder," has continued, with about a third of all colonies dying each year. The danger goes well beyond shortages of honey: Plants need bees to reproduce.

Colony collapse disorder has not been attributed to any one pest, disease, or manufactured toxin; researchers suspect a baleful synergy among pesticides, or between pesticides and pests. One study found 121 pesticides in a sample of beeswax comb. Are we approaching a tipping point in chemical overload—and not just for bees? Mark L. Winston thinks so. Corn is vulnerable, he says, for the same reasons bees are: Ever more pests and diseases lead farmers to apply more toxic chemicals, inducing resistance, while "too excellent weed control" eliminates habitats that sustain nature's controls.

Like many calls for change, *Bee Time* is repetitive, without taking on opposing viewpoints. Winston's proposed remedies are, however, relatively modest. Industrial-scale honeybee keepers move their hives from place to place and rely on chemical tools; he urges a

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Bee Time
Lessons from the Hive
by Mark L. Winston
Harvard, 296 pp., $24.95

shift to smaller, stationary operations and to cropping systems interspersed with hedgerows and blooming weeds. Naturally, he'd also like us to emulate the honeybee social model, at least a bit. Like human societies, hives need order; if a queen dies suddenly, bees can collapse into violence, attacking each other and the beekeepers.

But the life of a bee is better than you'd guess. Despite the name, worker bees spend two-thirds of their time doing nothing—creating a reserve for periods of stress in the hive. Being a "worker bee" suggests boredom, doing just one thing, but the worker bee's primary job evolves throughout its life, which runs about a month. Would life be better if we weren't overworked and experienced automatic career change as we aged? Winston also makes much of the fact that bees never multitask. They're egalitarian, too.

His portrait of an ongoing conversation within the hive is, indeed, striking. When worker bees meet, they frequently stroke each other's antennae (which receive pheromones and floral odors) for as much as a minute, while extending their long mouth parts to lick each other's tongues and legs, which can taste of fresh nectar and pollen. Organs in the legs detect vibrations directly from other bees or transmitted through the comb. A returning forager may tremble or shiver if receiving bees aren't taking her nectar load fast enough.

That bees communicate was first established more than a century ago by the philosopher Maurice Maeterlinck, who let a foraging honeybee find a dish of sugar syrup and return to the hive, then trapped her as she left it so she couldn't lead the way for others. Still, bees from her hive quickly appeared at the dish. Had they followed a smell? Evidently not—because they showed up even when the dish was many miles away, and downwind.

Since then, scientists have concluded that honeybees report on food sources by dancing. A forager back at the hive will grasp another worker and vibrate, signaling that it should migrate to the site of a "figure eight waggle dance." In the dance, a bee vibrates while running forward, indicating the distance to the food, and then turns and circles back to the starting point. Observing bees can see the direction of the food by the angle of the dance on the comb relative to the sun's position. If the food is especially good, the bee vibrates more intensely and makes more circles. The observers sometimes squeak, apparently asking for details; the bee responds by giving the squeaker a sample of her load.

Sometimes Winston goes too far afield—the chapters on bee-inspired art, religion, and social work projects are dull—but most of the time his lyricism inspires awe of these necessary insects, as when he describes approaching a hive:

> First you hear the sound, the low hum of tens of thousands of female workers. . . . Smells and textures bombard the senses next, the sweet odors of beeswax and honey, the stickiness of plant resins. . . . And then there are the bees themselves, walking over your hands and forearms . . . the subtlest of touches as their claws lightly cling and release, the gentlest of breezes as their wings buzz before taking flight. ♦

B&A

Goodbye, Colossus

The last chapter of Philip Roth's fiction.

BY DANIEL ROSS GOODMAN

"If we had a keen vision of all ordinary human life," George Eliot wrote in *Middlemarch*, "it would be like hearing the grass grow or the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of the roar which lies on the other side of silence." To read Philip Roth has been to hear your own heart beat; for over 50 years he has been the irrepressible roar inside our own heads. With the announcement in 2012 of his retirement, I fear the death of the roar that lies on the other side of Roth's silence.

Roth has received almost every literary award imaginable: a Pulitzer Prize, two National Book Awards, three PEN/Faulkner awards, and a National Medal of the Arts (from two different presidents). Although Roth has not won the Nobel Prize, it's safe to say that he has won it in the hearts and minds of his readers, if not yet from the finicky clique in Stockholm. And he is one of the only writers to have had his work anthologized by the Library of America while he is still living.

Roth Unbound
A Writer and His Books
by Claudia Roth Pierpont
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 368 pp., $27

In 2006, the *New York Times Book Review* asked literary scholars, writers, and critics to name "the single best work of American fiction published in the last 25 years." The book that received the most votes was *Beloved* by Toni Morrison; but the author who received the most votes was Philip Roth—although the votes for his work were split amongst an astounding seven different novels.

Such objective metrics confirm what, for many, has long been a subjective reality: Philip Roth is the Beethoven of modern American literature. In my view, at least, there is Roth and then there is everybody else. Yes, we enjoy the brilliant Mozartean concertos of John Updike, but nothing quite does it like the Beethovian

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reverie of Roth. Nowhere else do we find the ferocious passion and pathos, the unfiltered bathos and manic wit, the unsparing humor and surprising compassion, and the relentless, propulsive, vitalistic force of *life* as we find it in Roth's fiction. His may not be the literary art of, say, Thomas Mann, but it feels animated as if by the life-force itself. If we read (as Harold Bloom has written) "in search of more life," when we arrive at Roth, we have found it.

I use the classical music analogy deliberately, for no one who has read Philip Roth can forget the use to which he puts classical music, from Amy's virtuosic performance of Chopin's Scherzo No. 2 in *The Ghost Writer* and Dawn's Chopin polonaise recital in *American Pastoral* to Yefim Bronfman's resounding rendition of Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto and the poignant performance of Mahler's Third Symphony in *The Human Stain*. Roth knows his classical music, and a palpable love of it saturates his novels to such an extent that it is hard to believe that Roth grew up without hearing any of it in his house. This is but one of several fascinating *aperçus* found in Claudia Roth Pierpont's informative and insightful study.

The publication of *Roth Unbound* coincided with Roth's announcement of his retirement, as well as his 80th birthday, lending the book the aura of a Festschrift. But it is not an academic tome. Pierpont (no relation to Roth) is a *New Yorker* writer with a doctorate in art history but a journalist by trade; and though the book is filled with astute observations, it is not a work of literary criticism per se. Those seeking an academic study of Roth are advised to turn to the journal *Philip Roth Studies* or to works like Steven Milowitz's *Philip Roth Considered* (2000). Nor is *Roth Unbound* the definitive biography. Nevertheless, it is an impressive and comprehensive overview of Roth's life and work that sets a high standard for Roth's authorized biographer, Blake Bailey.

Roth Unbound will delight devotees seeking to deepen their appreciation of the novels and will serve as a gateway into the world of Roth for those who have yet to enter that exhilarating, infectious domain. Contrary to his protestations in the *Zuckerman* novels, Roth is never dull; still, Pierpont enlivens her subject through judicious use of editorials, reviews, television clips, literary criticism, and interviews with the author himself.

Prior to 1969, Roth was regarded as an up-and-coming talent: He had written several different types of novels in several different voices, but he had yet to achieve a major breakthrough. With the publication of *Portnoy's Complaint*, Roth found his voice. *Portnoy*'s intimate, confessional first-person style was almost more shocking than its substance. Pierpont compares its seemingly natural yet technically complex literary style to Marlon Brando's superficially natural yet technically complex acting style. But a more apt artistic analogy might be to Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* or Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*.

Finally out of debt and an unhappy marriage, Roth bought new clothes and a new East Side apartment, entered into a new relationship, and took a trip to Europe. "I was dizzy," Roth is quoted as saying, "dizzy with success and freedom and money."

Unlike most of the other "provocative" novels of the era, *Portnoy* has not only survived but "shows signs of becoming a classic rather than a relic." Yet, interestingly, and despite the enduring popularity and eminence that *Portnoy* continues to bestow upon its author, Roth is only mildly sanguine about what the novel has meant for his legacy. He also believes that its most important scene—a brief episode in which Alex Portnoy's Uncle Hymie concocts a cruel ruse to separate Alex from the shiksa cheerleader he has fallen in love with—"was almost entirely overlooked and has nothing to do with masturbation." That subject, in fact, is *Portnoy*'s great red herring; it is not a novel about onanism but about Roth's *idée fixe*: fathers and mothers and sons, and Jewish identity.

Here, almost no detail of Roth's life goes unnoticed; nor does Pierpont neglect to critique Roth's lesser works: *The Great American Novel* (1973) is called a "headache-inducing farce" and a "giddy mess." Pierpont also disabuses readers of some of the unfounded speculations that have adhered to Roth over the years. He was not the promiscuous "sexual madman" that many *Portnoy* readers had assumed him to be. Roth's parents were not the caricatures that were Portnoy's parents: His mother was far from stereotypical, and many of his novels convey a deep affection, and occasional outpouring of longing, for his parents. He did, though, have a difficult relationship with his father, and the need to escape from his father's influence may partially account for the theme of self-creation that permeates his work.

Some would argue that Roth's greatest novel is *The Counterlife* (1986, the book that "changed everything" for him, says Roth); others vouch for *The Ghost Writer* (1979, a "nearly perfect" work, in Pierpont's opinion); still others choose *American Pastoral* (1997). For the record, I believe it is *The Human Stain* (2000). Of course, taste can be arbitrary, and critical opinions are ineluctably subjective. Yet for all those who deem *American Pastoral* Roth's *magnum opus*, there are those (like me) who cannot connect to Merry and Swede Levov but who *can* connect to the characters—even, yes, Delphine—of *The Human Stain*. Detractors criticize Delphine as an unbelievable character who downgrades the novel's literary merit, but their belief that she is a caricature is misbegotten. Real-life Delphines do exist, and the fact that Roth's work encompasses multitudes—multitudes of opinions and multitudes of characters—is a continuing testament to his richness and diversity.

"The struggle with writing is over," Roth told the *New York Times* last year, "and it gives me much strength." His readers, meanwhile, can draw strength from the knowledge of the 31 compositions we continue to plumb. Our struggle to understand Philip Roth is just beginning. ♦

B&A

Florentine Frustration

The loneliness of the long-distance art lover.

BY JOSHUA GELERNTER

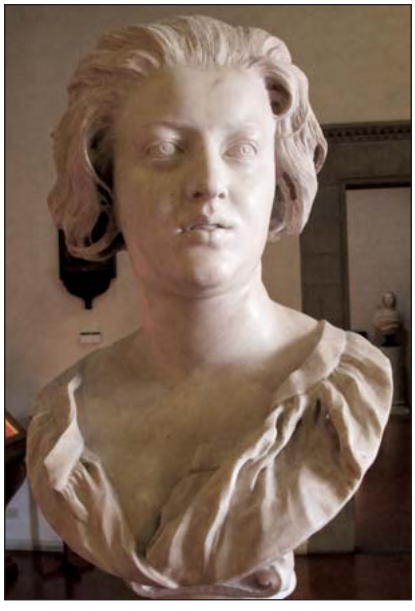
I live in Connecticut, and I don't travel much outside of the Northeast corridor. But through a few strokes of luck, and some happy happenstance, I've been in Florence five times in the last seven years.

Florence is an art city; the city itself is art, and its museums are the best in the world. It has the most famous cathedral south of Chartres, as well as Botticelli's best work, several important Leonardos, most of Michelangelo's greatest sculptures, and an unparalleled collection of the great pre-Renaissance proto-prospective painters.

It also has Gian Lorenzo Bernini's best bust, which is arguably his finest sculpture. Bernini was perhaps the greatest sculptor who ever lived—although he is more often listed as number two, behind Michelangelo—and he was a part-time bastard: His greatest bust is a racy portrait of his assistant Matteo Bonarelli's wife, Costanza. While she and Bernini had an affair, Bernini carved the bust for his personal collection. It shows Costanza with her hair tousled and her blouse disheveled, open at the breast. She's caught midsentence, with her eyes wide and her lips curving to speak. No other sculpture in the world looks so alive and so animated.

Not long after carving it, Bernini found out that his paramour Costanza was also having an affair with his younger brother, Luigi. Bernini chased his brother through the streets of Rome, into St. Peter's, and tried to beat him to death with an iron rod. Costanza's punishment, in kind, was being visited by one of Bernini's servants who, at his master's behest, slashed her face with a razor.

In the aftermath, a heartbroken



Costanza Bonarelli (ca. 1636)

Bernini couldn't stand to look at his Costanza bust, so he sold it to the Medicis, which is how it ended up in Florence. Which is lucky, art historian Simon Schama points out, because Bernini might otherwise have smashed it to pieces. Now it lives in the Bargello Museum: "Costanza that once was," Schama says, "and for us, always will be."

Except that she won't, because the room she's kept in has been closed for six years.

Seven years ago, on my first journey to Florence, I found her hidden in a back room on the Bargello's top floor. Five years ago, on my second trip, I found that her room was closed because the rooms between it and the stairway were being refloored. Four years ago, on my third trip, the flooring was ongoing, and last year, it was finished. But Costanza's room was still closed, and none of the museum guards could tell me why.

A few weeks ago, I was again in Florence, and a guard found me yanking on the medieval wooden door to Costanza's gallery, refusing to believe that after all this time the door could still be locked. He didn't speak any English, but he was very friendly and very accommodating, and, after a conversation of hand gestures and a little French, he went off and found a key, unlocked the door, and let me in. When I was finished, I shook his hand, thanked him, and went away a happy man: The Costanza blockade had finally ended.

The next day, I went to look at her again. The gallery was locked, and my guard was nowhere to be found. I asked six other guards to let me in. All politely declined. I went to the administrators' offices, trying to find out what was going on. They were empty. I tried the guards again, for information. That was a challenge. About half of the guards were either talking on their cell phones or sleeping, and the ones who were free spoke less and less English the less they felt like talking.

The only thing they could tell me for certain was that the room was closed and not scheduled for reopening. None knew why. One guessed that it might be because they don't have enough guards, which would have been more plausible had more guards been awake.

Here is my conclusion: Six years ago, a minor construction project was undertaken, requiring the Costanza room to be closed. Because the minor construction project was undertaken in postwar Italy, it took several years to complete. By the time the project was finished, no one at the museum could remember why the room had been closed. They don't require a reason; it's simply the status quo. And none of them seems to mind or care.

Perhaps living in Florence anesthetizes one to art. The exception to all this, of course, was my hero-guard—but perhaps he was some sort of angelic apparition. I returned twice to the museum but couldn't find him. My letters to the Bargello have gone unanswered. Next, I will be writing to Florence's mayor. In the meantime, I have a new appreciation for the decline and fall of the Florentine Republic. ♦

SAILKO

Joshua Gelernter is a writer in Connecticut.

PARODY

"Talks between Burger King and Tim Hortons to merge in a tax-advantaged inversion deal drew quick condemnation from some lawmakers Monday, increasing the pressure on Congress or the Obama administration to act."
—Wall Street Journal, *August 26, 2014*

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President launches war against Burger King

BUFFETT IN CROSSHAIRS

Wendy's locations declared landmarks

BY ROBERTO A. FERDMAN

AKRON, OH — "As if this summer couldn't get any worse," President Obama said at a rally in downtown Akron. "It's like a punch in the gut—a whopper of a punch. A company moves its headquarters overseas just to avoid paying taxes. Who does that?" The crowd of several dozen boos in response. "But I tell you what," the president continued. "We're going to have it *our* way!" He then took a bite of a Wendy's Baconator as the parking lot erupted in cheers.

The president was speaking in the parking lot of a Wendy's fast-food restaurant, expressing his outrage that Burger King Worldwide, Inc., is relocating its headquarters to Canada, following its acquisition of Canadian chain Tim Hortons. (Canada's nominal corporate tax rate is 26.3 percent while the U.S. rate is 39.1 percent—the highest among OECD members.)

"Hortons hears a who?" Obama taunted. "Oh, it hears me loud and clear!" The audience then applauded (the crowd consisted of a few of the president's supporters, two minivans stuck in the drive-thru lane, and a busload of second-graders on a class trip). The president closed by urging everyone to "skip the Canadian bacon and go for the Baconator!"

President Obama blasts Burger King at a Wendy's in Akron.

"Republicans are suggesting we lower the tax rate—like that's going to solve anything," scoffed White House press secretary Josh Earnest. "Instead, we need new legislation that will make it harder for companies to relocate in the first place. We need to lock 'em down and tax overseas profits, too." He added, "The president is confident the business environment would remain friendly."

Earnest said he's never seen Obama this agitated. "The president had planned to golf at nearby Rosemont Country Club—he canceled those plans." When asked about the role of Warren Buffett, whose company Berkshire Hathaway partly owns Burger King, Earnest said the president was greatly disappointed. "The president feels betrayed. He's also been considering sending out a commando unit in order to retrieve Mr. Buffett's Medal of

HOT 'N' JUICY CONTINUED ON A6

Lois Lerner's BlackBerry 'obliterated'

Destruction by microwave beams 'standard procedure'

the weekly Standard
SEPTEMBER 8, 2014