

**A WAR PRESIDENT—  
SORT OF**  
STEPHEN F. HAYES • WILLIAM KRISTOL

the weekly

# Standard

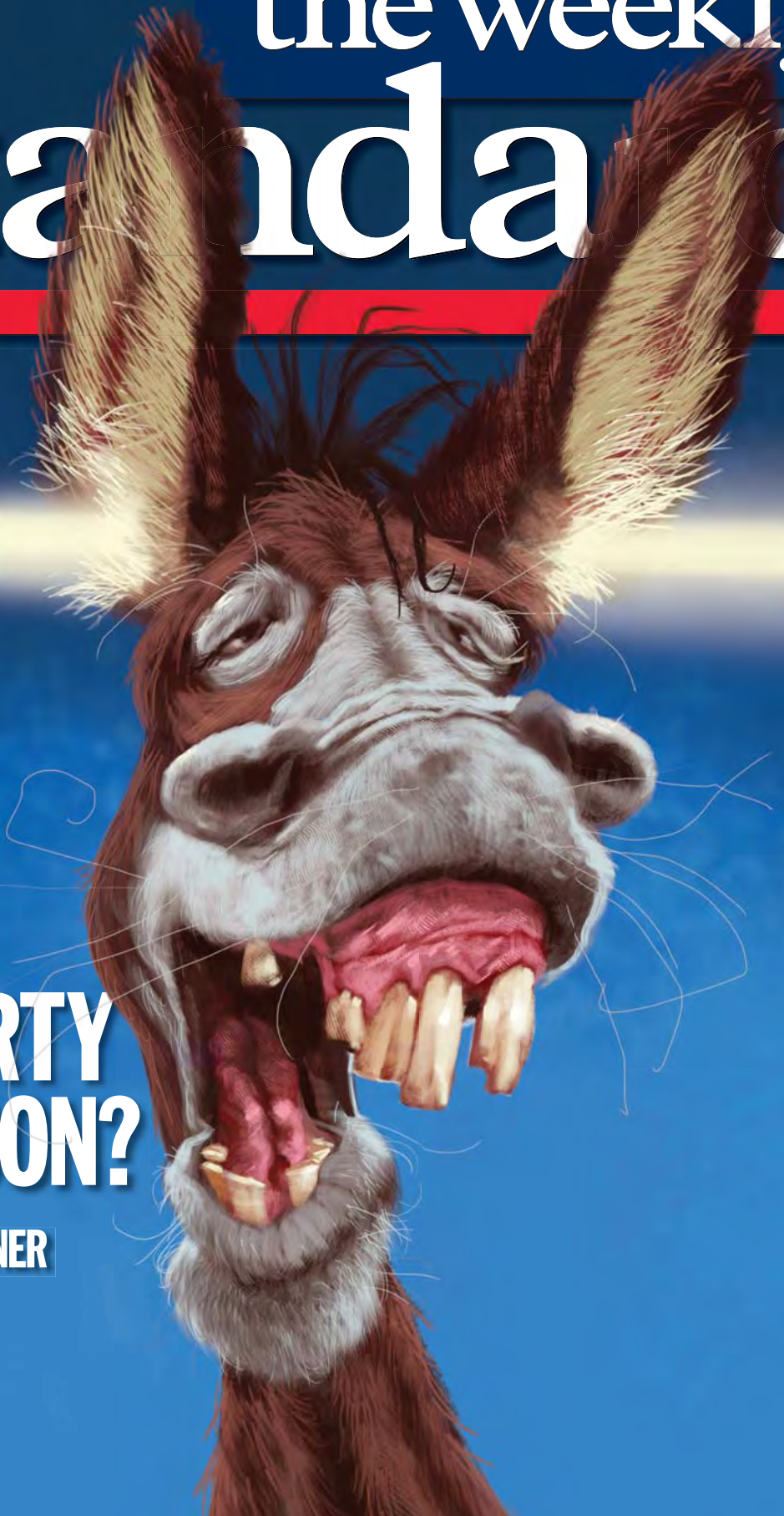
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## THE PARTY OF REASON?

BY JEFF BERGNER



# Contents

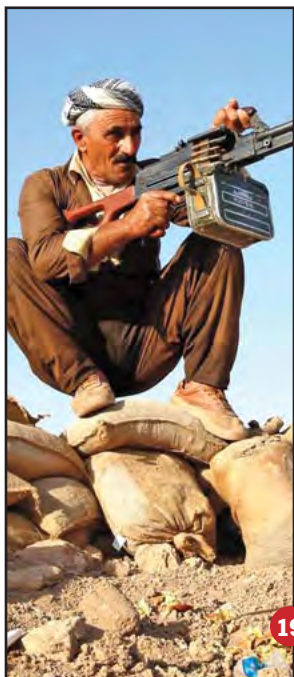
September 22, 2014 • Volume 20, Number 2



- 2 The Scrapbook *EV 2: Electric Boogaloo, the Bushitler curriculum, & more*  
5 Casual *Matt Labash, maximal minimalist*  
6 Editorials  
*A War President—Sort of* **BY STEPHEN F. HAYES**  
*American Leadership at Its Best* **BY WILLIAM KRISTOL**

## Articles

- 8 Leave No Voter Behind **BY MARK HEMINGWAY**  
*Ben Sasse's exhaustive Nebraska Senate campaign*  
10 From Blue to Red Overnight **BY FRED BARNES**  
*The fall of the Arkansas Democrats*  
12 Unsavory Bedfellows **BY LEE SMITH**  
*It's not easy protecting the Christians of the Middle East*  
13 Crony Capitalism Has Deep Roots **BY JAY COST**  
*The Ex-Im Bank and the trouble with the Republican party*  
15 Getting to Know the Chinese Navy **BY STEVE COHEN**  
*Sharing carrier secrets is a bad idea*  
17 The Ruggers of the Great War **BY C.J. CIARAMELLA**  
*They didn't let the old game down*  
19 At the Kurdistan Front **BY JONATHAN SPYER**  
*Holding the line against the Islamic State*



## Features

- 22 The Party of Reason? **BY JEFF BERGNER**  
*It's not the Democrats, despite their self-flattering claims*  
26 Getting There **BY JAMES C. CAPRETTA & YUVAL LEVIN**  
*How to transition from Obamacare to real health care reform*

## Books & Arts

- 30 The Misery Index **BY WRAY HERBERT**  
*Why aren't we doing more to relieve pain?*  
32 Refracted Glory **BY JAMES M. BANNER JR.**  
*Napoleon on the downward slope*  
33 Oneself in Others **BY JAMES BOWMAN**  
*The unintended consequences of reading George Eliot*  
35 Eager to Please **BY JAMES GARDNER**  
*Jeff Koons and the kitchen-sink approach to art*  
36 Here They Stood **BY MARK MAIER**  
*Confessions of a literary pilgrim*  
38 Westlake Lives! **BY SUSAN VASS**  
*Tasty morsels from the late master's larder*  
39 The Big Slide **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**  
*Fans aren't exactly flocking to the cineplex*  
40 Parody *Because I Came So Close Last Time*



**COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY**

# EV 2: Electric Boogaloo

Back in the Edenic days when the rise of the oceans began to slow and the planet began to heal and the people of this great nation were as one—way back in January 2011, that is—President Obama called on Americans to put one million electric cars on the road by 2015. It was a typically Obamian diktat, addressed to both producers and consumers, greasing both sides with other people’s money, and bearing no relation—none at all—to reality.

Well, 2015 is less than four months away, and like many other parts of the Obama fever dream, the idea of making and selling a million electric vehicles in America has turned out to be a mass delusion.

The Electric Drive Sales Association, the industry booster that puts these things in the most favorable light, recently crowed that there are now 246,426 plug-in EVs on the road in America. But even that likely overstates the appeal of the vehicles. Nobody really knows how many of these cars were sold to actual consumers, rather than corporate fleets. But a 2013 study by the firm Frost & Sullivan suggested that about half of all EV sales to that point had been to fleets.

Corporations may or may not be people, but their fleet purchasing decisions are often driven by the kind of second-order considerations that don’t move actual consumers. For instance, in 2010 General Electric announced

that it would purchase 25,000 EVs by 2015. The announcement was made, to much fanfare, by CEO Jeff Immelt, who at the time was a member of the president’s economic advisory board



Only 999,997 to go

and the following year would be promoted to chairman of Obama’s Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. It’s unclear whether G.E. made good on Immelt’s promise. But if they did, it means that G.E. now owns 10 percent of all the electric cars in America.

And it’s not just private-sector corporations. In Washington state, Massachusetts, California, and elsewhere, government agencies have bought up electric cars, too.

It’s been obvious from the beginning that the president’s goal of one million electric vehicles by 2015 was nonsense. And his administration has been trying to walk it back for almost two years. In 2013, an Energy Department official told Reuters, “Whether

we meet that goal in 2015 or 2016, that’s less important than that we’re on the right path to get many millions of these vehicles on the road.” Which is a nice sentiment, except that “we” won’t meet that goal in 2016. Or 2017. Or 2018. Or possibly even by the end of President Clinton’s second term.

Lost in the EV mania is the fact that plug-in electric sales seem to be coming at the expense of hybrid electric sales. Meaning that it isn’t people who would otherwise buy a Ford F-150 who are buying electric cars—it’s people who would otherwise be buying a Prius. From 2013 to 2014, the sale of all “electrified vehicles”—that is, both plug-ins and hybrids—declined just slightly. The number of plug-ins increased

slightly, year-on-year, from 29,917 in 2013 to 40,349 in 2014. (For a sense of scale, Ford’s F-series pick-up trucks sell about 50,000 units per month.) But the decline in hybrids swamped those gains, as sales dropped from 350,530 to 327,418.

Which means that even by its own standards of environmental do-gooderism, electric cars are over-promising and under-delivering.

By the by, when we said that America wouldn’t hit one million electric cars until the end of President Clinton’s second term, we meant President Chelsea Clinton. Because at the pace they’re going now, we won’t hit a million electric cars in America until 2030. ♦

## Berkeley and Free Speech

The 50th anniversary of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement is upon us, and we’re willing to concede that the founders of the movement

had a good slogan—even if it pains THE SCRAPBOOK to contemplate the damage done by “campus activists” since then. Whether the social and political change it foments is good or bad, free speech is obviously preferable to any censorious alternative.

Well, maybe not so obviously. Thus the specter of contemporary liberals who go out of their way to remind people that they are the inheritors of a tradition of free speech that, by any objective standard, they no longer believe in. And they refuse

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to see the contradiction between free speech and their own authoritarian impulses—whether it’s trying to out-law political campaign spending they dislike or inveighing against unpopular opinions as “hate speech.”

By these lights, UC Berkeley chancellor Nicholas Dirks’s September 5 email acknowledging the anniversary was a real beaut. “As we honor this turning point in our history,” Dirks writes, “it is important that we recognize the broader social context required in order for free speech to thrive.” You can probably guess where this is heading.

“The boundaries between protected and unprotected speech, between free speech and political advocacy, between the campus and the classroom, between debate and demagoguery, between freedom and responsibility, have never been fully settled,” Dirks says. This is a truism, and it fails to acknowledge that these issues are far more settled than, say, supporters of unconstitutional campaign finance laws and university chancellors who promulgate campus “speech codes” would have you believe.

Dirks’s clarifications are even less helpful. “Specifically, we can only exercise our right to free speech insofar as we feel safe and respected in doing so, and this in turn requires that people treat each other with civility. . . . Insofar as we wish to honor the ideal of free speech, therefore, we should do so by exercising it graciously.” It is emphatically not true that the right to free speech depends on whether or not you are in a safe environment. Your right to free speech predates and stands apart from any government that threatens it, and history is full of heroes and martyrs who can testify to that. Patrick Henry would probably agree that “Give me liberty insofar as I feel safe and respected in speaking up!” doesn’t quite have the same ring to it as the original.

The call for civility is actually a fine thing, if you value civil society. It’s pretty hard, however, to assume such benevolent motives for a



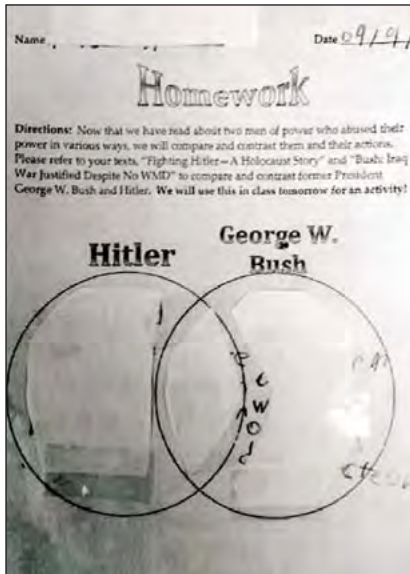
guy who, again, enforces a campus speech code as part of his professional obligations at a taxpayer-funded institution. Campus speech codes are routinely abused, and their legality is definitely not a settled question. In this context, a call to civility carries with it the whiff of cordite from a warning shot.

The kids at Berkeley in 1964 at least had enough understanding of their rights to stand up and claim them. Today, the kids at Berkeley have had their understanding of free speech warped by guardians such as Dirks, and the few kids who do have unpopular opinions express them at their peril. ♦

## The Bushitler Curriculum

It has been a constant refrain from the president’s supporters that Barack Obama has been subject to levels of criticism that no other president has had to confront. To that end, we refer you to *Daily Beast* columnist Michael Tomasky, a usually sensible, middle of the road liberal as it happens, who opined late last year: “To people on the left, Bush was embarrassing. To people on the right, though, Obama is a menace. They are different—and yes, the latter is worse than the former.”

This is laughable, but on a more



serious note, we sincerely hope Tomasky has made a full recovery from that Rip Van Winkle episode he must have suffered from during the George W. Bush years.

Case in point: Last week, a sixth-grade public school teacher in Washington, D.C., sent home this homework assignment:

Directions: Now that we have read about two men of power who abused their power in various ways, we will compare and contrast them and their actions. Please refer to your texts, "Fighting Hitler—A Holocaust Story" and "Bush: Iraq War Justified Despite No WMD" to compare and contrast former President George W. Bush and Hitler. We will use this in class tomorrow for an activity!

Just in case the comparison wasn't explicit enough, below the instructions there was a Venn diagram,

two overlapping circles, one labeled George W. Bush and the other Hitler. Well, we suppose it's true that both men were teetotalers and amateur painters, but that's obviously not the comparison the teacher had in mind.

It's fair to say that both Obama and Bush have received their share of over-the-top, paranoid criticism. For better and for worse, that comes with the job. But you could also assess that criticism in relation to the astounding levels of unwarranted veneration that Obama has received. To cite one relevant example, Obama has at least 14 public schools already named after him to George W. Bush's 1. Nor were Bush's supporters as delusional in their defenses of him. And we're frankly tired of playing the "If this happened under Bush" game, but the smart money says that now that the teacher and school system have apologized, there will be nothing more heard of this incident. There's almost no scenario we can conceive of in which a teacher who compared Obama to Hitler this explicitly wouldn't be sent packing.

We don't think engaging controversial topical politics is generally a wise strategy for teaching sixth-graders, but we'll note that a far more interesting comparison would be Bush and Obama. Listing the ways in which Obama decried Bush's supposed abuses of power, assumed office, and promptly exceeded any of Bush's supposed abuses of executive authority would be a worthy assignment.

Postscript: THE SCRAPBOOK is heartened that the assignment came to light because a parent blew the whistle—even in liberal Washington! ♦

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## Less Is Less

The surest way to know who you are is to understand who you are not. For as long as I can remember, I've thought myself a simple man. I prefer hamburgers to fancy cheeseburgers, with all their dolled-up, dairy-fied excess. I have a "Simplicity" calendar with lots of Lao Tzu quotes. I would rather micturate outdoors than indoors, as it connects me to the land while keeping down the weeds. And as long as we're showing our simplicity cards, I would rather say "squirt" than "micturate."

In short, I subscribe to Thoreau's philosophy: "Simplify, simplify." Or as we true minimalists say: "Simplify." I am not a materialist. I labor to stay content within each moment, so that when reading Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh on mindfulness, I try not to let my mind wander. Though sometimes it does. Such as when hearing the neighbors pull up in their spanking new Infiniti QX80. I don't keep up with the Joneses, which would be both difficult and expensive. But envying/resenting them is easy and costs me nothing.

Recently, however, I had a rude awakening when cleaning out my study and car, neither of which I'd seen the floor of in some years. Aside from my necessary possessions—fly rods, splitting wedges, chloroform (the usual)—there were three-year-old newspapers, ratty T-shirts I hadn't worn since Bush the Elder was president, orphaned power cords to now-defunct technologies. And that was for starters. After filling 19 trash bags of this stuff, I realized I'm a different kind of minimalist, the kind they call a maximalist. It's not that I acquire things for the sake of acquisition. It's just that once things have outlived

their utility, I reward their loyal service by not throwing them away.

But I'm at peace with my failed minimalism, after observing the professional minimalists' hustle. Minimalism—not of the Frank Stella/Raymond Carver variety, but of the de-cluttering/Simple Living kind—has become the hipster's staple lifestyle-porn. And as with everything else hipsters have ruined, from farm-to-table-restaurants to grow-



ing beards, they've de-simplified the once-elegant idea of simplicity. Entire libraries of books are now written on how you need to discard your library. A glance at Amazon shows that 23 books on minimalism were published last month alone.

That's a lot of words being marshaled to basically say: Shed your excess. And among the wordiest of all is a duo calling themselves The Minimalists, two thirtysomething corporate-cubicle refugees who threw out 90 percent of their possessions and moved to a cabin in Montana. Pared down and shaped up, they now follow their dreams, which, best I can tell, involve making you feel like a moral failure for not following theirs. (I'm being reductive, but since The Minimalists say less is more, they should applaud.)

In three years' time, they have

become exemplars of the simple life—if your idea of simple living is giving TED Talks, going on 72-city meet-up tours, blogging incessantly about your lifestyle choices, patching together said "essays" into books (five and counting since 2011), and imploring readers to give you good Amazon reviews. All while boasting about how you no longer have an Internet connection in your home, even as you're eternally available on Facebook/Pinterest/Instagram and any one of the eight separate Twitter accounts you service. This, in order to exhibit "what remains"—the raw, vital essentials that give life true meaning and that you post pictures of online, so that you start sounding like the anorexic supermodel who, in religiously rejecting food, ends up obsessing about it even more than the sweatpanted butterball with a Western X-Tra Bacon Thickburger® in one hand and a bag of doughnuts in the other.

Oh, and The Minimalists also offer, for a fee, to mentor you online or teach you how to write better. Though it's difficult to imagine the sad case who would turn to writing coaches capable of this: "And thus the American dream is a misnomer. . . . [T]here is blood on the flag, our blood." To which a good American, doing his patriotic best, might respond: Why not buy a new flag at flagstore.com?

All this monastic minimalism is rather exhausting. Even in the downturn of our Gilded Age, it's easy to forget that half the world still lives on two dollars a day—minimalists not by choice or TED Talk, but by geographic hard luck. It's enough to send me running for the Dollar General to buy a rackful of plastic crap I can't identify, likely made by Chinese orphans who are paid a couple yuan a week minus gruel and water. At least they can appreciate the value of superfluous possessions, not knowing the luxury of having any to shed.

MATT LABASH

# A War President—Sort of

On September 10, President Barack Obama announced in a prime-time television address that the United States would be going to war—sort of. He explained that terrorists in Iraq and Syria threatened the United States—sort of. He proclaimed that the United States would do everything in its power to eliminate that threat—except deploy the “modest contingent” of ground troops recommended by his generals. The president declared an ambitious objective—destroying the Islamic State—and laid out a strategy that almost certainly will not achieve it. And in so doing Obama assumed the mantle of war president—sort of.

America needed to hear from the president himself an acknowledgment that his approach to the global war on terror hasn't worked, that the reason he was delivering the speech at all is that he had misunderstood the threat. We needed to hear that he was committed to changing course and that, while we were not yet safer, we would be if we followed this new path.

Instead, we heard a president committed to selling failure as success, weakness as strength. It was the kind of speech a president would give if the White House discussions and debates preceding it had focused less on threats and war than on polls and politics. Before he even finished reading the second paragraph on the teleprompter in front of him—a brief recounting of “successes” in the overseas contingency operations he'd been conducting—Obama made clear that he is still not serious about winning the long war.

“We took out Osama bin Laden and much of al Qaeda's leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We've targeted al Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen and recently eliminated the top commander of its affiliate in Somalia. We've done so while bringing more than 140,000 American troops home from Iraq, and drawing down our forces in Afghanistan, where our combat mission will end later this year. Thanks to our military and counterterrorism professionals, America is safer.”

It is a passage almost breathtaking in its delusion.

America is not safer—not safer than a year ago, or six years ago, or a decade ago. That's an assessment shared by Obama critics and many supporters alike.

Senator Dianne Feinstein, chairman of the Senate

Select Committee on Intelligence, acknowledged that reality last year. CNN's Candy Crowley put the question to her directly. “The big question that's always asked: Are we safer now than we were a year ago, two years ago? In general?”

Feinstein, a Democrat, was unambiguous: “I don't think so. I think terror is up worldwide, the statistics indicate that. The numbers are way up. . . . There are more groups than ever and there's huge malevolence out there.”

She updated her assessment after gaveling in the annual “Worldwide Threats” hearing on January 23, 2014. Feinstein

worried about the “popular misconception that the threat has diminished,” and declared, “It has not.” Feinstein continued: “The presence of terrorist groups, including those formally affiliated with al Qaeda and others, has spread over the past year. While the threat emanating from Pakistan's tribal areas has diminished due to persistent counterterrorism operations, the threat from other areas has increased. In fact, terrorism is at an all-time high worldwide.”

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, the nation's top intelligence official and one who was appointed

by Obama, put it this way: “Looking back over my more than half a century in intelligence, I have not experienced a time when we have been beset by more crises and threats around the globe.” Among particularly acute threats: a more “globally dispersed” array of jihadist terror groups and the conflict in Syria, a “growing center of radical extremism, and the potential threat this poses to the homeland.”

Clapper was correct. The threat is greater today than it was just a few years ago.

Does Obama reject the assessment of his top intelligence adviser? Does he think we are in a better position than we were in January, when these two Obama supporters offered their assessments and when he himself dismissed the group we are now at war with—sort of—as junior varsity?

Equally troubling, Obama began a speech announcing America's return to war in Iraq by celebrating his withdrawal of combat troops from that country. Would he have us believe that the two events are unrelated?

If he believes this is a mere coincidence, he has little company. And it's a change from last month, when he attempted to deflect blame for the chaos by claiming it



*Not what I signed up for*

hadn't been his choice to remove troops from Iraq. Asked directly if he had "any second thoughts about pulling all ground troops out of Iraq," Obama disclaimed responsibility for the outcome. "As if this was my decision," he huffed.

Finally, can this president truly believe that removing troops from an Afghanistan teetering on a return to chaos will make us safer? Has he not learned the lessons of Iraq?

The day before the president's speech, *THE WEEKLY STANDARD* asked a senior official in the Afghan government what will happen if the United States follows through on Obama's promise to end the combat mission there. He was blunt: "It will be a disaster."

It may be comforting for the president to see these things as distinct and unrelated to one another, to imagine that the threats emanating from Iraq and Syria are new and unique, to pretend that his decisions have made us safer. But it shouldn't be comforting to the rest of us.

Ambivalence won't win this war. And self-delusion could lose it.

—Stephen F. Hayes

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# 'American Leadership at Its Best'

In his September 10 speech to the nation, President Obama said, "This is American leadership at its best: We stand with people who fight for their own freedom; and we rally other nations on behalf of our common security and common humanity."

Obama's wrong. Standing with people who fight for their own freedom and rallying other nations are good things. But they're not American leadership at its best. If they were, Americans would be prouder of Lend-Lease than of D-Day. Americans would respect the U.N. Security Council more than the U.S. Marine Corps. We don't. And we shouldn't.

Why did Obama say such a thing? Well, he must think, this is the 21st century. It's no longer necessary to "fight our country's battles / In the air, on land, and sea," or to be "First to fight for right and freedom / And to keep our honor clean." That was all so 19th century. That has no place in Obama's 21st century.

Unfortunately, Obama's 21st century is imaginary. Even Obama now realizes that there are retrograde forces around. Even Obama realizes that we'll still occasionally need to use military assets. President Obama says he isn't embarrassed

by that. He "could not be prouder of our men and women in uniform—pilots who bravely fly in the face of danger above the Middle East, and service-members who support our partners on the ground." That's our president's pride and joy: pilots who fly "above the Middle East" and "service-members" who support our partners on the ground.

Don't get us wrong. We at *THE WEEKLY STANDARD* are all for airpower. We would have used it in Syria long ago. We're all for supporting our partners on the ground. In fact, we're not the ones who dismissed the notion of helping Syrian freedom-fighters as a "fantasy." Over the years we have supported fighting side by side with Muslim partners in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Indeed, we're even willing to defend prudent and effective efforts at nation-building abroad. It's President Obama who urges us to turn inward: "America, it is time to focus on nation-building at home." The fact is, we at *THE WEEKLY STANDARD* are much more committed multilateralists and internationalists than President Obama.

But we're also much more committed to real American leadership than President Obama. He says, "Abroad, American leadership is the one constant in an uncertain world." Then he elaborates: "It is America that has the capacity and the will to mobilize the world against terrorists. It is America that has rallied the world against Russian aggression, and in support of the Ukrainian peoples' right to determine their own destiny." For President Obama, leadership is all mobilizing and rallying. Again, we're for that. But it doesn't always work. The world isn't rallying against Russian aggression. The world isn't mobilizing against ISIS. American leadership can't wait on the world. There are times we need to act, not simply to "mobilize" and "rally." This is such a time.

But we don't have a president willing to rise to the challenge. We have a president who thinks of himself as community-organizer-in-chief, who thinks leadership can be from behind. This is, to say the least, unfortunate. The prospect of two more years of President Obama is cause for alarm—not to say dread.

But we have to do what we can. So over the next two years we will oppose the president when we think it correct to do so and support him when he moves in the right direction, while often urging him to go further. And we will urge Republicans to embrace the responsibility to lay out a foreign and defense policy that meets the test of American leadership at its best—even if polls show some hesitancy on the part of the American people.

Last week, we quoted Yeats: "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." A reader emailed, suggesting we also keep in mind T.S. Eliot's famous lines: "This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper."

We may well have further setbacks over the next couple of years. But the world won't end. And Obama's whimper will not be America's last word.

—William Kristol

# Leave No Voter Behind

Ben Sasse's exhaustive Nebraska Senate campaign. BY MARK HEMINGWAY



*Lexington, Neb.*

It was a little disconcerting when Ben Sasse, the man most likely to be Nebraska's next senator, dropped down and did 60 push-ups. There was almost no warning this was about to happen, and it happened on board the campaign's RV, aka "The Benebago," cruising down a lonely road in the western part of the state. One of his campaign staffers joined him in the effort, though with four other people on board, there wasn't much room for one person to hit the deck, let alone two. Lest anyone think this strange, Sasse's loyal campaign strategist and push-up partner cracks wise: "We decided it would be awkward if one of us did push-ups, but if two people do it, we've created a subculture."

The truth is that it's hard to stay in shape in the middle of a political campaign, with the long hours and omnipresent fast food. As for Sasse's campaign style, well, the push-ups are all part of the plan. Sasse's Democratic

opponent, Dave Domina, is arguably the most prominent trial lawyer in the state and worth somewhere between \$20 million and \$82 million according to his financial disclosure forms. Everywhere Sasse goes, he promises voters, "We may be outspent, but we will not be outworked."

Sasse isn't kidding. He's vowed to be the only guy in Nebraska history (as far as the campaign can tell) to stump in all 93 counties. If you're familiar with Nebraska, what this means for campaign logistics is something between a slog and a waking nightmare. The Benebago hits a motel around 11 that night and is on the road again at 5:30 A.M. so Sasse can gladhand employees punching in at dawn at a Cabela's distribution center. It only gets more hectic from there. Eleven-and-a-half hours of drive time that day, not counting the campaign stops—a radio interview, two high school football games, a trip to a state park, and several visits to places that can't be found on Google Maps. Sasse's RV is chasing down potential voters in counties larger than Rhode Island with populations of just over 1,000.

Sasse's high-energy strategy appears to be working. A poll that came out September 2 has him up 26 points over Domina, but he's not taking anything for granted. Last fall, Sasse had 3 percent name ID in the state. His primary opponent, Shane Osborn, had the backing and resources of Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell. The *Omaha World-Herald* endorsed Sid Dinsdale, a wealthy businessman. Sasse didn't run a single negative ad despite being pummeled by his opponents. And then he stunned every observer in the country by capturing 49 percent of the vote in a three-way race, besting Dinsdale by 27 points and winning the vote in 92 of 93 counties.

Sasse didn't come from nowhere. He's a two-time Bush appointee, notably a former assistant secretary of health and human services. His health policy knowledge is encyclopedic, and he's one of the foremost experts on Obamacare. He worked for Boston Consulting Group and has successfully dabbled in private equity. He attended Harvard, Oxford, and Yale. He taught politics

GARY LOCKE

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at the University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs. In 2009, at age 37, he became president of Midland University in his hometown of Fremont, Nebraska. The college was on the verge of bankruptcy, and in a few years Sasse reformed tenure, doubled enrollment, and turned it into the fastest-growing college in the Midwest.

Sasse has considerable gifts, to be sure. But it wasn't his résumé that stunned the political establishment. It was his grit. His work ethic is not in doubt, and his time management strategies are legendary. (Typical email: "Can I call you? I have some time between 11:47 and 11:54.") Fortunately, Sasse is far from humorless about all this. The Benbago is adorned with tchotchkes from a year's worth of Nebraska adventures—shotgun shell Christmas lights, a stuffed pheasant on the dash, a Photoshopped poster of Sasse as Cousin Eddie from *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. The campaign staffers in tow seem to tolerate Sasse's mildly insane ideas about campaigning because they like being around him.

Last year, at the weekly Fremont Area Chamber of Commerce mixer just before he declared his candidacy, Sasse was conspicuously ambivalent about selling himself to strangers. He's a smart guy, and his head wanted to outrun his tongue, resulting in a car crash of dependent clauses. A year later, outside the high school football game in Valentine, Nebraska—*Go Badgers!*—Sasse is a well-oiled campaign machine, enthusiastically greeting voters. He loves to campaign at football games. As a Nebraska boy, he lives for the sport—he even quarterbacked the American football team at Oxford, where he ran a playbook based on legendary Cornhusker coach Tom Osborne's option offense. As a political candidate with a bottomless appetite for McKinsey and Co. studies, he likes the maximal efficiency of greeting everyone showing up for the game as they're funneled through a gate.

"Hi, I'm Ben Sasse, the Republican

nominee for the U.S. Senate. . . . Hi, I'm Ben Sasse, the Republican nominee for the U.S. Senate. . . . Hi, I'm . . ." Not even the occasional snarky comment from a Democrat throws him off his game. "Hey, I want your vote, too!" he shoots back. In his acceptance speech after his primary victory, Sasse quoted Jack Kemp: "We may not get every vote. But we'll speak to every heart, and we will seek to represent the entire American family." He greets voters as if he believes this. At least one of his college-age staffers quips that he's a cross between Jack Kemp and an aggressive panhandler. In any event, the sun is setting on the plains, you can hear the collective hopes and dreams of a small town after every dropped screen pass, and out in front of the stadium there's a guy shaking hands who's probably going to be the next Nebraska senator because the other guys didn't work nearly as hard at listening to their concerns. When the high school band strikes up "Don't Stop Believin'," it's enough to make Norman Rockwell cringe.

And yet, this is not exactly the best moment for a guy like Sasse to capitalize on energy or optimism. To paraphrase Barack Obama's last campaign slogan, Detroit is bankrupt, and the guys Osama thought were too radical for al Qaeda are beheading American journalists on YouTube. The fact that current events seem discordant with Sasse's campaign message is a sign of how bad things really are.

Here's Sasse at a town hall in Lexington, Nebraska: "I wanna fight for what I call a humble politics—a Washington that does fewer things, but does the more important things, more aggressively, more transparently, more urgently, with less screaming." He sets a low bar for what he can and should do as a senator. "I have no reticence at all in admitting that I don't have the answers for anything, because I don't think the vast majority of things can be solved in Washington, so I punt most all the hard questions back to the [state government]."

It's all very Nebraska nice, but the problem is that the federal

government is already punting its problems back to the states. In Lexington, people want to talk about immigration. And immigration some more. "What about the illegal immigration, Ben?" is actually a sigh in the form of a question. The people of Lexington have good reason to be upset. Last month the federal government dropped off 11 Central American kids in the rural Lexington school district without warning. The community is not exactly happy about shouldering what people quite justly see as an avoidable burden.

Sasse's responses are comparatively measured. "One of the things that I find so interesting is that the national media ask questions for the purpose of dividing things," he says. "Either there's this one perfect comprehensive solution that will solve everything, or you're against certain kinds of people." He's got his talking points on border security, and he rightly blames the president for not sending the message to Central America that our borders are not open to unaccompanied children. But there is just no easy answer for what he as a single senator can do about the problem.

Instead, Sasse makes a compelling argument that Washington hasn't even been having the necessary conversation with voters. People rolled their eyes when Sasse, a Bushie and college professor, was anointed the Tea Party outsider candidate, but he has earned the moniker in perhaps the most meaningful sense. His stump appearances invariably turn into mini-lectures on constitutional principles, such as the primacy of local communities, civil society, and natural rights.

Back in the RV, he's more overt about his disgust. Sasse says he's itching to fight religious liberty battles; he is troubled by the White House's latest attempt to rewrite and enforce Obamacare's birth control mandate even after being slapped down by the Supreme Court. He named his 3-year-old son Augustine, and if you want to get into the theological weeds, he's uncommonly thoughtful about the nature of the conflict between

the city of God and the city of man.

But as a matter of practical politics, Sasse's comments on religious liberty devolve into another civics lesson. "What's scary at this moment is the willingness of politicians to opportunistically, cravenly try to manipulate public opinion by saying things that just don't align with what American history has ever been about," he tells *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*. "Republican-Democrat issues aren't what motivate me first. What motivates me first is the identity we have as Americans, and we have to celebrate the Constitution, and we have to be having these discussions. And if we don't have more people who run for office for the purposes of having that civic conversation, we will lose the republic. I don't think that's going to happen, because I think people are going to demand more serious leadership that talks about these issues. The next generation does not wake up in the morning understanding American exceptionalism and the fact that natural rights predate government, and government is just a tool to secure those rights. And we've got to teach it."

Again, it's almost inspiring. But there's zero evidence that the American people generally are demanding more serious leadership, even if a lot of people are pinning their hopes on Sasse. Beltway cynics will note that civics lessons are not a political agenda. In fairness, Sasse has demonstrated considerable substance as an anti-Obamacare candidate, and he has lots of specific ideas about key policy areas that have been neglected by Republicans, such as education. But for now, he is declining to stake out a position on reauthorizing the Export-Import Bank and other hot topics where there's a fine line between "a humble politics" and playing coy. The political reality is that he's up 26 points in the polls. The smart play for now is probably a prevent defense. And if his campaign is any indication of what he'll be like as a senator, come November, he's going to be a man with a plan, and willing to work damn hard to achieve it. ♦

# From Blue to Red Overnight

The fall of the Arkansas Democrats.

BY FRED BARNES

*Little Rock*

In 1949, Harvard political scientist V.O. Key Jr. declared in his book *Southern Politics in State and Nation* that in Arkansas "we have the one-party system in its most undefiled and undiluted form." Other Southern states, nearly as Democratic in those days as Arkansas, gradually became Republican. Arkansas didn't. One-party Democratic rule in the state lasted another 60 years.

It was an amazing Democratic run that didn't end until 2010. Now Arkansas has emerged as one of the most reliably Republican states in the country. And if Republican Tom Cotton defeats Democratic senator Mark Pryor in November and Republican Asa Hutchinson captures the governorship, the GOP ascendancy will be complete. Both Cotton and Hutchinson are favored to win.

Not long ago this was Bill Clinton's state. Today he's a nonfactor politically. His influence in Arkansas is striking in its absence. "I don't think you can exaggerate how much the landscape has changed," says Janine Parry, a professor at the University of Arkansas and director of the annual Arkansas Poll.

The partisan realignment here is historic. No state has switched party control as suddenly and totally as Arkansas. Before the 2010 election, Democrats held both Senate seats, three of the four House seats, the governorship, and both chambers of the state legislature. Republicans feared they were doomed to permanent minority status.

After the 2010 election, they

stopped worrying. Republicans won all four House seats, and Republican John Boozman crushed incumbent Democratic senator Blanche Lincoln, 58 percent to 37 percent. Two years later, they took over the state legislature for the first time in 158 years. And Mitt Romney defeated President Obama in Arkansas, 61 percent to 37 percent.

But it was Republican success in down-ballot races that was most telling. In 2010, GOP candidates for lieutenant governor, secretary of state, and land commissioner were little-known, poorly funded, and expected to lose by roughly 60-40. To everyone's surprise, they won narrowly, with 51 or 52 percent of the vote.

This meant "the Republican base vote" had become a majority in Arkansas elections, says Dan Greenberg, the president of the Advance Arkansas Institute, a Little Rock think tank. The Republican advantage appears to have grown since 2010 to 5 or 6 percentage points.

Gloom has descended on the Democratic party. Its popular governor, Mike Beebe, 67, is leaving office and is unlikely to run again. Attorney General Dustin McDaniell, 42, was positioned to be his Democratic successor, but a sex scandal forced McDaniell to drop out of the governor's race. Democrats drafted ex-congressman Mike Ross as their gubernatorial candidate, though he had earlier declined to run.

Democrats now experience what Republicans did for decades in Arkansas: difficulty in recruiting candidates. In one legislative race, they settled for a candidate who's been married six times. If Republicans prevail in the 2014 elections, this problem will only get worse for Democrats.

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The political turnaround in Arkansas raises two questions: How did Democrats manage to stay in charge for so long, and what caused the reversal over the past four years? Arkansas voters had been “prepared” to vote for Republicans for a generation, according to Professor Jay Barth of Hendrix University. So what caused the delay?

Diane Blair, a University of Arkansas professor, pointed to the “Big Three” in Arkansas politics, Democrats Dale Bumpers, David Pryor, and Clinton. Bumpers and Pryor were governors before being elected to the Senate. Clinton was governor for 12 years, then president. “In sustaining their own appeal to the Arkansas electorate, the Big Three helped prolong the appeal of the Democratic label.” Blair, a close friend of the Clintons, died in 2000.

Indeed, a “Clinton effect” lingered for nearly two decades after he’d left the state. He “had a natural ability to humanize the Democratic party,” says Paul Greenberg, the editorial page editor of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. Also, a tradition of loyalty to leading Democrats tended to buttress the Democratic brand, Greenberg says.

State senator David Sanders, a Republican, credits Clinton and Democrats with skillfully making “adjustments” to maintain their power. After he was ousted as governor in 1980, Clinton did an “apology tour” around the state. And after insisting on keeping her maiden name, Hillary Clinton took her husband’s last name. Bill was reelected in 1982.

Like Clinton, Bumpers, David Pryor (father of Senator Mark Pryor), and other Democrats were “really good” at fashioning their views to accommodate their moderate-to-conservative state.

A GOP operative in Arkansas has a more sinister explanation of how Democrats hung on. Here’s his analysis:

Everybody in Arkansas was a Democrat. The most liberal and the most conservative people were in the same party. The rank and file were center-right in their philosophy. They weren’t going to vote for a Republican.

But the leaders were not center-right. The Democratic power structure was always left-leaning. They stayed in control through deception. They would act one way and [operate] another way.

The arrival of cable news, the Internet, and President Obama exposed the deception. Mark Pryor, who had no Republican opponent in 2008, and Blanche Lincoln had thrived when Republican George W. Bush was president. “They could ride the fence effectively,” Sanders says. Obama’s election made this practice



*Mark Pryor and Barack Obama survey the wreckage of Arkansas's Democratic party.*

perilous. It became difficult, as a Democrat, to oppose Obama, but dangerous in Arkansas to agree with him. Lincoln, for example, hedged for months on “card check,” which Obama and organized labor strongly supported. When she finally announced her opposition, it was too late.

Paul Greenberg says Clinton was especially clever at compromising and hiding his liberal streak. Obama couldn’t. It was “naked and obvious” that he was “a European-style social democrat,” thus ideologically at odds with Arkansas, Greenberg says.

By exploiting the gap between the state and Obama, Republicans have found the long-sought path to power. In 2010 and 2012, they ran against Obama and everything associated with his presidency, particularly

Obamacare. Again this year, it’s the heart of their election strategy.

Pre-Obama, Republicans in Arkansas had numerous false starts in their quest to match the success achieved in most Southern states years earlier. In 1968, Winthrop Rockefeller succeeded Democrat Orval Faubus as the first Republican governor since Reconstruction. A grandson of Standard Oil founder John D. Rockefeller, he had little interest in party building.

In 1993, Republican Mike Huckabee was elected lieutenant governor, and when Gov. Jim Guy Tucker resigned after being convicted of fraud, he stepped into the governorship. He was elected to two four-year terms, in 1998 and 2002. But on his watch, too, the GOP stagnated.

After the 2002 election, only 30 of the 100 members of the Arkansas House were Republicans. When Huckabee left office, there were 25. In 2008, Republicans won 30 seats.

Obama and his policies were a godsend. The Republican pickup of 15 seats in 2010 was unprecedented. Democrats still controlled the legislature and had the luxury of reapportioning the districts to their advantage. They failed. Republicans won 51 seats in 2012, a majority. In the state senate, the story was the same: Republicans rose from 8 to 15 to 21 (of 35) seats between 2008 and 2012.

In 2014, it’s unclear where Democrats like Pryor can go to piece together a majority. Rural Arkansas and the suburbs of Little Rock have turned Republican. “The narrative that the GOP is growing because of Obama’s skin color is poisonous, but Democrats rely on it,” Dan Greenberg (Paul’s son) says. There’s scant evidence it’s true.

Back when Key wrote his classic assessment of politics in the South, he noted that Arkansas Republicans were proud of their leaders, whom they saw as “sound, reputable [and] honest people,” mostly businessmen. “The people, however, who build political parties are politicians,” Key noted. Now Republicans in Arkansas have plenty of them. ♦

# Unsavory Bedfellows

It's not easy protecting the Christians of the Middle East. **BY LEE SMITH**

Last week, Senator Ted Cruz helped unmask an organization ostensibly founded to protect a Middle East minority. When the Texas legislator, the keynote speaker, asked the gala dinner audience comprising mostly Middle Eastern Christians at the In Defense of Christians conference in Washington to stand with Israel, many hooted and booed him off the stage. The hostility came as no surprise to me: When I found myself the night before in the same bar as a group of IDC speakers and organizers—at the Four Seasons in Georgetown—I ordered a bottle of champagne and had it sent to their table. Not long after, the D.C. Metropolitan Police detained me and a friend for an hour.

IDC's proclaimed purpose—to protect Christians in the face of a jihadist onslaught led at present by ISIS—is of utmost importance. However, too many of the priests, prelates, and patriarchs from Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, as well as one of the organization's key benefactors, Lebanese-Nigerian billionaire Gilbert Chagoury, have also identified themselves as supporters of the Iranian axis in the Middle East. ISIS is a murderous group, but so is the regime in Tehran and so are its clients, chief among them Syria's Bashar al-Assad and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

ISIS, as the world now knows all

too well, has used beheadings, crucifixions, and all forms of murder and torture to terrorize its opponents, who include Christians, Yazidis, Alawites, Shiite Muslims, and Sunnis who don't pledge fealty. But Assad's record in Syria is no better. Besides the gas attacks and indiscriminate bombings that have killed tens of thousands of innocents, his security forces have specialized in acts of vindictive sadism. Early in the uprising, for instance, they mutilated the corpse of a 13-year-old boy before returning the body to his parents.



*Chagoury in 2003*

And yet many of the clerics invited to speak at the IDC conference are openly supportive of Assad. For instance, Maronite patriarch Bechara Boutros al-Rai calls Assad a reformer. Maybe he took that message to the White House when he met with Obama and Susan Rice Thursday afternoon to ask for continued American support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, even if its military intelligence unit is controlled by Hezbollah. But whatever is wrong with Hezbollah or Assad, many of the IDC clerics reason, at least they're killing the Sunni extremists who would kill them.

I referenced this conception of Assad's role in the note I sent along with the champagne: "Thanks IDC—and thanks Bashar al-Assad, 'Protector of Christians'! XOXOXO." I asked the waitress to deliver the bottle directly to Chagoury, who according to leaked U.S. diplomatic cables has supported Michel Aoun, Hezbollah's

key Christian ally in Lebanon. A 2007 cable also explains that Chagoury is close to Suleiman Franjeh Jr., another pillar of Lebanon's pro-Damascus, pro-Hezbollah March 8 political coalition and a man who calls Assad his friend and brother. Former prime minister of Lebanon Fouad Siniora suggested to then U.S. ambassador to Lebanon Jeffrey Feltman "that the U.S. deliver to Chagoury a stern message about the possibility of financial sanctions and travel bans against those who undermine Lebanon's legitimate institutions."

My friend noticed that the bottle was returned to the bar unopened. So there would be no thanks, sarcastic or otherwise, or insults. We left, disappointed, and got into a taxi. A policeman stopped the cab and told us to get out. His partner pulled out the note and asked if I'd written it. Of course, I said. The recipient, she explained, perceived it as a threat.

This was now getting interesting. A man who was a confidant of Sani Abacha, head of one of the bloodiest and most corrupt regimes in modern African history, and friends with Lebanese warlords like Nabih Berri thought that a note accompanying a bottle of champagne was threatening.

They can't take a joke at their expense because usually they don't have to, my friend said. With them it's always the principle of "Do you know who I am?" This is what happens when you mess with a powerful man, one of the richest men in the world. However, my friend continued, this is not Nigeria or Lebanon—there are no thugs and militias waiting in the wings. This is the United States of America.

The police asked us to wait while they talked with Chagoury and his party. He's a big Clinton donor. Who knows? Maybe he had lawyers calling in to the police. After about half an hour, someone with the Chagoury gang walked out from the hotel lobby and circled around to get a look at us. The guy looked just like Samir Kassir, a Lebanese journalist I met once when I lived in Beirut. But then I remembered it couldn't be him: Kassir was on the other side. For

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opposing the Assad/Hezbollah condominium over Lebanon supported by the likes of Chagoury, Kassir was killed with a car bomb in 2005.

What happens under the hoods of Lebanese cars, what goes on in Nigerian prisons, is the province of men like Chagoury and their political patrons. This is the capital of the free world. After an hour, too long by any

reckoning, the cops sent us on our way, happy to be reminded on the eve of 9/11 that as Americans we stand with our friends around the region of all faiths, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim, who believe in what we believe in and fight for what we too often take for granted—the right to express oneself freely, the obligation to mock those who stand with murderers. ♦

# Crony Capitalism Has Deep Roots

The Ex-Im Bank and the trouble with the Republican party. BY JAY COST

Well, this was predictable. House Republicans last week acceded to an extension of the Export-Import Bank for at least the next nine months. The Export-Import Bank is far from the worst example of government-business cronyism. I just completed a history of American political corruption and actually had to leave Ex-Im on the cutting room floor. Its cronies are pikers compared with the corporate moguls that take advantage of tax preferences like the G.E. and Apple loopholes. They also cannot hold a candle to the American Medical Association, which is basically free to write the reimbursement rates for Medicare Part B. And nothing compares to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac from 1991-2008. The two mortgage giants kept the entire D.C. political class bent over a barrel for almost 20 years as its top executives reaped enormous bonuses while putting the broader economy at risk.

What makes Ex-Im noteworthy is how narrow its coalition of

beneficiaries is. With most modern corruption, you see some sort of logroll. The farm bill, for instance, ensnares not only dozens of commodity groups but also a vast array of interests that have seemingly little to do with agriculture. Similarly, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac survived for so long by roping in realtors, primary mortgage lenders, and home builders, all of whom benefited from the same sorts of policies.

Ex-Im's list of beneficiaries basically starts and ends with Boeing. This *should* in theory make it more vulnerable. Our perverse system of interest group pluralism tends to favor policies that rally multiple groups. Ex-Im does not really do that. Further, its economic justifications are slender indeed. On top of that, all congressional Republicans have to do is nothing; absent action by Congress renewing the bank, it disappears.

Ex-Im is the lowest of low-hanging fruit in the sprawling tree of American political corruption. And yet House Republicans cannot seem to pluck it.

There is a lesson in this—an unhappy one, but one that must nevertheless be learned if conservative reformers hope to win: The Republican party is part of this problem, and

always has been. Today, the foundation of the party's electoral coalition is the conservative movement, but that's a historical novelty. The forebears of today's conservatives used to be spread between the two parties (with Southerners in the Democratic party and small-town Midwesterners in the GOP). The Republican party predates the conservative movement, and in important respects simply tacked on its voters to an extant set of interests.

The purpose of the party at its creation was to oppose the Kansas-Nebraska Act and generally halt the spread of slavery. The GOP succeeded in this, and much more, but by the 1870s it had lost its motive force. Initially opposed to the machine-style politics of the Buchanan administration, it came to embrace the patronage regime wholeheartedly. Under Ulysses S. Grant this system metastasized into a full-blown epidemic of corruption.

As Senator James Grimes of Iowa put it in 1870, "It looks at this distance as though the Republican party were going to the dogs. . . . Like all parties that have an undistributed power for a long time, it has become corrupt, and I believe that it is today the [most] corrupt and debauched political party that has ever existed."

This corruption was quite different from the modern variety, currying favor with business interests. Of course, Republican machines in Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania did deal with businesses. But they had their own streams of revenue to manage their operations, so they were not in hock to them. Ultimately, party bosses in the Senate relied on the federal spoils system to take control of state government patronage, thereby setting themselves up as satraps. Businesses could be part of the process, but bosses like Roscoe Conkling were just as likely to use the Port of New York to extort businesses as to favor them.

When corruption reached a whole new level under Grant, it pushed a faction of the Republican party toward reform. The dam finally broke after the assassination of James Garfield in 1881. That led to sweeping civil service

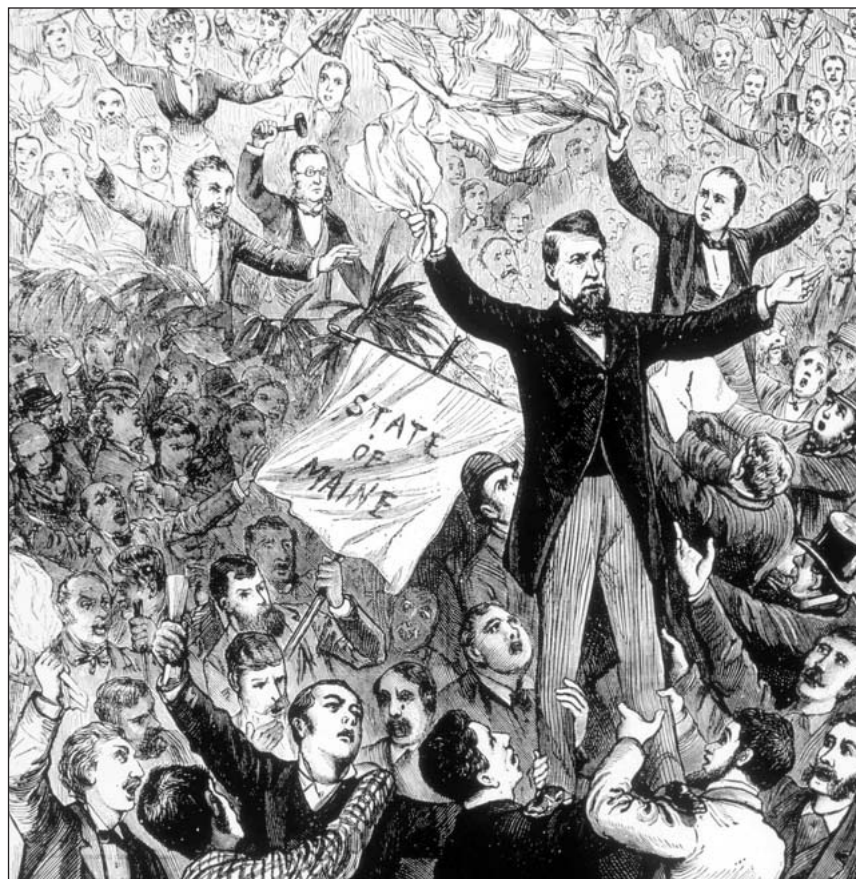
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reform, and the old revenue streams quickly dried up. This was an *enormous* problem for Republicans in the North. The Southern plantation class solved the collective action problem inherent to winning elections by sys-

finance: currying favor with industrial magnates. This operation would be replicated across Republican-dominated states of the North, and it was a pretty tidy way to do business. Rather than buying off a seemingly endless

actions prompted Vermont Republican George Edmunds to comment:

It is my deliberate opinion that Mr. Blaine acts as the attorney of Jay Gould. Whenever Mr. Thurman and I have settled upon legislation to bring the Pacific railroads to terms of equity with the government, up has jumped James G. Blaine, musket in hand, from behind the breastworks of Gould's lobby, to fire in our backs.



Presidential candidate James G. Blaine is cheered at the 1880 GOP convention.

tematically disenfranchising anybody who disagreed with them, not only black Republicans but also poor, white populists. This was impossible in the North, so how were Republican bosses supposed to hold the line, especially in states like Indiana, New York, and Ohio, where the parties were evenly matched? It required a massive campaign effort, which in turn required millions of dollars. With federal patronage now (mostly) illegal, *something* had to be done.

Enter James G. Blaine—the “continental liar from the state of Maine” (as his critics tagged him). Actually an opponent of the old patronage machines, Blaine nevertheless spearheaded a new method of campaign

array of ignorant state legislators and avaricious members of Congress, big business dealt with party bosses like Blaine, Tom Platt, and Matt Quay, who took charge of keeping their loyalists in line.

The system was enormously successful, and much more stable than the machine politics of the Grant era, which ultimately depended upon a compliant chief executive to keep the patronage funds flowing. So, for instance, by the late 1870s, railroad loans were coming due, and titans like Jay Gould and Collis Huntington did not want to pay them back. What to do? Deploy Blaine in Congress to rally his troops to kill a repayment plan. Blaine’s

The point of this history lesson is the following: While the Republican party repudiated Grantism 130 years ago, it has never done the same to Blaineism. Instead, the party too often behaves as though this form of corruption does not exist.

The modern Republican party is a marriage of convenience. The ideological similitude between its constituent groups is stronger than among the strange bedfellows of the Democratic party. But still, there is a tension. Grassroots conservatives support business because they believe that free enterprise is the best way to establish broad-based prosperity and individual liberty. Blaine-style Republicans support business—full stop.

And this is why you see Republicans in Congress so often doing things that Republicans in the heartland oppose. Immigration reform—with its massive amnesty as well as a huge increase in the number of legal immigrants—is good for business owners but bad for lower income workers struggling to rise to the middle class. Grassroots conservatives and their allies in Congress opposed it. But Republican politicians more in the Blaine mold were amenable to it.

Ditto Ex-Im. It is one more instance of the divide between conservatives and the Blaine faction. And the news last week shows you who is still in charge.

What is so troubling is that Blaine-style Republicanism has precious few followers, and virtually none outside the Beltway. It sustains itself primarily via a logroll between connected industry groups who buy their way into the process. Again, the farm bill is illustrative. House Republicans—at the height of their reformist zeal—basically killed

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farm subsidies in 1996. But they slowly brought them back. Was there a compelling reason for this? Of course not. It was the subtle operation of scores of interest groups over time that pushed the congressional GOP into buckling, which it did most recently in the winter with a massive new payoff.

At its core, Blaine-style Republicanism is not so much a vision of a prosperous, dynamic, and free nation as it is a management tool designed to keep the money rolling in. It really has no defenders, at least out in the open air. Its payoffs are either studiously covered up or couched dishonestly in the rhetoric of conservatism. To wit, the first choice of Blaine Republicans is not to talk about Ex-Im. But, barring that, they will always defend the program in terms of jobs and prosperity.

So American conservatives often feel a bit like George Edmunds. We stand up to fight the corrupt cronies in the Democratic party. And then from behind the breastworks, up pop the heirs to James G. Blaine, muskets in hand, ready to fire in our backs.

There is a lesson in all this. Ultimately, reformers cannot strike at corruption by going after even its most egregious manifestations, like the Ex-Im Bank. The entire regime is the product of *corrupt processes*, and the only way to take that regime apart is to reform those processes.

Currying favor with special interests at the expense of the public good is a way for politicians to fund their campaigns and secure their future for when they leave government. It has been firmly enshrined as the primary source of money for politics since the Sherman Act did away with patronage. So long as politicians are able to tap special interests for these purposes, they will find ways to reward them with public policy—and they will do whatever it takes to protect the programs they have already put in place. What reformers really need to do first is attack the way the business of politics is conducted, rather than focusing on the products of that business. Then, *and only then*, will the cancer of cronyism be removed from the body politic. ♦

# Getting to Know the Chinese Navy

Sharing carrier secrets is a bad idea.

BY STEVE COHEN

The Obama administration very much wants a diplomatic success somewhere in the world. So when the president orders the head of the U.S. Navy to meet with his Chinese counterpart and find areas of cooperation, it is neither surprising nor inappropriate. But the possibility that the Chinese Navy will gain real insight into how our aircraft carriers operate is worrying our Pacific allies and could compromise our security.

The order to sit down with China's Admiral Wu Shengli came from the president through Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to the chief of naval operations, Admiral Jonathan Greenert, last year. It followed Obama's meeting with Chinese president Xi at Sunnylands in June 2013. Greenert then met with Admiral Wu in September 2013—the first of four meetings—and they identified eight areas of possible cooperation.

The first was an unprecedented invitation to China to participate in the 2014 Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercises, the biennial naval maneuvers that are the world's largest. This year RIMPAC involved 22 nations, 49 surface ships, and 6 submarines. China sent four warships to the maneuvers, which took place in June and July off Hawaii. But in an unexplained display of—something—China also sent an electronic intelligence ship to spy on the exercises.

The second area was a Chinese request to send their “experts” aboard an American aircraft carrier to learn about “maintenance and tactics.”

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Greenert's response was “We're not ready for that.” Yet he left the door open: “We have to manage our way through this.”

Sharing carrier secrets is a bad idea, one that's coming not from naval officers, but from their civilian overseers. Joint exercises and military exchange programs are widely believed to reduce the chances of armed misunderstandings. Personal relationships, familiarization with another navy's ways of doing things, and protocols for CUES—codes for unplanned encounters at sea—reduce the risk of unintended consequences. And those have been the principal focus of the admirals' discussions.

But the desire to secure some fleeting positive headlines—and perhaps some sincere goodwill—in an ever-more contentious world should not trump long-term security interests. In the words of Admiral James Stavridis, a former supreme allied commander at NATO, “While we want to have the most positive military-to-military relationships possible, such activities have to take into account the need to protect our most sensitive equipment, tactics, and procedures. Nations must have common sense as well as good intentions.”

An aircraft carrier allows a nation to project power far beyond the range of land-based planes and forces. Helping China to extend its military reach is not something the United States should be encouraging or enabling. A new poll from the Pew Research Center found that a majority of citizens in 11 Asian nations are “concerned that territorial disputes between China and its neighbors will lead to a military conflict.”

Ninety-three percent of Filipinos surveyed feared the possibility of conflict with China. Similarly, fully 85 percent of Japanese and 84 percent of Vietnamese fear armed conflict with China. China's recent two-month-long stationing of an oil rig off Vietnam and Beijing's provocative moves over the Senkaku Islands give these allies legitimate reasons for concern.

The distance between Shanghai and contested areas in the South China Sea is more than 1,100 miles. With the introduction of a Chinese aircraft carrier into the region, that distance becomes less of an impediment to an assertive China. As retired Vice Admiral William Douglas Crowder, the former commander of the Seventh Fleet in the Pacific, notes, "If our friends in Asia become convinced that the United States lacks the ability or political will to stand up to PRC intimidation over territorial disputes, they will be forced, however reluctantly, to make their best deal with the PRC. And it won't likely be a very good deal for them."

Which brings us back to Admiral Wu's request for greater insight into American carrier expertise. Since 1985, the Chinese have purchased three Soviet-era carriers along with an Australian ship of World War II design. One, now called the *Liaoning*, was bought from Ukraine. About 60 percent of the 999-foot ship was replaced with new Chinese electronics and mechanicals, and it was commissioned in 2012.

The Chinese then assigned stealthy, supersonic J-15 Flying Sharks to the air wing. The J-15 was introduced in 2009, and is considered by many to be somewhat more advanced than our own carrier-based F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, though somewhat less capable than the problem-prone F-35s designed to replace our aging attack-fighters.

For the last two years Chinese pilots have been practicing carrier-based operations—mainly launches, arrested landings, and safety drills. To watch videos of these drills is to recognize how the Chinese have borrowed from the American instruction manual. As retired Vice Admiral Peter Daly, the CEO of the United States Naval Institute, points out, the Chinese have already copied, in detail, safety techniques to reduce damage to aircraft from small debris left on the deck by hard landings, along with visual communications to control takeoffs.



*Chinese and Russian vessels in a joint exercise, May 24*

The Chinese now want to learn exactly what parts wear out, how often, and what parts of the planes, arresting gear, and catapult systems need maintenance between flights. "Even allowing them to see the level of automation or redundancy in certain systems would go a long way to speeding up their learning curve," says another retired admiral.

Some military-to-military cooperation—even with a nation such as China—makes sense. As an aide to Admiral Greenert pointed out, "Our goal is not to make them smarter or more capable. It is to learn how to conduct business more safely. We will be operating with them after the next tsunami. So humanitarian relief, search-and-rescue, counterpiracy—these are the things we need to train for together."

While the Obama administration is understandably anxious to improve relations with the Chinese, at least some members of Congress are urging a go-slow-and-go-smart approach. Rep. Randy Forbes, the chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces, said, "While military-to-military exchanges can play an important role in building trust at the operational level, we must be mindful that they are unlikely to alter China's strategic goals and objectives."

When Admiral William Crowe was chairman of the joint chiefs in the late 1980s, he invited his Soviet counterpart, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, aboard an American carrier. The admiral's purpose was to reinforce President Reagan's message that the Soviets would have to spend far more than they could afford to match America's military capabilities.

Today, the administration's temptation to agree to the Chinese request appears to be driven by weakness, not strength. This is less an exchange than it is a transfer of knowledge and technology. The Chinese stand to gain far more than the United States, something that is at best questionable as tensions in Asia rise.

The lure of better ties with an up-and-coming superpower must be attractive for Washington, particularly in light of the warming relations between Moscow and Beijing. But that is insufficient reason to share hard-earned lessons of aircraft carrier maintenance with the Chinese.

As retired Vice Admiral Crowder says, "Technical skill is important, but 100 years of experience—including a good deal of tragedy on the deck and in the air—is the key element in the U.S. Navy's tactical airpower."

Such hard-earned experience is not to be given away lightly. ♦

ASSOCIATED PRESS

# The Ruggerers of the Great War

They didn't let the old game down.

BY C.J. CIARAMELLA

"Good old rugby football. All over the British Isles its exponents were in the van of those who went." —Walter Carey, Bishop of Bloemfontein and former British Lion, 1921

One hundred years ago, the rugby pitches of the British Empire and France emptied out, and a generation of players traded in their hoop jerseys for khaki uniforms. A terrible number of them ended up littering the battlefields of France, Belgium, and Turkey, never to return to the game they loved.

Rugby union was still a young sport then. It had been only a bit more than 60 years since the first set of rules was codified and roughly 80 since William Webb Ellis, "with a fine disregard for the rules of football," as the apocryphal plaque at Rugby School declares, first picked up the ball and ran. But by 1914 rugby was a solid institution among middle- and lower-upper-class England, and the men who played it were filled with Edwardian notions of masculinity, glory, and empire. When England declared war on August 4, 1914, rugby players volunteered by the hundreds. Because of their social class and background, most of them ended up as junior officers. In other words, the first over the top of the trench.

Overall, 140 international rugby players from nine countries died in the war. Author Nigel McCrery profiled every one in a book released last

year, *Into Touch: Rugby Internationals Killed in the Great War*. Scotland lost 30 international players, more than any other nation. They included not only the best of their day, but some of the greatest of all time.

There was Dave Gallaher, the captain of the original New Zealand All



British recruitment poster, 1914

Blacks team. Gallaher was too old to be conscripted, but when his two brothers were killed in the war, he falsified his age and enlisted. After he was killed by shrapnel at Passchendaele, the *Auckland Star* wrote in his 1917 obituary: "Standing six feet in height, thirteen stone in weight, hard as nails, fast and full of dash, he bolted from the mark every time,

played right up to the whistle and stopped for nothing big or small."

There was Ronald Poulton-Palmer, a renowned English center. A sniper killed him on the Western Front just 13 months after he scored four tries (the rugby equivalent of a touch-down) against France. His last words were reported to be: "I shall never play at Twickenham again."

They came not only from the British Isles, but in droves from New Zealand and Australia. It is estimated that 98 percent of the rugby players in Australia enlisted.

"We arrived at Heliopolis about three weeks ago," Clarrie Wallach, an Australian forward, wrote in a letter on his way to Gallipoli. "We have been in some pretty solid work, but expect to go into the real stuff next week. All the rugby union men are well here, from the Major down to the privates. Twit Tasker told me how Harold George died the death of deaths—a hero's—never beaten till the whistle went."

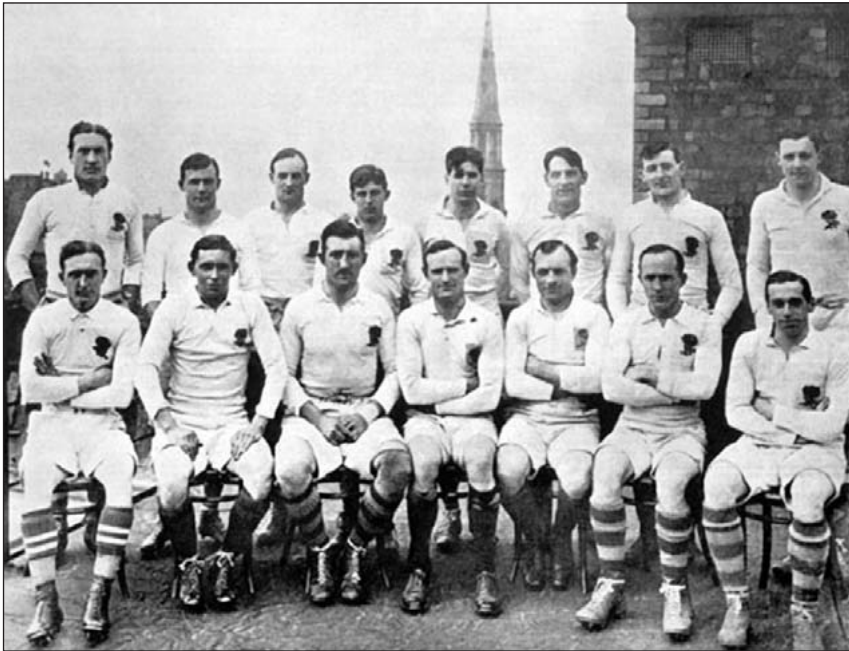
George, also an Australian player, was mortally wounded by a sniper. By the time the ANZAC forces finally evacuated Gallipoli, seven Wallabies had been buried on the Dardanelles Peninsula.

Tasker, who held the distinction of being the first Wallaby to be ejected from a match, was evacuated after his legs were peppered with shrapnel. "It will be some time before he can do any of that sidestepping he used to do," one of his old rugby colleagues wrote home in a letter. Tasker was discharged in 1915 but reenlisted and saw action on the Western Front, where he was wounded twice more and

gassed before a shell killed him three months short of the war's end.

Wallach was later killed in action and received the Military Cross. His brother Neville, also a rugger, enlisted at 18 and received a Military Cross for his actions at the First Battle of Bullecourt. According to his citation, Neville Wallach "was a Platoon Commander in the attack on the

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*England's 1914 rugby team just before WWI, in which seven of their number would be killed*

Hindenburg Line near Bullecourt on 11 April 1917 and though he received a bullet through his thigh . . . led his men over 1,200 yards of ground swept by shell and machine gun fire." A shell killed him in 1918.

They were young and old. Welsh international player Richard Garbons Williams was 59 when he was killed in action at the Battle of Loos in 1915. The officer corps rejected former English rugby captain Edgar Mobbs, 31, for being too old, so he enlisted as a private. He recruited 250 men and later rose to become their battalion commander. According to legend, Mobbs would punt a rugby ball into no man's land before leading the charge. He was wounded twice in battle and received the Distinguished Service Order before being killed while assaulting a machine gun nest in the muddy abattoir of Passchendaele. Only 85 of "Mobbs' Own," as his battalion was called, survived the war.

If one has played rugby, there is a recognizable attitude in their actions and words—that fine disregard for the rules and a certain dogged indifference to danger and bleak odds. In rugby, a team is either advancing down the field or being pushed back. There is no standing still.

Sergeant Billy Nanson, an English forward, was last seen singlehandedly clearing a Turkish trench with his rifle and bayonet, yelling back at his troops, "Come on, lads, let's shift them." Likewise, Cambridge fly-half Horace Thomas's last known words during the Battle of the Somme were, "Come on, boys, we've got 'em beat."

When the stretcher-bearers came across dying Wallaby Edward Larkin at Anzac Cove, he waved them off, saying, "There's plenty worse than me out there." In 1916, English player Jack King wrote in his last letter home that "so long as I don't disgrace the old Rugby game, I don't think I mind."

By their own high standards, none of them let the old game down. The English international rugby players alone were awarded 28 Military Crosses and a Victoria Cross, Britain's highest military honor.

Arthur Leyland Harrison, a lieutenant commander in the Royal Navy—and a "sturdy and tireless forward" for the English side, according to the *Rugby Football Internationals' Roll of Honour* by E.H.D. Sewell—was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions at the Raid of Zeebrugge, a volunteer-only mission. According to

his citation, Harrison's ship was coming alongside the German *Mole* when he "was struck on the head by a fragment of a shell which broke his jaw and knocked him senseless."

"Recovering consciousness he proceeded on to the *Mole* and took over command of his party, who were attacking the seaward end of the *Mole*," the citation continues,

The silencing of the guns on the *Mole* head was of the first importance, and though in a position fully exposed to the enemy's machine-gun fire Lieut.-Commander Harrison gathered his men together and led them to the attack. He was killed at the head of his men, all of whom were either killed or wounded. Lieut.-Commander Harrison, though already severely wounded and undoubtedly in great pain, displayed indomitable resolution and courage of the highest order in pressing his attack, knowing as he did that any delay in silencing the guns might jeopardise the main object of the expedition, i.e., the blocking of the Zeebrugge-Bruges Canal.

Besides the international players, the lost members of the Blackheath Football Club received two Military Crosses, two Distinguished Service Orders, and one Victoria Cross. Blackheath's Capt. Walter Napleton Stone was in command of a forward observation post about 1,000 yards ahead of the front line when he noticed the Germans preparing to advance. He ordered his company to retreat, save for a couple platoons to provide a rearguard.

"He stood on the parapet with the telephone under a tremendous bombardment, observing the enemy and continued to send back valuable information until the wire was cut by his orders," his citation states. "The rearguard was eventually surrounded and cut to pieces, and Capt. Stone was seen fighting to the last till he was shot through the head."

It was not just the British. Twenty-one French international rugby players died in the war, including Maurice Boyau. The captain of the French side before the war, Boyau became a fighter ace and

skilled at destroying enemy observation balloons, notching 14 confirmed kills and 21 flamed balloons. Boyau received the *Légion d'Honneur*, France's highest military award for gallantry. His citation described him as a "pilot of remarkable bravery whose marvelous physical qualities are put to use by his most arduous spirit and fights at great heights." He was shot down on a balloon-busting mission by defending German fighters in September 1918.

It was not until the war ended that the full scale of the loss to rugby sunk in. "Of the English fifteen which played before the King at Twickenham early in 1914, scarcely one is left," a columnist for the *Times* wrote after the war. "They might indeed on that occasion have hailed their distinguished spectator, only too appropriately, with the ancient gladiators' cry, '*Morituri te salutant.*'"

Blackheath lost 58 members. The Rosslyn Park Rugby Club, 85. One of Blackheath's rivals, the London Scottish, lost 103 members, including 45 of the 60 players in its last set of matches before the war broke. The club was immortalized in Mick Imlah's poem "London Scottish (1914)."

*April, the last full fixture of the spring:  
'Feet, Scottish, feet!'—they rucked the fear  
of God  
Into Blackheath. Their club was  
everything:  
And of the four sides playing that afternoon,  
The stars, but also those from the back  
pitches,  
All sixty volunteered for the touring squad,  
And swapped their Richmond turf for  
Belgian ditches.  
October: mad for a fight, they broke too soon  
On the Ypres Salient, rushing the ridge  
between  
'Witshii' and Messines. Three-quarters  
died.  
Of that ill-balanced and fatigued fifteen  
The ass selectors favoured to survive,  
Just one, Brodie the prop, resumed his post.  
The others sometimes drank to 'The  
Forty-Five':  
Neither a humorous nor an idle toast.*

In a more sane world, the London Scottish toasts would have remained as all rugby toasts have traditionally been and should be: dirty and joyous. ♦

# At the Kurdistan Front

Holding the line against the Islamic State.

BY JONATHAN SPYER



A Kurdish Peshmerga fighter on the front lines near Erbil, September 10

*Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan*

War is being waged along a 900-mile front between two entities that today constitute de facto quasi-states stretching across the old border between Syria and Iraq. These are the Islamic State to the south and a contiguous area of Kurdish-controlled territory to the north. Recently, I traveled to the latter, in regions of northern Iraq and northeast Syria, like the town of Derik, where I spoke with a Kurdish soldier who had recently been in a firefight with IS forces in the neighboring village of Jeza'a.

"We were fighting for 17 hours," said the Kurd. He was with the

People's Protection Units (YPG), affiliated with the PYD, the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Worker's party, or PKK. "There must have been about 500 of them," he said of the IS militants. "Only about 90 of us. They're strange, the way they keep on coming at you. We got on each side of them. In the end, you should have seen the trucks that came to take the bodies away. Stacked up."

He paused and took a drag on his cigarette. "I wasn't hurt bad," he continued. "I dislocated my shoulder when I had to jump over a wall after one of them threw a grenade. Then they got me out of there. I killed three of them. It's not nice, you know. One of them was just a kid of about 16. But you've got no choice."

So what does an IS attack look like, I asked. Do they just come running headlong at you?

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“They don’t run,” he replied, looking directly at me as if to acknowledge the eeriness of the thing he was saying. “They walk,” he said. “At a normal pace. Towards you. Like they’re not afraid. And you have to shoot them before they shoot you.”

The fighting at Jeza’a was one of the most intense clashes to have taken place between the Islamic State and the YPG. The battle formed part of a broader IS-Kurdish war taking place along a contiguous frontline stretching from Jalawla on the Iraq-Iran border all the way to Jarabulus on the line separating Syria from Turkey.

At Jeza’a, the Islamic State was trying to close the corridor that the YPG had opened in order to bring Yazidi refugees from the Sinjar Mountains to safety at the Newroz refugee camp outside Derik. The more than 100,000 refugees who made their way to Newroz are exhausted and traumatized. The Islamic State considers the Yazidi to be “devil worshippers” who are thus denied the few privileges afforded the so-called people of the book, i.e., Christians and Jews. Yazidi women were sent to the prisons of IS-controlled Mosul, where they were later sold as slaves or forced to wed IS fighters.

Conditions at Newroz are primitive, but there is food and shelter. Further east, in the Kurdish Regional Government area of northern Iraq, the towns of Dohuk and Erbil are swollen with refugees who fled Mosul and Sinjar. The Islamic State’s march toward the KRG capital of Erbil was stopped only by the intervention of the United States Air Force, and they know that any attempt to push forward would result in their obliteration from the air. The KRG’s Peshmerga forces are facing them in hastily assembled positions cut into the dirt. These frontlines are for the moment strangely silent.

In Erbil and in Dohuk, the half-built structures that until very recently were symbols of economic growth and expansion have been converted into makeshift homes for refugee families from further south. You see refugees everywhere. In the

evenings the cities have a teeming, crowded feel to them. But the foreigners who came with the oil companies that moved in to do business when the KRG was the most stable part of Iraq are mostly gone. The bars and restaurants that opened up to cater to them are empty. On a Thursday evening in the Deutscher Hof restaurant in Erbil, one of the few places that serves cold beer, only a couple of British security contractors are at the bar. The Indian staff tell me that a month ago, the place would have been packed at this time.

A considerable portion of Erbil’s Kurdish population also left when it

**The Kurdish national agenda is visible just below the surface. General Maghdid Haraki of the Peshmerga put it most bluntly when he told me, ‘We have a different land, different language, different mentality. I don’t know why the world won’t see this. They just see ‘Iraq.’”**

looked likely that the Islamic State was on its way. Some sources spoke of a departure of up to 30 percent of Erbil’s residents. The Peshmerga, with the help of Iraqi special forces as well as U.S. air support, have begun to push back against IS. The Mosul Dam, a highly symbolic conquest for the IS, was retaken on August 21. Since then, IS has lost ground in a number of other places. The Peshmerga are now in the process of reconquering oil fields close to Mosul.

West of the Syria-Iraq border, meanwhile, the YPG is continuing its own fight against the Islamic State. I visited the frontline area at the Yarubiya border crossing. The YPG seized the crossing in early August, and now controls both the Iraqi and Syrian sides of it. IS still holds a neighborhood immediately adjoining the crossing. Sniping from both sides and mortar fire are regular occurrences. But the morale of the

YPG seemed high. “They can’t shoot,” a female fighter told me cheerfully after we sprinted across open ground to a concealed position a few hundred yards from a mosque where the IS sniper was operating.

Conversations with Kurdish officials indicate that they do not consider the fight with IS in Iraq and Syria to be a battle for the preservation of those two states. Rather, the Kurdish national agenda is visible just barely below the surface. General Maghdid Haraki of the Peshmerga, an effective-looking figure clearly influenced by American military style, put it most bluntly when he told me, “We have a different land, different language, different mentality. I don’t know why the world won’t see this. They just see ‘Iraq.’”

A senior KRG official linked to the political leadership was more circumspect. “Iraqi Kurds are today still part of Iraq,” he said. “But if a sectarian civil war starts in Iraq, we want no part of it. And if the mess continues in Iraq and Kurdish rights are not granted, then what is the point of it? Anyway, Kurds, like any other nation, have the right to determine their own future.”

Nonetheless, the fact is that the Kurds are not unified and their divisions are not easily resolved. The central rift is between the two rival pan-Kurdish movements. One is Massoud Barzani’s Kurdistan Democratic party, which controls the KRG. The other is Abdullah Ocalan’s PKK, listed by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist organization for its three-decade-long campaign of violence against Turkey.

Still, when it comes to Kurdish self-determination, PKK-associated officials sound similar to General Haraki and his colleagues. Nilufer Koc, of the PKK-associated Kurdistan National Congress, told me in Erbil that “what’s needed is a referendum on independence here in Iraqi Kurdistan. And when we clear the issue of the referendum, if a new Iraqi government continues to reject Kurdish rights, then the Kurds need to take what belongs to them.” ♦

# The Party of Reason?

*It's not the Democrats, despite their self-flattering claims*

BY JEFF BERGNER

It has become a staple of the political left to brand Republicans the anti-science, anti-reason party. This narrative congealed in a breathless 2005 book by journalist Chris Mooney entitled—does the phrase sound familiar?—*The Republican War on Science*. Those fueling the narrative today seize on occasional unfortunate remarks about rape or evolution by Republican fringe figures, as well as on the skepticism of many Republicans about man-made global warming, to make their case.

The narrative, however, also taps into a deeper and more sinister view of conservatives that dates back at least to Richard Hofstadter's 1964 article "The Paranoid Style in American Politics." Hofstadter painted conservatives as conspiracy-minded, change-resistant authoritarians fearful of the liberating power of knowledge and unable to entertain a world in which many answers are provisional and not absolute.

It takes no talent to cherry-pick examples of ignorance from either Republicans or Democrats. More worthwhile is a systematic look at some major fault lines between the two political parties. Let's consider four significant domestic policy areas where Democrats and Republicans differ—the economy, energy, global warming, and abortion—and see which party can fairly lay claim to being the party of reason.

We will see a pattern. In each case, Democratic thinking will unfold in three stages: (1) Policy is predicated on reality as one wishes it to be, not as it is. (2) That policy fails. And (3) its advocates explain the failure by demonizing their opponents. The demonization of political opponents to cover policy failures is an all too reliable

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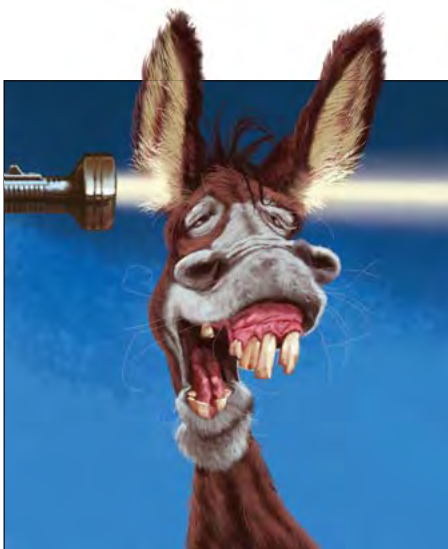
indicator that the policies rest on unsound, anti-scientific, irrational foundations.

## THE ECONOMY

The Republican party is the party of economic growth, and the Democratic party is the party of redistribution. This, to be sure, is a gross generalization; Republicans support many redistributive policies, and Democrats pay at least lip service to the importance of economic growth. But the two parties clearly have different centers of gravity. Republicans press for tax reform, regulatory relief, and other measures to stimulate economic growth; Democrats express concern about economic inequality and support higher taxes and expanding redistribution programs.

Most societies throughout history have consisted of small pockets of wealth and widespread poverty. As the economist Deirdre McCloskey has noted, a graph of real per capita income would run flat, and very close to the x-axis, from the earliest peoples until roughly 1750. The new capitalist system and its accompanying social values made possible productivity gains that created widespread per capita income growth for the first time ever. It also made possible for the first time significant income redistribution.

Economic growth is and has always been the only meaningful way to raise real per capita income and thus alleviate widespread poverty. Redistribution can doubtless provide short-term relief to those at the lowest end of the economy. But there is no known example of any nation permanently lifting its people out of poverty by redistributing the finite resources of its national product. Indeed, redistribution at any given moment is made possible only by prior economic growth, without which there would be little or nothing to redistribute. Economic growth is the necessary precondition for increasing per capita income, as well as for broad redistributive policies.



This is a fundamental lesson from the economic history of mankind, compared with which everyday policy debates (how long to provide unemployment compensation, which measure of inflation to use to index Social Security benefits, and the like) are second-order questions. Which political party understands the priority of economic growth? Which party understands that putting redistribution before growth changes incentive structures so as to result in slower economic growth—and thus ultimately less wealth to distribute? Which party has learned this elementary lesson from history?

On the other hand, which political party demands that reality conform to its redistributive wishes? And when redistribution fails to alleviate poverty—as it always does—which party seeks external forces to blame? When the good intentions of redistributors fail to bend reality, which party seeks villains and malefactors to explain its failure? Here is where denunciation of the 1 percent, the rich, talk radio, the oil industry, and lately the Koch brothers begins. Redistribution would work, so liberals say, if only it were not sabotaged by villains at every turn. We must double down on the policy and ferret out the villains.

The search for villains—whether the British intelligence service for LaRouchies, democratic protesters in Venezuela, or the Koch brothers in the mind of Harry Reid—always springs from the same impulse. The targets differ, but their role is the same: to explain away the failure of policies that cannot possibly work. Here is a hint about where the paranoid style actually resides in American politics today.

## ENERGY

**T**he Obama administration came into office fully convinced that the era of fossil fuels was over and that its own role was to hasten those fuels' demise. To that end it hoped for—and worked for—higher oil prices. In the process, it wasted large sums of taxpayer money on subsidizing Rube Goldberg alternative energy schemes for the politically well connected.

The Obama administration's view of world energy realities was not based on science. In fact, to say that its view of reality was mistaken would be to say far too little; its misjudgment was one of epic proportions. As it turned out, America was on the cusp of the greatest fossil fuel revolution since the discovery of oil. New technologies (embraced by Republicans) now permit the relatively cheap exploitation of enormous reserves of oil and natural gas. The United States today can actually move toward achieving its long-stated goal to free itself from dependence on Middle East oil. The end of fossil

fuels will come one day, but that day is nowhere in sight.

How was such a massive misjudgment possible? A misjudgment of this magnitude—we are talking upside down, 180 degrees out, flat wrong—is not a miscalculation at the margins. It is the result of turning one's back on reality, clinging to ideological preconceptions, and drawing all the wrong conclusions. Misjudgments of this scale are never simple errors. They reflect the willful substitution of ideology for reality.

The Obama administration has responded to its embarrassing error with . . . further willfulness. It slows new oil drilling permits on public lands, sets up regulatory obstacles to new production and distribution, delays the Keystone pipeline, and indulges in paranoid fears that new technologies cannot properly be regulated to protect the environment (all the while boasting of great progress toward energy independence when doing so is politically useful).

Here is a fantasy: What if oil had not been discovered in the mid-19th century? America's economic modernization would have depended on traditional sources of energy like coal, hydropower, steam, wood, windmills, and farm animals. America might have become a vast continent of ugly, noisy, unreliable, bird-killing windmills from sea to shining sea. What if someone had then come forward and said: Look, here is a better idea. Let's stop despoiling our environment and get our energy from an abundant, inexpensive, reliable source under the ground. Better yet, this new source of energy has many uses that traditional fuels cannot serve—powering airplanes, for example. Would today's Democratic party embrace this advance? Here is a second hint about where the paranoid style resides in American politics today.

The Democratic party demonstrates abundant resistance to new technologies—for oil and gas extraction, clean coal, nuclear power, genetically modified food, and strategic missile defense, to name a few. Green technology alone finds favor in the Democratic party. That would be unobjectionable—many Republicans favor it too—if it meant government support for scientific research whose findings are made available to the public. Instead, cascades of public money have been wasted picking politically favored corporations to commercialize technologies that are not ready for prime time.

The Democratic party's deepest inclination is expressed in its embrace of the so-called precautionary principle, which is a fancy name for fear of the new. The secret is given away in former Obama adviser Cass Sunstein's 2003 working paper "Beyond the Precautionary Principle." There Sunstein says that this principle "requires regulation of activities *even if it cannot be shown* that these activities are likely to produce significant

harms” (emphasis mine). Here is an embrace of government control that knows no limit.

This is the party of reason? It sounds more like the party of paranoia. Who then is to blame for the failure of the promised green-job bonanza to materialize? The answer comes straight out of the Democratic playbook: “Big oil” is responsible for the failure of the Obama administration’s energy policies. Evil oil companies have made it impossible for alternative energy sources to compete; they undercut alternative technologies at every turn. Worse yet, their Republican defenders in Congress enable oil companies to do this by means of what Democrats perversely call “subsidies”—obscuring the very real difference between tax breaks to encourage oil and gas exploration and the actual cash-transfer subsidies that go to alternative energy companies.

## GLOBAL WARMING

**M**uch of the Democratic party’s opposition to fossil fuels is rooted in its concern about man-made global warming (though distaste for fossil fuels on the left long predated concern about global warming). The prevailing Democratic party view holds that the science of global warming is settled. A deeper reading would suggest that what passes for the study of man-made global warming is not science at all, but natural history.

Unrepeatable events like the evolution of the world’s species and the evolution of the world’s climate are inherently difficult to explain, and their future course is even harder to predict. Discernment of patterns over time does not constitute knowledge of future developments. The cyclical warming and cooling of the Earth over millennia is precisely *not* what is at stake; what is claimed is that man-made global warming is a new planetary phenomenon. In the absence of a hypothesis to account for the rate and direction of change, predictions of its future course are simple extrapolations from the past—that is, mere guesswork.

Even when there is such a hypothesis, predictions may be unwarranted. For example, evolutionary biology—which is held up by some climate change acolytes as the gold standard of settled science—teaches that species have adapted over time. With this theory in hand, evolutionary biology can infer the existence of certain intermediate life forms even in the absence of fossil evidence. If such fossils are found, their discovery supports the underlying theory.

But evolutionary biology does not predict the future course of evolution. Past experience suggests we should expect adaptation and natural selection to continue to operate. But evolutionary biology tells us nothing about the types, numbers, or characteristics of the species yet to come. If and when species evolve a certain way, all that

can be said—after the fact—is that this must have come about through adaptation and natural selection. The ability to predict replicable events is one thing, the possibility of predicting the onetime evolution of the Earth, its species, and its climate quite another. In short, climate activists are asking far more of global warming models than is asked of evolutionary biology.

Today’s knowledge of global warming consists of longer and better records of temperatures observed around the world than ever before. This is historical knowledge. The careful recording of global temperatures over time is no different in principle from the recording of the U.S. unemployment rate or the rise and fall of kingdoms. From this kind of knowledge alone, nothing can be predicted about the future.

We also have models which purport to account for the rise of global temperatures, most of which focus heavily on carbon dioxide emissions as a “forcing” factor for global temperatures. The best, the Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature project, begins correlating temperatures and carbon dioxide levels in the mid-18th century, when global temperatures were beginning to rise. A persuasive model, however, would be able to map accurately earlier periods of rising and falling temperatures. More, it would contain within it an implicit hypothesis (about the climate sensitivity of the planet) that could generate a correct and potentially falsifiable prediction about the future. No model has done either. None predicted the relatively flat global temperatures of the past 17 years.

In the absence of such a model, a degree of caution, even open-minded skepticism, about the claim of imminent harm or eventual catastrophe is in order. Our knowledge today remains historical in character. In the case of global warming, it is the skeptics who are the more willing to live with partial and provisional knowledge of the kind that Hofstadter contrasted with the certainty of closed-minded authoritarians.

And the Democrats? Their conviction that catastrophic warming is occurring is held with the fervor of zealotry, pretending to a certainty far beyond what the available evidence could possibly demonstrate. And they know who is responsible. For the alleged impending planetary tragedy, Democrats place immediate blame on the Koch brothers, oil companies, and other self-interested parties and ultimate blame on the nearly insatiable human demand for energy.

## ABORTION

**I**t is possible to imagine a political resolution to social issues like affirmative action, gay marriage, and illegal immigration, each of which has roiled American politics in recent years. A political resolution of the abortion

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issue is harder to see; this remains the most divisive social issue on the political landscape. What do science, and more broadly reason, teach us about this issue?

Republicans hold a variety of views on abortion. Some believe that an embryo is a human being from the moment of conception and deserves full legal protections. Others are prepared to accept limited exceptions to a broad no-abortion policy. Still others are uncertain about when during pregnancy a fetus becomes sufficiently human to deserve legal protection. But Republicans generally are open to the idea that a fetus is a developing human being.

For this reason, Republicans favor research into questions relating to the physical and mental development of the fetus—whether, and at what age, a fetus experiences pain, for instance. Republicans also support a measure of consistency about laws governing abortions for minors. Does it make sense that a minor cannot be given an aspirin at school without parental consent but can have an abortion without parental knowledge? Although some dubious studies purport to show that requiring parental consent may harm young mothers, virtually all opposition to parental consent rests squarely on the ground that it might restrict access to abortion.

Science seems to be cooperating with Republicans on the abortion issue. New technologies (like 4D fetal imaging) that graphically display ever-earlier fetal activity have had an indisputable effect on how a fetus is viewed. We should expect further refinement of these technologies. So too we have seen great advances in the ability of doctors to sustain ever-younger babies born prematurely.

What is the science-friendly Democrats' position on abortion? It is to close their eyes tight and oppose any and all thought about these questions. It is to shut out the external world and repeat over and over the mantra: *A woman has a right to choose. A woman has a right to choose. A woman has a right to choose.*

But a woman does not have a right to choose to murder her infant, her child, or her neighbor. Whether abortion is murder depends entirely on whether a fetus is a human being sufficiently advanced in its development to deserve legal protection.

This question cannot be elided, which is why abortion remains a political issue. Louder and more vociferous claims about "reproductive rights" do not touch the core question; they simply substitute a higher decibel level for serious reflection.

To avoid what would probably be a losing argument, Democrats refuse to discuss all such issues. Instead, they demonize opponents as religious bigots who are waging a "war on women." Name-calling stands in for thought. Labeling the pro-abortion position "choice" is sheer genius as political marketing—but it has no relation to

the underlying question at issue. In all, it is quite remarkable to have come to the point where opposition to abortion should be regarded as antiwoman.

So, which is the party of science, curiosity, reflective reason, and a willingness to harbor uncertainty in its views? Which is the party open to reflection about the core question that must be decided to take a consistently moral position on abortion?

## IN SUM

**T**hese examples could be multiplied many times over—including in foreign policy. While foreign policy is beyond the scope of this essay, it is worth noting that here, too, Democrats are guilty of creating alternative realities. The early outreach to the Iranian mullahs, the Russian reset, President Obama's Cairo speech, the premature departure from Iraq, the early dismissal of ISIS, and the moral equivalence granted to Hamas and Israel all depend on seeing despotic leaders not as they are, but as the administration wishes them to be.

Because the left wishes to eliminate poverty by redistribution, it assumes reality can be made to conform. Because it judges fossil fuels bad, they must be allowed no future. Because it insists on human causation for global warming, dissenters must be hounded. Because the left favors unrestricted access to abortion, a woman's right to choose must be enshrined.

The words of today's political left are much like ancient incantations. They are magic. But there is one difference: Ancient incantations reflected an underlying belief in an external world that was difficult to control, a world in which humans had at best a modest measure of influence.

Liberals have long favored the notion of a command economy; today they operate in nothing less than a command reality. For the modern liberal, we humans have the power to deconstruct and reconstruct reality as we please. In this brave new world, words are all that is required for a new reality to leap into existence. To speak about an issue is to resolve it. Good intentions suffice. If the results of programs created with good intentions disappoint, it doesn't matter. Disastrous policy results do not reflect a misunderstanding of reality, but the evil machinations of political opponents.

This of course is not reason; it is hubris. The great power of modern science arises from the understanding that we gain a degree of mastery over natural forces and ourselves only by conforming our thoughts and actions to the nature of reality itself. The incantations of the modern left notwithstanding, reality is not easily bent by words alone. ♦

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# Getting There

*How to transition from Obamacare  
to real health care reform*

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BY JAMES C. CAPRETTA  
& YUVAL LEVIN

Obamacare—or at least the version of it that the president and his advisers currently think they can get away with putting into place—has been upending arrangements and reshuffling the deck in the health system since the beginning of the year. That’s when the new insurance rules, subsidies, and optional state Medicaid expansions went into effect. The law’s defenders say the changes that have been set in motion are irreversible, in large part because several million people are now covered by insurance plans sold through the exchanges, and a few million more are enrolled in Medicaid as a result of Obamacare. President Obama has stated repeatedly that these developments should effectively shut the door on further debate over the matter.

Of course, the president does not get to decide when public debates begin or end, and the public seems to be in no mood to declare the Obamacare case closed. Polling has consistently shown that more Americans oppose the law than support it, and that the opposition is far more intense than the support. The law is built on a foundation of dramatically expanded government power over the nation’s health system, which strikes many voters as a dangerous step toward more bureaucracy, less choice, higher costs, and lower quality care. The beginning of the law’s implementation does not appear to have eased these fears, and in some cases has exacerbated them.

But opponents of Obamacare must also reckon with the reality that the goal of repealing the law and replacing it with real, market-based health reform to bring down costs and enable more people to get covered is no longer aimed at a system that exists only in theory. When President Obama won reelection in 2012, it became inevitable that some version of the law would get implemented

starting this year. And it was also a pretty good bet that, despite the law’s internal contradictions and problems, it would not, as some had surmised, collapse on the launch pad. Massive federal spending authority can prop up many a teetering edifice. The surprise is not that some 6 million people or so eligible for nearly free insurance under Obamacare took advantage of the offer; the surprise is that many millions more who were eligible declined to take it.

Some of the law’s opponents are reacting to these developments with something close to resignation. One prominent proposal would leave much of Obamacare’s government-centric architecture in place on the theory that it can be reformed and made to serve genuine market-oriented purposes. The law’s state and federal “exchanges,” which are the focal points of Obamacare’s expanded federal control over the health system, would be enlarged under this plan with millions of new enrollees from Medicaid. Future Medicare beneficiaries would also be forced to get their coverage through this mechanism.

It is true that exchanges are not, by definition, anti-market. Indeed, in concept, they could facilitate transparency and thus modestly improve consumer choice. But the Obamacare exchanges were built to assert increasing federal regulatory control over the nation’s health system. It is very rare for deregulation efforts to remove all such authority from an agency of government. Even if a deregulation effort partially succeeds in the short run, over the long run, federal regulatory agencies gain power by cleverly creating vested interests in the protection and expansion of that power. It is a very risky bet to place the future of American health care at the mercy of a new and improved system of Obamacare exchanges.

And there is no need to do so. The reality of Obamacare implementation in 2014 does not mean the law is no longer replaceable with something better. It still can be displaced by an appealing conservative alternative if a newly elected president chooses to make repeal and replace a top priority in 2017. But plans to replace Obamacare must now take into account the changes that the law has brought about this year, and stands to deliver over the next few years.

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The president and the law's supporters may pay a heavy political price this November for breaking their repeated promises not to needlessly disrupt pre-Obamacare insurance arrangements or doctor-patient relationships. The law's opponents must avoid making the same mistake in their plans to replace Obamacare: They should refrain both from promising that all disruption can be avoided and from causing avoidable disruption. A replacement will need to include a transition—a bridge from Obamacare's broken architecture to a working health financing system.

The nature of such a bridge depends in part on the particulars of the alternative. The best of the replacement plans so far proposed by conservatives are those that address the problems that existed in the health system before Obamacare was enacted without the horrendously misguided government-centered architecture of Obamacare that has made those problems worse. For instance, the reform plan introduced by Republican senators Richard Burr, Tom Coburn, and Orrin Hatch would dramatically expand insurance coverage, control costs with a functioning marketplace, and allow people with expensive health conditions to get affordable and stable insurance—without the high costs and overbearing federal regulatory control of Obamacare. The reform plan developed by the 2017 Project—an organization dedicated to developing a conservative reform agenda—has many key features in common with the Burr-Coburn-Hatch plan, and would also broaden insurance coverage and provide stable insurance for the sick without Obamacare's excesses. We assume that some synthesis of these plans will form the starting point for replacing Obamacare.

The transition from Obamacare to programs like these would be a move from a more prescribed and regulated to a less prescribed and regulated health system, and therefore would increase rather than reduce the range of options available to Americans. This would make such a transition dramatically different from, and far easier than, the transition to Obamacare that we are now witnessing. Adding options, rather than subtracting them, can make it possible to enable even those people who are most entangled in Obamacare's new mechanisms to gradually make their way into the new and more functional market-based alternative.

Indeed, for most Americans the transition would not be much of an issue and the new system would offer major

benefits. About 160 million Americans receive health coverage through their employers, and in these early stages of Obamacare implementation, that system has remained largely as it was.

The repeal and replacement of Obamacare would reduce some burdens now faced by the employer system—by lifting the threat of the employer mandate and reducing tax and regulatory pressures that have undermined employment. And it would relieve employers of the coming “Cadillac” tax, scheduled to take effect in 2018, and offer a more plausible and less painful way to inject some cost discipline into employer coverage.

The Cadillac tax is a 40 percent excise tax on employer-plan premiums in excess of an upper threshold, set at \$27,500 for family coverage in 2018 (the tax also applies to expensive policies sold directly by insurers to consumers). It requires employers to pay the same tax for high-paid and low-paid workers, and since employers would pass on the cost in the form of compensation adjustments, it would particularly harm lower-paid employees of firms with generous plans. A better approach, included in both the Burr-Coburn-Hatch plan and in the 2017 Project proposal, is to place

an upper limit on the amount of employer-paid premiums that is tax-free income to workers. Premium costs paid by firms above the threshold would then be taxable income for employees, but higher-salaried employees would pay more because their salaries put them in higher marginal income-tax brackets. Most Americans would never confront the tax, and those who did would be far better positioned to deal with it, or to change their coverage to avoid it.

The transition from Obamacare's crude regulatory distortions of the insurance market to a system that creates protections for people with preexisting conditions without outlawing insurance could also be made quite smooth for the same reason: People would find themselves with more options and no less protection.

Obamacare outlaws using health status in setting premiums and bans exclusions of preexisting conditions, which provides an incentive to consumers to delay insurance enrollment until they need it. The law tries to counteract this perverse incentive by imposing a new tax on the uninsured—the so-called



An anti-Obamacare protest in front of the Supreme Court, 2012

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individual mandate. The emerging alternative plans take a different approach: They require that anyone who has stayed continuously insured be shielded from higher premiums based on their health status. This would include anyone who needed to move from an employer plan to the individual insurance market. The replacements would thus eliminate the individual mandate immediately, but the protection for those who stay insured would provide at least as strong an incentive to stay covered as the mandate while enabling the creation of a competitive market in coverage.

Some other insurance rules in Obamacare would need to be addressed with explicit transition provisions. For instance, Obamacare limits the allowable premium difference between older and younger consumers in the individual market to a 3 to 1 ratio, which is much narrower than the practice in many states before Obamacare was enacted. If this provision were to be repealed, as it ought to be along with the rest of the law, premiums would likely rise for older insurance enrollees and fall for younger consumers. To address this, a replacement plan should explicitly require states to provide for a brief transition period (of, say, three or four years) from Obamacare rules to the new system. A transition of this length would minimize disruption for consumers.

The challenges of transition are of course greater in the case of the two populations that receive direct benefits under Obamacare—those covered under the Medicaid expansion in their states and those who receive premium subsidies for the purchase of coverage through the exchanges. These individuals are most directly and materially entangled in Obamacare's architecture, and smoothing for them the transition to a better system would require some special care.

The emerging alternative to Obamacare would help those who do not have access to an employer plan by providing them with tax credits for purchasing health insurance. The value of these tax credits would be roughly equal to the value of the tax preference for employer-paid plans, and thus would undo the unfairness of providing a tax benefit just to those in employer plans (the Burr-Coburn-Hatch plan limits the credits to households with incomes below three times the federal poverty line). Medicaid would then be transformed into a flexible, state-administered program of additional premium and cost-sharing support for low-income families. States would use the funding to supplement the federal tax credits and allow program participants to use the combined support to pick a coverage option from among competing insurance plans.

In both the case of Medicaid-eligible individuals and people without access to employer coverage, therefore, the conservative alternative to Obamacare would provide subsidized access to coverage, though through a different

mechanism intended to help people enter a robust and competitive market in coverage that enables them to choose from among affordable options and allows their choices to make the underlying health system more efficient and accessible. This means that people receiving coverage under Obamacare's Medicaid expansion and those receiving subsidies through the Obamacare exchanges would have to be given a bridge to the new system with as little disruption as possible.

The best way to transition those in the Medicaid program is through a grandfathering exemption. No one enrolled in Medicaid would be pushed out of the program. People could stay enrolled as long as they remained eligible under the old Obamacare rules, and as long as their states elected to keep the old program structure in place for them. But all new applicants would go into the reformed Medicaid program, and all participants in the old program could voluntarily elect to switch into the reformed Medicaid program.

A great many Medicaid beneficiaries would choose to make that transition as they would be given new choices and the ability to enroll in the same types of mainstream insurance plans available to the middle class—often with significantly greater access to care than they now have in Medicaid. The states would also have an incentive to make it more appealing, smoother, and easier for people to choose the new Medicaid alternative, since the new system would be significantly less costly for state governments. Given these incentives, and the fact that turnover in Medicaid has always been very high, the full transition to the new Medicaid alternative could occur fairly rapidly, yet could be experienced by the people affected as a choice, not a disruption.

The transition to the new health insurance tax credits for those currently receiving subsidized coverage in Obamacare's exchanges would not be as straightforward, but could follow the same general principle. Current enrollees (say, through the beginning of the year in which the alternative is enacted) in plans bought through the Obamacare exchanges could stay in those plans and continue to receive premium credits based on the Obamacare rules, though those credits would not grow year over year as they do under Obamacare. New applicants would instead receive the new tax credit and select from insurance plans in the new, more functional market.

The limited population of existing, subsidized enrollees could choose at any time to transition to new coverage using the new tax credits instead of their Obamacare plans. The new system would be able to offer them lower-cost plans (including catastrophic coverage that could be purchased for a premium equal to the value of the tax credit, and therefore involve no out-of-pocket premium

costs at all), and the credits would help offset their costs if they chose more comprehensive options. Some individuals would find themselves better off remaining in their Obamacare-purchased coverage for a time, and they could do so, but the new system would grow more attractive each year as it brought down costs while the relative value of the Obamacare subsidies declined.

Under the emerging plans to replace Obamacare, HealthCare.gov and the state-based exchange websites would not be necessary, though states could choose to keep theirs or build other exchange mechanisms if they wanted. But the federal tax credits would not be tied to purchasing plans through an exchange, and they would not be used to enforce federal insurance rules.

Of course, not all of Obamacare would require transition rules. The tax increases, the Independent Payment Advisory Board, the blunt and ill-advised Medicare cuts, the various intrusions by the federal government into the practice of medicine, the strict and counterproductive definition of insurance, and much else could be safely repealed, effective immediately, and the only consequence would be a better health care system.

But the insurance provisions of Obamacare have now moved millions of people into new coverage arrangements. Granted, many of those who have switched to new insurance plans did so because they concluded they had no other choice, and they would welcome a law that freed them up to get the kind of insurance they would prefer. For these people, the transition could be swift. But Obamacare also provides massive new subsidies to a relatively small portion of the population, and undoing those arrangements abruptly would be both unfair and unwise. Obamacare's opponents should not make the same mistake its champions made in designing and implementing it.

Building in an adequate transition will not undermine the ultimate effectiveness of an Obamacare replacement plan. The goal is a functioning marketplace where consumers decide how to allocate resources, where all Americans have access to stable insurance, where quality care and medical innovation are rewarded, and where federal support for insurance enrollment is affordable for taxpayers. These are goals that are critically important for the long-term strength and vitality of the country, and they are goals that are more likely to be reached if Obamacare's opponents wisely design short-term transition provisions to defuse opposition to a full replacement plan. ♦

## Five Ways to Improve Education

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

Last week the U.S. Chamber of Commerce released its *Leaders & Laggards* report on K–12 education. The data paint a grim picture. Without meaningful reform and sustained improvement, the United States will lose its edge in global competition, put the economy at risk, and consign future generations of Americans to limited opportunities.

Acknowledging that we have a problem is the “easy” part. Addressing it is where things get tough. Here are five ways we can work to improve our education system:

*First, stay the course on accountability.* It's not always popular, but accountability is crucial to closing the achievement gap. If there are no consequences for underperforming schools, the status quo will prevail and broad swaths of students—most of them minority or low income—will continue to slip through the cracks. This is unacceptable for a nation

founded on the promise of opportunity, and it's a recipe for economic decline.

*Second, allow choice.* When schools prove to be chronically failing, parents should have the option to send their children somewhere else—whether a public or private school or online learning. If schools know there is an alternative, they'll up their game—and the competition will serve students well.

*Third, demand higher standards and implement them.* We've seen a nationwide movement to raise standards so that our students are better prepared for college or career and can contend with international competitors. This signals progress, but we've seen implementation of initiatives, like the Common Core State Standards, lag as opponents or advocates for the status quo spread misinformation. We must drive the debate forward.

*Fourth, encourage innovation.* Though there are exceptions, the American classroom has been virtually untouched by the technology revolution that has swept the rest of society. The smart deployment of

technology could empower teachers, engage students, customize learning, and make schools and districts more efficient. Data should also be used to improve students' performance, enabling educators to predict successes and intervene when risks emerge.

*Fifth, educate our students to be competitive—and employable.* High-growth sectors like information technology require a workforce with advanced skills. We must increase access to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, encourage students to pursue STEM studies earlier and with greater focus, and better train STEM educators.

Some of these changes will be difficult to implement and met with resistance. But can we really afford the alternative, which is to do nothing at all? Our students deserve better, and our economy and competitiveness demand more.



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*'The Raft of the Medusa' by Théodore Géricault (1819)*

# The Misery Index

*Why aren't we doing more to relieve pain?* BY WRAY HERBERT

**H**yrum Neizer was a successful Salt Lake City truck driver and a happily married man until the headaches began. Then, suddenly, for no apparent reason, he was disabled by pain—pain so punishing that he often ended up in the emergency room. He sought help from physician after physician, but the experts were either stumped or skeptical. They either didn't believe his pain was as bad as he

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**A Nation in Pain**  
*Healing Our Biggest Health Problem*  
 by Judy Foreman  
 Oxford, 464 pp., \$29.95

said or, worse, they thought he was faking the headaches in order to get drugs. Even his wife grew doubtful over time. Finally, having lost his job, his home, and his dignity, he stuck the barrel of a gun into his mouth and poised to pull the trigger.

Neizer would be dead if his wife had not happened to walk in at that moment. At her urging, he renewed his efforts to find an answer, and, finally,

another expert ran some tests that no one had run before. The tests revealed that he had two aneurysms: ballooning arteries in his brain. A surgeon operated that night and again soon after. And then the pain was gone.

Hyrum Neizer is one of millions of Americans who suffer from chronic pain. He is also a casualty in what Judy Foreman calls the Opioid Wars, in which the battlefronts are medical, economic, psychological, cultural, and political. And if Foreman is right, these clashes are leaving many Americans to suffer needlessly in an unrecognized public health epidemic.

The problem begins in medical school, where the nation's future doc-

tors learn—or, more accurately, do not learn—about pain. Foreman reports on the way pain biology is taught in medical schools, and what she finds is distressing. Pain is the leading reason why people go to doctors, and it accounts for more than 40 percent of ER visits; yet aspiring physicians get almost no instruction in pain biology or palliative care. According to a survey by the American Association of Medical Colleges, accredited medical schools offer only 8 to 16 hours of pain instruction—over a period of four years. Other studies suggest that the figure is far less. Indeed, only four American medical schools require a full course on pain. Veterinarians receive about twice the pain education physicians do.

This educational failure reverberates through the entire practice of medicine. Most people in pain are cared for by their primary care physician, but primary care physicians have not been taught the best practices in pain management. Doctors themselves know this: In one survey, only about a third said that they were comfortable treating people in chronic pain. What's more, because their pain instruction is so hit-and-miss, young doctors have little interest in becoming pain specialists. As a result, there are only about 3-4,000 pain specialists in America—far too few for the millions seeking relief.

In short, medical education in this country is out of sync with the reality of chronic pain. So it's not surprising that Hyrum Neizer had to shop unsuccessfully for so long before he found a physician who took his suffering seriously and had the skill to diagnose the problem.

But it wasn't just ignorance of biology that Neizer encountered. He also collided with a potent, and completely unfounded, bias against pain medication—opiates in particular. Patients in legitimate pain, who seek relief from agony, are suspected of seeking mind-altering, recreational drugs. Not to put too fine a point on it, they are dismissed as deceptive, malingering drug addicts.

Foreman argues that there are in fact two public health emergencies—epidemics—in America right now, and that they are on a collision course. The

more visible and obvious emergency is widespread abuse of narcotics—pain pills such as Vicodin and Oxycontin, as well as street drugs such as heroin. Abusers, often young people, have created an insatiable demand for these drugs, which can be addictive and life-threatening. The federal government, as a result of this abuse, is cracking down on illicit narcotics. But, ironically, this militancy spills over into the regulation of medical narcotics. This leads to an “opioid conundrum”: Street abusers have a plentiful supply of illegal narcotics, while people in chronic pain—often older people with no history of drug abuse—cannot get the drugs they need and would most likely use responsibly.

Much of this bias is rooted in a misunderstanding—and deep fear—of addiction. The image of the crazed narcotic addict looms so large in popular culture that it eclipses the truth about opiate addiction, which is that many people who take medication for chronic pain do just fine, even if they become physically dependent on the drugs: “They do their jobs, raise their kids, live their lives, maintain stable doses, and achieve reasonable pain relief for years.” Physical dependence and tolerance do not necessarily add up to maladaptive drug abuse, and until this view is altered, the millions who are in chronic pain will likely suffer more than they have to.

Today's cultural collision has deep historical roots, but it has largely to do with the treatment of drugs and addiction as crimes. The pendulum of public attitudes has swung widely over the past century, from tolerance of illicit drugs to a strict law-and-order stance, and these shifts in attitude inevitably shape attitudes toward pain and its treatment. It was physicians themselves who recognized under-treatment of pain as inhumane and called for reforms in regulation. But there remains a pervasive suspicion about narcotics, which allows the epidemic of untreated suffering to continue.

Few would deny potent painkillers, even narcotics, to the terminally ill who are dying of excruciating diseases, including cancer. But the most sobering news in this account is that

even powerful drugs are often not up to the task of pain relief. Opioids reduce pain by only 30 to 40 percent, and nothing, not even higher doses, completely eliminates pain. The result is that, even in hospice and palliative care programs, pain is quite common. Indeed, fully a third of people in hospice report pain right up to the end.

That's bad news for people like Tom Fersch, who was diagnosed with esophageal cancer and endured 15 months of chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery to no avail. His cancer spread relentlessly and took over his stomach, chest, and back, causing constant pain. Fersch was fortunate to even have a palliative care specialist, but it didn't help much. He was on fentanyl patches, oral Dilaudid, and oxycodone, but even that potent combination failed to provide relief.

Fersch died in pain.

*A Nation in Pain* comes to life with people who are dying or who wish they were dying. But Foreman's account goes beyond its emotional appeal and makes some rigorously reported arguments about the failure of the palliative care enterprise in America. It starts with the National Institutes of Health, which, because of its very organization—one institute for cancer, one for heart disease, another for mental illness, and so forth—has orphaned pain. The often-intolerable symptom of many diseases and disorders lacks an institute, a constituency, and adequate funding.

This organizational neglect has other untoward consequences. There are many alternative approaches to pain management that might help where drugs come up short, but, according to Foreman, the medical establishment lacks the will and money to explore these possibilities in any rigorous way. She reviews the evidence, some of it very promising, on acupuncture, massage, nutrition, and other alternative treatments; she devotes an entire chapter to marijuana's potential as a pain reliever, and another to exercise, which may, in the end, be the true magic bullet. Our doctors-in-training learn none of this. And yet, as Foreman argues, fixing the chronic pain crisis is a moral imperative. The failure to do so violates every principle of medical ethics. ♦

# Refracted Glory

*Napoleon on the downward slope.*

BY JAMES M. BANNER JR.



*Napoleon in retreat after the Battle of Laon, 1814, by Ernest Meissonier*

History is rewritten and rehashed—in the lingo, it is “revised”—for many reasons, some of which have nothing to do with politics, ideology, or current academic trends. Sometimes, the reason is the sudden availability of never-before-seen documents; sometimes it’s a historian’s more thorough exploitation of long-known documents. In the case of Munro Price’s latest book, it’s both: Some of the sources he exploits in this fresh take on an old, if rarely focused-on, subject have lain unused for 200 years. Slowly do the mills of historical knowledge do their work.

Its publication coinciding with the bicentennial of Napoleon’s final time in power, *Napoleon* covers the 18 months between the emperor’s failed invasion of Russia in 1812 and his removal from rule by the other European powers in 1814. Those months have often taken

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## Napoleon

*The End of Glory*  
by Munro Price  
Oxford, 344 pp., \$29.95

second place to historians’ preferred focus on Napoleon’s final defeat at Waterloo in 1815, at the hands of Wellington and Blucher after the fiasco of his return to France from exile on Elba. Price treats those Hundred Days as an afterthought and brings their more consequential prelude into the foreground.

Readers should not expect the grand gestures of Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, which covers part of the same period, especially Napoleon’s retreat from Moscow. This is traditional history—war, diplomacy, politics—at its traditional best, as long as you have a taste for it. Sometimes, as with *War and Peace*, you need a crib sheet to keep track of all the figures who pass through the scenery. (Price thought-

fully provides one, although it’s too spare.) You also have to be comfortable with a Great Man approach to the past: Price doesn’t even bother to genuflect to the genres of historical knowledge that paint into the history of warfare and diplomacy the social composition of armies or the cultural context of foreign relations. This book could have appeared 50 years ago, when it would have fallen snugly into place beside many similar ones; today, it’s a bit of an outlier. But that says nothing about its high quality as history.

No power has ever successfully invaded and held Moscow from Western Europe. Napoleon was no luckier than Hitler would prove to be. Napoleon’s failure in late 1812 inaugurated the beginning of the end for the man who has fascinated successive generations with his military and political genius—genius of a kind that, like all others, eventually flagged and gave out. This is the setting of the history that Price relates. It’s the story of still-brilliant military leadership and congruent diplomatic cunning that slowly went awry through illness, the skills of adversaries, and the turn in French public opinion that, eventually, even Napoleon could no longer satisfy. Introducing public opinion into the story is where Price offers his principal addition to previous scholarship.

Until Napoleon invaded Russia, he seemed indomitable. After that, distance, winter weather, and Russian generalship made Napoleon look seriously vulnerable for the first time. On his return from Moscow in the following months, and until he lost his imperial throne in 1814, he struggled to make up, in actual strength and reputation, what he’d lost in both. In effect, he failed in that campaign, too, but only after many subsequent battles, large and small, and especially his disastrous defeat at Leipzig in 1813. While he struggled to reclaim the initiative on the battlefield and negotiation table, his adversaries across the continent—Russia and Austria, especially—worked hard to create a military and diplomatic coalition that could check him. The prize was always the German states, namely

Prussia. Part of Price's tale involves Napoleon's efforts to hold onto his Prussian ally while his adversaries attempted to peel it away (as they eventually did) from the French. Once they succeeded in doing so, the die against Napoleon was cast.

Or so it seemed. As long as France stood behind the emperor, the various internal threats to his rule—from royalists hoping to restore the Bourbon monarchy to republicans hoping to end imperial government—could be held at bay. Price's attention to French public opinion gives *Napoleon* its revisionist flavor. Historians' research into public opinion has blossomed in recent years, and Price is no pioneer in this effort, but he is the first to view public opinion in 1812-14 as a critical factor in Napoleon's hold on power as well as a scholar's barometer of the changing realities that the emperor faced. Price relies principally on the unexploited reports of the prefects of France's *départements* (themselves a creation of the revolution, and still in existence). Many of these officials made clear to the emperor the mounting war-weariness of the people as the Napoleonic wars dragged on and casualties mounted to insupportable levels. Reports from police surveillance provided similar information.

It seems unlikely that, had Napoleon not been defeated on the battlefield, he would have been forced by eroding political support to sue for peace. But he couldn't absorb the information about the collapse of French morale his prefects were giving him, or the news of armed revolts against conscription in the provinces. What's more, he remained obtusely faithful to diplomatic demands that the other European powers wouldn't accept. Once the armistice concluded at Prague in 1813 came to an end, so did the hopes of the French people in Napoleon. The result was the resumption of war, this time on French territory ever closer to Paris. It also marked the end of critical political support at home, conspiracies to oust Napoleon in favor of a regent or a Bourbon, and ultimately exile. Not for the last time, the end was symbolized by the entry of foreign troops into the

French capital, this time led by none other than Czar Alexander I.

Price has also dug more deeply than his predecessors into other existing but under-examined archives. This would not be of much interest were the papers not those of two of Europe's leading figures: Austria's celebrated foreign minister, Prince Metternich, and his French counterpart, Napoleon's confidant and foreign minister, Armand de Caulaincourt. Price has also gained access to the private papers of a man with the Kafkaesque name of Carl Clam-Martinic, aide to Field-Marshal Schwarzenberg, the great Austrian commander of the forces facing Napoleon.

Price concludes this complex yet always clearly told tale with what one

senses is a rueful, if sharp, verdict on the emperor. If only he had compromised with his European enemies at the negotiating table, and if only he had accepted the restoration of France's pre-revolution borders, he might have retained his crown. But in continuing to think, in the face of irrefutable evidence, that he might regain his people's backing on the battlefield, Napoleon was "catastrophically wrong." Though his genius had ebbed and he had at last been checked by others, Napoleon might have been able to spend his last years in Paris as head of the French state. Instead, he was left to a lonely existence on distant islands, his glory following him into history but not into what remained of his life. ♦



# Oneself in Others

*The unintended consequences of reading George Eliot.*

BY JAMES BOWMAN

Let's face it. Should Rebecca Mead, a *New Yorker* staff writer, offer us her mere, unadorned autobiography as something to pack along with our pail and shovel as a good beach read, she might risk the odd sarcastic comment from a friend or accusations of presumption or arrogance from those less well-disposed toward her. And yet, she's proud of her life and has the professional writer's urge to share.

What to do? Well, one answer is to hitch the memoir to somebody else's star, somebody of indisputably autobiographical stature. The result is the latest example of that new genre, "part literary criticism, part memoir," that Elaine Showalter calls "the shelfie." It may not top the commercial success of Elizabeth Gilbert (*Eat, Pray, Love*) in turning her less-than-distinguished life story into

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## My Life in Middlemarch

by Rebecca Mead  
Crown, 304 pp., \$25

a celebrity memoir and self-help guide for women, but then what does? George Eliot, *née* Mary Anne (or Mary Ann or Marian) Evans, is Mead's choice of eminent author whose life may be said to shadow her own.

Rebecca Mead, too, was a bookish girl from provincial England, not conventionally pretty but not without her charms for men. She has enjoyed success as a writer in the metropolitan center of the English-speaking world of her day and, on her marriage, became a sudden stepmother to three sons, just as Eliot did to the sons of George Henry Lewes. Such frequently cited parallels give Mead the advantage of self-help at second hand, since George Eliot's life experiences made her very big on wise sayings and how-to-live advice—

perhaps even bigger than she was on writing readable novels, though that is clearly a matter of opinion.

Anyway, these wise sayings have stood Eliot's doppelgänger, like many other readers over the last century, in good stead. In fact, to tread in Mead's footsteps for a moment, allow me to furnish you with an autobiographical tidbit of my own. I have read *Middlemarch* four times in my life—twice as a student, twice as a teacher—and apart from a basic outline of the plot and the nature of the pain suffered by the two principal characters (bad marriages in both cases), there are really only two things I can now remember about it. One is Caleb Garth's advice to Fred Vincy about coming to work at a proper job, where you need to "love your work, and not be always looking over the edge of it, wanting your play to begin." Very true, said I to myself, as a lad of about Fred's age. And I have always sought to live by that advice. The other thing I remember is this famous passage:

If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence.

As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.

Profound, don't you think? Mead certainly does, finding in it evidence of the author's opinion that "if Art does not enlarge men's sympathies, it does nothing morally." Mead's own sympathies, like those of most readers, vibrate in tune with the sorrows of the novel's marriage martyrs, Dorothea and Lydgate. "I am able," Mead claims, "not only to imagine their vivid, solipsistic experience but also to see them from Eliot's authorial perspective of heightened, mature sympathy. In viewing them I am invited to shed my wadded layers of stupidity, and

to listen for the sound of growing grass."

Unfortunately, she does not tell us what she hears when she listens for the sound of growing grass, but we can be pretty sure it's not growing grass. Nor, presumably, has she successfully shed her wadded layers of stupidity, since doing so—according to George Eliot, anyway—would have resulted in her death. In other words, Rebecca Mead turns out to be not that careful a reader of the one book she says gives meaning to her life. What she takes to be a recommendation for infinitely expansive sympathy is actually a warning of sympathy's limitations, even in "the quickest of us." And although we may

The vogue, among professional readers of English literature, is all for "deconstructing," which is the opposite of learning life lessons from Victorian novelists. Instead, we are, in effect, posthumously schooling *them*, demanding that they see the injustices in their society that are so clear to us but are missed by them and nearly all their benighted contemporaries. Mead is aware of the scholarly milieu out of which her book emerges; she writes of the squirrel's heartbeat passage that

This kind of editorializing can strike today's reader as awkward and off-putting. We're wiser now, we think, than to believe in the authoritative

inclusiveness of the first person plural; feminist or Marxist or post-colonial theory has made us conscious of perspectives that have been excluded by, or don't care to be encompassed by, its embrace. We may even be writing from one of those perspectives ourselves. (I humbly submit: when I write "we," I mean by it "I, and hopefully you.")

How touching, this modest attempt to reclaim the common reader's "we" from its political and academic exile! She is likewise self-deprecating in her account of her (albeit

long dead) rival for the position of Eliot's acolyte, whose name, like her own, is only four letters long and begins with the letter "M." In 1875, Alexander Main produced, with the author's permission, a volume titled *Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings, in Prose and Verse, Selected from the Works of George Eliot*, which was a huge success and went through numerous editions during Eliot's lifetime and after. Mead's account of her predecessor's labors and his "assumption of intimacy" with the great woman is at times rather sour, yet she writes, "I recognized in his enthusiasm for her works enough of my own admiration for her to feel an awkward fellowship with him."



George Eliot, Rebecca Mead

stipulate that Mead knows something of "vivid, solipsistic experience," this does not mean the word "solipsistic" is appropriate to describe the experiences of the novel's characters. She is projecting her own solipsistic experiences onto them, as she does throughout this book.

I have to say, however, that I find my own sympathies enlarging, not quite painlessly, to encompass even Rebecca Mead and her earnest, schoolgirlish, almost Victorian, effort to extract from the greatest work of a classic novelist something of the meaning and purpose her life must otherwise lack. It is so much at odds with how we are nowadays taught to read these works!

L TO R: NEWS.COM; ELISABETH C. PROCHNIK

Though she doesn't quite acknowledge it, that fellowship extends to the revolutionary assumption, once common but now long out of use, that we might have something to learn from the past. You won't find much original wisdom in this volume, any more than you would have done in Mr. Main's, apart from what, with a bit more effort, you can get for yourself from *Middle-*

*march* or a straightforward biography of George Eliot. One exception is when Rebecca Mead observes that "a book may not tell us exactly how to live our own lives, but our own lives can teach us how to read a book." Just so. Her own may not directly take on the academic correctors of the past, but it does suggest how we might live our lives so as to learn from it. ♦

BCA

# Eager to Please

*Jeff Koons and the kitchen-sink approach to art.*

BY JAMES GARDNER

In theory, this Jeff Koons retrospective is a big deal. It has taken over the entire Marcel Breuer fortress at 945 Madison Avenue—an honor that, if memory serves, has been accorded to no previous artist. Perhaps more important, it is the last exhibition that the Whitney will ever mount in the Brutalist landmark that has housed the institution for nearly half a century: Sometime next spring, the museum will reopen in a new and far vaster venue in the Meatpacking District, three miles to the south and west. Thus, even those members of the press and public who, for years, have taken a somewhat skeptical view of the Whitney's doings cannot look with an entirely dry eye upon this powerful reminder of the evanescence of earthly things.

In a sense, there is, or should be, added poignancy in this tribute to an artist who is now in his 60th year. For it was in these very galleries, some 25 years ago, that, with one imperishable basketball floating in a fish tank and one metallic simulacrum of an inflatable rabbit, Jeff Koons commenced that sustained ascent from anonymity to wealth and status in the art world.

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Jeff Koons  
*A Retrospective*  
Whitney Museum of American Art  
Through October 19



'New Hoover Convertibles' (1981-87)

To lay my cards on the table, I have never thought much of him: The doctrines that inform his work—having to do with postmodern appropriation, abjection, and the critique of consumerism—were none too impressive, even when they were fresh and

new, three decades ago. The fact that Koons appropriated his forms and had them assembled or executed by others—a process once thought challenging—now seems scarcely worthy of mention.

If, with a gun to my head, I were compelled to emphasize the positive, I should have to admit that Koons is not boring and that, in his almost servile eagerness to please, he has managed to fill the cavernous galleries of the Whitney with colorful, diverting stunts that make for a pleasant afternoon. That is more than I could muster for the gray and overrated dullness of Jasper Johns, another and earlier creation of the Whitney fame machine.

Certainly the works on view at the Whitney get your attention, and for several powerful reasons: first, because they tend to be bigger than you and are arrayed in brilliant colors—which humans tend to like; and then, because they re-create in new materials things we are used to seeing in other materials. Thus, the inflatable bunny looks for all the world to be plastic—but it's metal! Similarly, a 10-foot pile of brightly colored Play-Doh—that fixture of baby boomer childhood—is actually fashioned from polychromed aluminum.

As Koons has aged, his eagerness to please has grown only stronger. His earliest works, those floating basketballs and vacuum cleaners in glass cases, were relatively chaste affairs, their punning point being the reenactment (in baser materials) of the solemn artifacts of the Minimalist movement, then only recently deceased. Boring! Koons has not repeated the mistake. Instead, he seems willing to do anything to win the viewer's attention, which usually means pornography. And allow me to say, as an aside, that pornography—in purely rhetorical terms—rarely gets the respect that it deserves. Say of it what you will, it pierces the intellect with the speed and instantaneity of sight itself. And so, in Koons's images of himself copulating with his erewhile wife, the Hungarian-Italian porn star Cicciolina, or in his multihued images of actress Gretchen Mol as Bettie Page straddling a plastic

JEFF KOONS / WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

porpoise, he compels the attention of all but the most jaded viewer.

There has always been a subtext of hypocrisy in Jeff Koons's public persona, an imputation he has embraced with such exuberance that to mention it at all is to seem to fall into a trap, to risk that most unconscionable of fates: to appear to miss the point. Savor this bilious morsel from Rosalind Krauss, the septuagenarian doyenne of art historians, as quoted by curator Scott Rothkopf:

Artists' interest in using the media against itself was formerly subversive and parodic, beginning with Dadaism. . . . Koons, on the other hand, is not exploiting the media for avant-garde purposes. He's in cahoots with the media. . . . It's self-advertisement, and I find that repulsive.

Clearly, Krauss has not understood that to inveigh against Koons's selling out, against the absurd sums that his works command, is to fail to understand that that marketability is (we are assured) part of his critique of late capitalism, or the art market, or both, or something else.

Which brings us to the real issue with Koons's art and that of many of his contemporaries. In the history of Western painting and sculpture, a work was either good or bad, or somewhere in between. What makes so much contemporary art distasteful—in entirely new ways—is the absurdly inflated claims that are being made for it. If Jeff Koons's work were presented to us as nothing more than an ocular diversion, an impish entertainment, we should have no problem with what he does. But we are asked to swallow Rothkopf's pronouncement that "the boundaries [Koons] has broken are unique to his historical position within art's great narrative and draw on the larger forces—technological, financial, social, and otherwise—of the moment in which we live." That is the point at which this sort of thing becomes nauseating.

Rothkopf's quote also underscores something else: The Whitney retrospective is surely one of the most defensive, insecure exhibitions ever

mounted. The whole point of the wall texts and the catalogue seems to be to persuade visitors that Koons's art is not, as one may suspect, a con or a joke or, more grievously, something entirely lacking in intellectual heft. I overheard an earnest docent on the second floor explaining to her listeners that, despite what they had heard about the astronomical prices Koons's works command, the artist had invested a great deal of his own money in them. And despite the works' appearing to be simple reproductions, each of them had actually been preceded by a great deal of thought. Rothkopf writes, "For an artist who has persistently claimed to have little interest in craft per se, Koons has arguably pursued it more ruthlessly than any of our age."

Even in matters of opinion, this is demonstrably untrue.

I was struck, however, by something that Koons said on *The Colbert Report* two years ago: "The art isn't in the

object . . . [it] happens inside you, the viewer." There is, believe it or not, an important point embedded in this statement. It succeeds in articulating, in few words, the dominant thrust of not only Koons's art, but of most of the contemporary art that is taken seriously today by major museums, critics, and collectors. The works of Koons, Damien Hirst, Matthew Barney, and a legion of others are indeed less concerned with aesthetics—how things look—than with the engendering of an affective response inside the viewers.

In the perceptual imperative of the older aesthetics, there was an appetite for visual engagement, for the sense of human intelligence robed in perceptual form, that finds almost no satisfaction in recent art. And yet, this is what I seek—perhaps all I seek—from visual culture. But it is nowhere to be found in the work of Jeff Koons or his contemporaries, and what they offer in its stead is, with rare exceptions, nothing that I want to have. ♦



# Here They Stood

*Confessions of a literary pilgrim.*

BY MARK MAIER

When I was 16 years old and obsessed with the Glass family stories of J.D. Salinger, I convinced three of my friends to set out for Cornish, New Hampshire, in hopes of meeting the reclusive author. I'd recently read an unauthorized biography of Salinger that had provided some clues concerning how to find his home, but at some point during the journey, it occurred to me that I didn't have much of a plan for what would happen if I actually found Salinger.

What could I possibly say to the man? Would I be run off his property?

*Mark Maier is assistant to the provost, and lecturer in English, at Hillsdale College.*

It never occurred to me, then, to be concerned for his privacy. When we finally found what we believed was Salinger's mailbox, I called off the search, losing all nerve. In the end, I was content to visit the local grocery store, which was likely patronized by J.D. Salinger. This was enough for me: to be in the place where my hero shopped, where he bought his milk and cereal.

That was my first literary pilgrimage, but it was far from the last. Over the last two decades, I've completed several more, although never to the home of an actual living author. I'm content to remain on the periphery.

My travels began in earnest in 1999, the year I married a fellow English major and literary tourist/pilgrim. Our

first trip was to visit the grave of Edgar Allan Poe in Baltimore. Since then, we've been to 45 states together, as well as three foreign countries. While each trip wasn't solely for the purpose of literary tourism, there was always some literary site nearby—"nearby" being liberally defined—that called to us. What self-respecting English major could refuse a mere 246-mile detour off I-80 to visit Ketchum, Idaho? It's not every day you are *only* four hours from the spot where Ernest Hemingway lies buried. Besides, as an added bonus, we got to see where Ezra Pound was born, in Hailey, Idaho.

That neither of us is a particular fan of Pound's poetry is beside the matter: These shrines might pale in comparison to the shrines of the saints in medieval cathedrals, but in our modern world, where football stadiums and shopping malls might be the only proper destinations for a pilgrim, I'm much happier spending my time among literary ghosts.

Through the years, we've visited John Steinbeck's Salinas Valley, Walker Percy's New Orleans and Greenville, Mississippi, William Faulkner's Oxford, T.S. Eliot's St. Louis, and the final resting place of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald in Rockville, Maryland. We've been to Hemingway's Michigan and Key West, Eudora Welty's home in Jackson, Willa Cather's Red Cloud, Nebraska, and J.F. Powers's Collegeville, Minnesota.

We visited the Concord of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and the Alcotts—the highlight of which was stopping at The Old Manse, once home to both Emerson and Hawthorne. (In the window of the north study, visitors can still see where Nathaniel Hawthorne carved into the glass with a diamond this phrase: "Man's accidents are God's purposes.")

We also visited Herman Melville's Arrowhead in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where, looking out on Mount Greylock, Melville saw his great white whale in the snow-covered mountain.

Our most profound experience came

on a recent visit to Flannery O'Connor's Andalusia, her home from 1951 until her death in 1964. This was actually our second visit to Milledgeville, Georgia, as we spent a day of our honeymoon detouring to the town in hopes of finding O'Connor's grave. While neither Milledgeville nor a cemetery is the quintessential romantic destination, we were only a few hours away; how could we resist the temptation? At the time of our first visit, Andalusia was inhabited and not open to the public, and while making preparations for the trip, I



Flannery O'Connor and peacock at Andalusia (ca. 1961)

recalled reading stories of pilgrims being chased off the property by a shotgun-toting cousin. I didn't know if there was any truth to these stories, but I concluded that it might be best simply to stop and pay our respects at Memory Hill Cemetery, or maybe just stick our heads into Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

Fortunately, Flannery O'Connor's Andalusia was opened to the public in 2003, and it has since become a genuine landmark. It was in this house that O'Connor spent her remaining years after receiving a diagnosis of lupus, the disease that had killed her father. It was here that she completed her two novels—*Wise Blood* (1952) and

*The Violent Bear It Away* (1960)—and her collections of short stories, *A Good Man is Hard to Find* (1955) and *Everything that Rises Must Converge*, published posthumously in 1965.

Most of the letters collected in *The Habit of Being* (1979) were also written in this house, and, standing on the porch, I found it hard not to think about the countless luminaries (and pilgrims) who visited O'Connor over the years. Andalusia, indeed, was frequented by some of the most important literary figures of the 20th century. I was struck by the same thought while visiting Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford, where the list of pilgrims can be found in a guestbook: Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott, Alfred Lord Tennyson, John Keats, Lord Byron, Thomas Hardy.

I signed the guestbook in both places.

Andalusia is part of a 544-acre farm and includes most of the original structures extant in O'Connor's lifetime. There is even a peafowl aviary on the land, although none of the original flock survived long after O'Connor's death. Since O'Connor's lupus made it difficult for her to climb stairs, her bedroom is on the main floor, with windows looking out on the surrounding acreage. O'Connor's room is immediately to the left upon entering the front door, making it the first thing one

sees in the house. Here are O'Connor's crutches and typewriter. In the kitchen, you see a table set for two—O'Connor and her mother Regina—and the refrigerator purchased by Flannery after the sale of the television rights for "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." Behind the house is the barn, which calls immediately to mind Hulga Hopewell and the traveling Bible salesman/atheist Manley Pointer from "Good Country People."

For me, it was overwhelming. Almost everything appeared as though Flannery O'Connor were still alive, as if the world about which she wrote still existed.

Yet news of these pilgrimages often elicits puzzled expressions from others,

even pity for our children. I would be the first to admit that there is nothing conventional about our vacation practices, and while we might relish the uniqueness of our travels, we have reflected about them as well. Inhabiting places where authors lived and worked, viewing the landscapes of novels and stories that we have treasured over a lifetime, connects the imagination with concrete experience. There is certainly a sense that we are paying homage to our literary heroes; we are also trying to instill in our children a proper reverence and love for literature, hoping that they will come to share in something that has drawn us together.

Being in these places opens up a new, almost tangible, connection with their corresponding works of literature. Perhaps it is akin to what Binx Bolling in Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer* calls "certification." Rather than seeing everyday reality transformed on a movie screen into places heretofore only encountered in the imagination, such places become real in a way that's hard to articulate but difficult not to feel.

Maybe part of the allure is hope. Maybe seeing the places that inspired great art offers some sort of clue, some way of looking at the world, that will translate into a vision we make our own someday. ♦

the fact that Westlake almost died in infancy due to an inability to digest milk of any kind, even mother's milk. Now I can say, and for the first time: Thank God for the soybean!

"We do write what we know, whether we know it or not," Westlake admitted. In *Dancing Aztecs* (1976), a character has a scam job soliciting writers to submit manuscripts for a price—a job Westlake once had. He writes, "Everybody in America, it seemed, had glared at the TV set and said, 'I can write better than that.'" And then he adds, "It was amazing how many of them were wrong."

We find a panel discussion among all of Westlake's pen names, complete with an overbearing moderator who strives to insert himself into the mix, and an essay from Abby Adams, his third wife, discussing what it was like to be married to all those characters. There is copious advice on writing. There are introductions for other writers and generous responses to fan letters. Westlake had an encyclopedic knowledge of literature, which he discussed with respect and constructive criticism.

In addition to comic caper novels, hard-boiled mysteries, and westerns, Westlake early on dabbled for easy money in primitive pornography, what he called his "euphemism" novels: "It's easy to get to fifty thousand words when you can't call anything by its rightful name." Unapologetic, he believed no writing was ever wasted in learning the craft. There is even a recipe for May's Famous Tuna Casserole, featuring a white sauce in place of the traditional can of cream of mushroom soup and the addition of spinach, rendering it even less palatable to children.

Here is how Westlake ended a letter he sent to Stephen King after King's near-fatal accident: "As you said to me the first time you met me years ago at Tavern on the Green, don't die." Would that Westlake had taken this excellent advice: At 75, he undoubtedly had several dozen more books in him. Still, *The Getaway Car* inspires us to sit down with a bottle of Amsterdam Liquor Store Bourbon—"Our Own Brand"—to toast a genius and to count our blessings that we have one more chance to savor Westlake's words. ♦



# Westlake Lives!

*Tasty morsels from the late master's larder.*

BY SUSAN VASS

Imagine that a beloved family member has died unexpectedly, leaving a huge void in your life. Logic dictates that you will never hear another word from the deceased again. But then, the departed contacts you in an hours-long séance! The medium in this case is an editor named Levi Stahl; the spirit is Donald E. Westlake, who died in 2008. This book is the message.

Granted full access to Westlake's archives, Stahl has done a superb job of panning gold from Westlake's river of personal material. In normal gold-panning, the trick is ferreting out enough tiny nuggets to make it worthwhile. But here, judiciousness is called for, knowing which nuggets to feature from the embarrassment of riches. Westlake's friend and fellow crime novelist Lawrence Sanders has written a loving foreword, praising Stahl for "separating the best of the wheat from the rest of the wheat—Don didn't do chaff."

Stahl emphasizes that this is a book

*Susan Vass is a writer in Arizona.*

## The Getaway Car

*A Donald Westlake Nonfiction Miscellany*  
edited by Levi Stahl  
Chicago, 256 pp., \$18

for fans. If you are not already familiar with Westlake's vast oeuvre, walk briskly to a bookstore and scarf up any title you see. Read, laugh, and marvel at the wit, the bone-deep pessimism that never slides into cynicism. I am a rabid fan, having read the entire Dortmund series to the point of near-memorization. It matters not that I know how everything turns out: The joy is in the journey, in Westlake's way with words. His all-too-human characters never wear out their welcome—although Kelp, the car thief, became marginally less enchanting when my own car was stolen. Twice.

*The Getaway Car* has so many fetching surprises that I hate to spoil any. Still, readers need to know about some of the uncovered nuggets. Among the fascinating autobiographical details is

# The Big Slide

*Fans aren't exactly flocking to the cineplex.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

**T**he summer of 2014 confirms it: Hollywood is dying. By “Hollywood,” I mean the industry that produces mainstream, conventional movies that are made and distributed by big studios. This summer was a great disappointment for the business, with total ticket sales down 15 percent from the year before: the “Worst Summer Since 1997,” declared the *New York Times*. Some say it’s because several would-have-been hits were delayed (a Pixar film, especially). But the truth is, it’s far worse than that. Summer 2014 has definitively exposed a secular trend that has been underway for nearly a generation.

The number of tickets sold in the United States has floated between 1.2 billion and 1.5 billion since 1996. This year, Hollywood will be lucky to make it to 1.2 billion. But here’s the thing: In 1996, there were 270 million Americans. In 2000, 282 million. In 2007, 301 million. In 2011, 311 million. In 2014, there are an estimated 319 million. Hollywood has sold the same number of tickets every year, give or take, while the population has grown by nearly 20 percent.

The conventional wisdom in Hollywood says that 2014 has been flat because audiences are rejecting “more of the same,” as Brooks Barnes said in the *Times*. Too many superheroes, too many sequels, too many old faces. Boring. But there’s nothing new about the sameness: The biggest ticket-seller of 1995 was *Batman Forever*, which was both a comic-book superhero film and a sequel to a sequel.

Perhaps the reliance on such fare was



Chris Pratt

what created the trend. But sameness in popular culture is far less of a problem than you might think. The Tin Pan Alley wordsmith Gus Kahn once quipped that every popular song says “I love you” in 32 bars. Golden Age Hollywood was nothing but sameness—westerns and musicals and romances, all with pretty much the same plots—and still, in 1946, 90 million Americans went to the movies every week.

In any case, there’s a reason Hollywood repeats itself obsessively, and it’s not because financiers and studio executives are desperate to tell the story of obscure comic book superheroes like Ant Man (the name of an actual picture that will open next year). They make such movies because, in a business in which bosses are constantly being fired, the usual fare is a safer bet than anything else.

The story of 2014 is not that people are tired of the usual fare; it’s that the usual fare can’t just be usual. The year’s biggest hit, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, has been a spectacular success because it’s a comic-book superhero movie that takes its inspiration from the Bill Murray comedies of the 1980s. It’s fast and colorful and very, very

funny—with a dazzling star turn by a previously all-but-unknown actor named Chris Pratt. But it stays firmly within the conventions of its genre.

The second-biggest hit, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, is nowhere near as good—but it, too, plays variations on the form by evoking the paranoid leftist thrillers of the 1970s, like *The Parallax View* and *Three Days of the Condor* (down to having that movie’s star, Robert Redford, play the villain part).

Both *Guardians of the Galaxy* and *The Winter Soldier* were made by Disney—the only filmmaking machine that seems to have a strategic sense of what it’s doing. It made last year’s mega-hit, *Frozen*. And it made *Maleficent* with Angelina Jolie, another of this year’s rare box office triumphs. It recently paid \$4 billion for the rights to the most successful franchise in movie history and next year will release the seventh *Star Wars* film—which will almost certainly be the biggest hit of 2015, with the next Pixar (also owned by Disney) release, *The Good Dinosaur*, a likely second.

What is it about Disney that has given it such a command of the American pop-culture psyche? The answer is that its movies are straightforward and unironic. Both *Frozen* and *Maleficent* are very earnest fairy tales. Even *Guardians*, which is basically a comedy, has nothing campy or self-mocking about it. Pixar has always distinguished itself by refusing to go for cheap laughs, which is why it has become a beloved brand in a way that DreamWorks (which began around the same time) never has. DreamWorks is *Shrek*—a jokey pop-culture put-on. Pixar is *Toy Story*—funny, moving, original.

In trying to tell stories straight, Disney finds a way to connect with its audiences. The same is true of James Cameron, who made the two most successful movies of all time—*Titanic* (1997) and *Avatar* (2009)—even as the business was in such decline. Maybe that’s why Americans are increasingly giving up on the movies: They know Hollywood, as a general rule, is just going through the motions. ♦

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

**"Mitt Romney has said he's not running for president in 2016—but if he were to run and win, he's sure he'd be a lot better at the job than Hillary Clinton."**

**—CBS News, September 7, 2014**

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# Romney 'absolutely not' running for president

**UNVEILS SLOGANS HE WON'T USE**

*Calls Romney2016.com web registration 'a gag'*

BY ROBERT COSTA

In an effort to put to rest recent rumors that he was considering another run at the White House, Mitt Romney announced this morning he is "definitely not" going to run for president in 2016. Speaking from the steps of his La Jolla, California, home, Romney—tanned and rested, his hair perfectly groomed, dressed in a dark blue suit, white shirt, and red tie, an American flag pinned to his lapel—read prepared remarks to the assembled crowd of reporters he had invited.

"America is at a crossroads. War and tyranny are spreading around the globe; our economy remains stagnant; the policies of this president have made America less safe, less free, and less prosperous, and the current moment calls for an American to stand for office and turn back the tide of big government and appeasement," Romney began, staring



Romney shows reporters a T-shirt that he 'certainly will not use.'

wistfully out at the Pacific Ocean for a moment, before concluding, "I am not that American."

When pressed by reporters after concluding his hour-long remarks, Romney was adamant that his time on the political stage was over. "Oh, golly, no, no, absolutely not, I'm not running. I don't know where you guys get this bunkum," he declared, picking up a baby from a woman in the front row and attempting to make it smile. "I mean, for Pete's sake, you guys practically expect me to get up here with a campaign slogan ready—like, 'R-O-M, N-E-Y, Romney,

Romney, He's Our Guy,'" he continued, pausing briefly to gauge the crowd's reaction and cross something out on a sheet of paper, before adding, "Vote Romney, by gum-ney?"

With Romney now officially out of the race, the former governor says he's looking forward to spending more time with the people in his life who really matter. "Next week I'll be heading off on a little retreat with some of my dearest friends, Beth Myers and Matt Rhoades—

MITT2016 CONTINUED ON A6

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