

**HONG KONG
TAKES TO THE
STREETS**
ELLEN BORK • CLAUDIA ROSETT

the weekly

Standard

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SANDSTORM

The Middle East in chaos

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT



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COVER BY DAVID PALUMBO

Free Mumia's Email!

THE SCRAPBOOK gets a lot of attention-grabbing emails, plaintive appeals from Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi and Gabby Giffords warning that civilization as we know it is going to end RIGHT NOW (unless we pledge \$5 or more to fight Republican extremism before the midnight fundraising deadline). We thought we were inured to the political celebrity come-on. But last week a new name popped up in the sender column: Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Readers of a certain age will remember Mumia as the Black Panther who was arrested for the murder of Philadelphia policeman Daniel Faulkner in 1981. The spectacle of his trial drew national attention because Mumia believed all the right (i.e., left) things and was so devoted to his beliefs that he chose to represent himself in court, even though he was being tried for a capital crime. He made such a spectacle of himself that the court eventually assigned counsel to him. He was convicted and spent 30 years on death row, before his sentence was commuted, in 2011, to life without parole.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is an interesting cultural figure. He's a symbol of the lawlessness and radical politics

that made "tough on crime" one of the more successful political stances of the 1970s and '80s. A wholly unsympathetic figure, he's the kind of defendant who caused middle Americans to reflexively side with law enforcement for a generation.

He's also the last of the left's glorious political prisoners. From Julius and Ethel Rosenberg to Alger Hiss to Bill Ayers to the SLA, the left spent two generations fixating on and defending a series of criminals. It was a curious predilection—that liberals felt they had to man the barricades for thugs, murderers, and traitors just because they were fellow travelers—but every political movement has its idiosyncrasies. What makes Mumia Abu-Jamal noteworthy isn't that he was part of this train of causes. No, what makes him interesting is that he was the caboose. He was the last "political prisoner" to capture the hearts of the left in a lasting way. For whatever reason, after liberalism had its affair with Mumia, it woke up the next morning and was scared straight.

All of which is why THE SCRAPBOOK was surprised by the email from Mumia. It wasn't from his actual email account, but rather from a do-gooder nonprofit group, Picture

the Homeless. They have enlisted Mumia's help in publicizing their annual fundraising gala in New York. This year's guest of honor will be Frances Goldin, a "longtime warrior for social justice." What does Miss Goldin do? Why, she's a literary agent. In fact, she's Mumia's agent. Hence the email, which is a testimonial from Mumia on behalf of his agent, in an attempt to solicit donations for a charity that's supposed to help the homeless. If there's a more picaresque example of liberalism in the wild, we haven't seen it.

By the by, this is actually the second bit of outreach from Mumia Abu-Jamal in recent weeks. The first was a press release the day before the email noting that Mumia would be giving the fall commencement address for Goddard College in Vermont.

Because of his unfortunate incarceration, he won't be appearing at Goddard in the flesh. Rather he will pre-record his speech and it will be played at the ceremony. Maybe it's a sign of progress on the part of the American left that the press release was sure to note that it was the students—not the aging boomer administrators—who had chosen to honor Abu-Jamal. ♦

How the Game Is Played

Many youngsters dream of an NBA career, despite warnings from parents and coaches about the meager odds.

THE SCRAPBOOK will confess to thousands of hours of childhood spent honing dribbling and jump-shot skills. As was the case for countless others, the orange hoop on the side of our garage that we aimed at with middling results came from a

company called Lifetime, which, as it's based in Utah, naturally bills its products as "Made in the USA."

So we were sorry to read in the *Wall Street Journal* last week that a class-action lawsuit has cost the company well over \$1.3 million. Why? The bolts and the net packaged with Lifetime's hoop come from China. California, where the lawsuit originated, has strict definitions of what constitutes "Made in the USA." "If even one rivet in a larger product is foreign,"

the *Journal's* Timothy Aepfel writes, "state law says it amounts to false advertising to call it U.S. made."

In today's global economy, it's not unusual for consumer goods to have inputs from all around the world. Yet protectionists and trial lawyers are eager to punish America's remaining manufacturers by quibbling over archaic definitions. John Donboli, the trial lawyer responsible for the suit, seems to think the definition of "Made in the USA" should be similar to that of kosher hot dogs. He told

the *Journal*: “I think there are some things where it just makes sense to stick to a 100% standard,” he says. “Otherwise, why even bother?”

THE SCRAPBOOK thinks “why even bother suing” might be more to the point. The *Journal* notes other lawsuits based on similarly absurd semantics. In one, “A maker of helium tanks designed to be used at children’s parties was sued because it started packing imported balloons with the equipment.”

If the trial lawyers are to be believed, they’re just doing it for the consumers, not their own payday. In the Lifetime case, the court “awarded plaintiff’s attorneys \$485,000, and Lifetime agreed to donate an additional \$325,000 to charity and to offer discounts to consumers who had bought basketball equipment in the past. One of the two named plaintiffs was awarded \$4,500, the other \$3,500. The company says the bill for its legal team added an additional \$535,000.”

TopClassActions.com reports that those eligible in the class action suit can receive a “\$12.50-\$30 Gift Card or Free Basketball.” But only if they live in California.

Final score: Trial Lawyers, +\$485,000. Lifetime Products, -\$1,300,000. Plaintiffs, +\$8,000. Eligible Class Action Members, Up to \$30 or a free basketball.

What a game! ◆

The Elk Club

Politico recently hired Timothy Noah to be the publication’s labor and employment editor. Noah is a former *Slate* and *New Republic* columnist known for being liberal. Of course, most reporters on the labor beat are pro-union, so you’re probably wondering what the news is here. Well, that would be Noah’s hiring, in turn, of Mike Elk, former editor of *Huffington Post* and *In These Times*, to help him cover the beat.

THE SCRAPBOOK hesitates to call Elk a reporter—he’s more of an activist who happens to call sources.



HONG KONG'S FORTUNE

In fact, a few years ago Elk lost his gig at the *Huffington Post* after lending his press credentials to a union activist. The activist then used Elk’s credentials to gain entry into a mortgage bankers’ conference and disrupt it. Earlier this year, Elk wrote a long, tortured item at *Huffington Post*, in which he explained that he’s evolved on the question of journalistic ethics—he now believes he should have some.

Elk describes his style of reporting as “sh—t-kicking” and says that he’s prone to outbursts. In fact, he’s made headlines for starting pointless feuds with other reporters. This is mostly because Elk feels inclined

to defend his ex-partner Rania Khalek, who likes to spout off on social media about Jewish journalists supporting “Israel’s racist ideology” and circulate photos of herself flipping off a photo of Bibi Netanyahu alongside a Putin propagandist. Whenever these debates get too heated for Elk, he backs off by reminding everyone he has Asperger’s syndrome, and it’s not nice to go after people with mental health issues. Then there was the time that Elk launched an Internet crowdfunding campaign to pay for his vacation, which caused much sighing and headshaking.

So that’s the baggage that comes with Mike Elk. But before he gets

completely dismissed, it's worth noting he's not all bad. He's likable on a personal level. And if you scrape away the unprofessionalism and ideological bias—admittedly a lot of spade-work—you can learn a lot from Elk's writing on labor issues. He comes from a union family in Pittsburgh and is, for better and for worse, all about solidarity. He spends a lot of time with union sources who might not trust other reporters. If he gets his issues under control and is given a firm editorial hand, there's a possibility he could become a great labor reporter.

However, it's open to question whether Noah is the man to rein in Elk's poor instincts. On Twitter last week, Noah was asked what he was going to do to "ensure some balance of perspectives," and Noah responded, "We're going to do straight news right down the middle." Three days later, Elk was on Twitter crowing about handing out Steve Early books to colleagues in the newsroom at *Politico*. Early is the Noam Chomsky-approved author of *Save Our Unions: Dispatches From A Movement in Distress*.

Hey, this is America. THE SCRAPBOOK believes in second chances. And fourth and fifth chances, if they're sincere. Honestly, we're hoping Noah and Elk surprise us. ♦

Irving Kristol on Jews and Judaism

In 2011, James Ceaser reviewed in these pages a posthumous collection of Irving Kristol's essays, *The*

Neoconservative Persuasion. Ceaser was particularly struck by how interested Irving Kristol had been in religion:

Religion is the most important theme running through this collection, the focus of more essays than any other topic. Irving Kristol was not just a Jewish intellectual, but an intellectual who wrote about Jews, Judaism, and the Jewish Problem (Jews in relation to Christianity). . . . Kristol's early essays on Judaism, written in the shadow of the Holocaust, contain some remarkable reflections on the long history of Jewish-Christian relations from the Middle Ages. His most original contribution, however, comes in his treatment of American Jews. . . . Jews, by his account, have failed in thinking through clearly their own situation and determining how best to navigate some of the challenges they now face.

THE SCRAPBOOK agrees—as always!—with Ceaser, and is therefore very pleased to report that Kristol's essays on Jews and Judaism have now been collected and published as an ebook, edited by Gertrude Himmelfarb, who has provided a fine introduction. The ebook is available for your iPad and iPhone via Apple's iBooks app, and on Kindle and the Kindle app via Amazon. Visit mosaicmagazine.com/books for more information.

As our distinguished contributing editor Charles Krauthammer writes, this collection of "deep and subtle theological writings . . . brilliantly illuminates the deepest layers of Kristol's thinking about God and man. A revelation—and an education." So order, read, and enjoy. ♦

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Summer of My Discontent

S ometime in mid-February, after the long winter, baseball fans are delighted to read, usually over a two-paragraph-long story buried beneath the fold in the sports pages, the tag line Pitchers and Catchers Report. They are reporting, of course, to spring training two or three weeks ahead of the rest of their teams, and the announcement bodes the first news of the lengthy and leisurely baseball season ahead. Pitchers and Catchers Report is a happy herald, what a large trout leaping out of the water might be to a fisherman getting out his gear, or the wafting smell of garlic to a glutton entering an all-you-can-eat restaurant.

As a baseball fan in Chicago, this past spring I was looking forward to a fine season. My allegiance is split between the city's two teams, though in recent years I have been following the White Sox more ardently than the hopeless Cubs—now, as a well-worn local quip has it, well into the second century of their rebuilding program. My temperament, never given to boundless optimism, hasn't allowed me to become a zealous, or die-hard, Cubs fan. The team's record, as the politicians say, speaks for itself. The Cubs have not won a World Series since 1908 and not been in another since 1945. Going into September in 1969 the team had an insurmountable 10-game lead over the New York Mets, which of course the Mets surmounted. In fairly recent appearances in playoffs, they have found a way to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

The White Sox have been another kettle of crayfish. That the White Sox play in the weak American League Central division gave the team the look of a serious contender. But things, as

things will, quickly fell apart. In April, the promising rookie Avisail Garcia fell diving for a low line drive in right field and was said to be out for the season with a shoulder injury. (He returned in late August, when, in effect, he was no longer needed.) In May, the team's pitching ace Chris Sale had arm trouble and was on the disabled list for roughly a month. Other injuries took key players out of the lineup. Those still playing fell into deep hitting slumps.

A few bright spots emerged. The



White Sox acquired a third baseman named Conor Gillaspie from the San Francisco Giants, where a local sports columnist compared his fielding and throwing to “Johnny Damon wearing boxing gloves.” Playing for the White Sox, Gillaspie fielded his position respectably and hit around .300 much of the season. The brightest news was José Abreu, a 27-year-old first baseman from Cuba, who figures to be rookie of the year.

Yet not even Gillaspie and Abreu and Chris Sale (after his return) could take the gloom off an irretrievably dismal season. By June the White Sox were slipping out of contention; by July the hope was that they could compile a win-loss record above .500; by August even that minimal goal had to be abandoned. In September watching the team felt like serving detention.

Clutch hitting for the White Sox was almost entirely absent all summer long. If the team fell behind, you could be certain that there was little chance of its ever coming back to win the game. To derive the number of men the team left on base would require the calculator of an astronomer, for it was stratospheric. All summer the bullpen was a problem. Under the tyranny of the new interest in pitch count, a manager now takes his starting pitcher out of a game once he has thrown more than a hundred or so pitches, no matter how well he is doing. The idea is to save the pitcher's arm—save it, perhaps, for the junior prom. For the too Pale Hose, as I came to think of the White Sox, this meant throwing the outcome of the game into the hands of its inept bullpen, an act comparable to hiring known arsonists to work for the fire department.

Traditionally, the readiest solution for so dreary a season is to fire the manager. The White Sox manager is Robin Ventura, in his playing days an All-Star third baseman for the team. Ventura is handsome, even tempered, reasonable, and generally intelligent, but under his stewardship over the past three years the team has sunk deeper into torpor. Might it be that managing a team in the doldrums is a job not for Robin but for Batman, some bullying, slightly nutty, politically incorrect, less than fully intelligible uncouth fellow on the model of Ozzie Guillén, the team's former manager, the mad Venezuelan who took it to a World Series nine years ago?

Preparing to watch another World Series without a Chicago team in it, I ask, What is to be done? The question was posed first by Chernyshevsky, then by Lenin, and now by me, a disheartened couch potato awaiting mid-February and the life-enhancing notice that once again Pitchers and Catchers Report.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

After Holder

During his confirmation hearing in early 2009, Eric Holder declared he would not politicize the Justice Department. Yet throughout more than five years in office, the attorney general has done just that—without objection from President Obama, who obviously paid no heed to Holder’s promise. Indeed, it is manifestly clear that Holder and Obama approach law the same way: Where necessary, it may be manipulated—or ignored—in pursuit of political ends.

Holder has announced his resignation, and we recognize that Obama is unlikely to pick a replacement as close to him as Holder has been. With any luck, the nominee will be someone who realizes that being at least an inch or two independent of the president might be good for the Justice Department and the country. We are under no illusion, however, that Obama will choose a successor to Holder who has a more traditional understanding of law. After all, he is Obama.

Still, the situation is not futile, since the confirmation hearing will offer Republicans an opportunity to show how under Obama and Holder the law has in critical contexts been abused for political purposes. This could prove a deterrent to Holder’s successor, such that some new abuse is not attempted. It could also help Republicans begin to frame an important argument as 2016 draws near: for a president—and an attorney general—committed to restoring the integrity of the Justice Department.

Among the items worth raising during the confirmation process is one that involves the department’s Office of Legal Counsel, an elite unit of lawyers who provide first-class legal advice not tilted in favor of a president’s political agenda. Early in Obama’s first term, David Barron, a liberal Democrat installed by Holder as the acting head of OLC, signed an opinion concluding that legislation to give the District of Columbia a voting member in the House of Representatives is unconstitutional—a position the Justice Department has held since 1963, regardless of the party in power. But because Holder, like Obama, supports such legislation, he asked the deputy solicitor general whether his office could defend the bill in court and was told it could—whereupon he overruled OLC.

The problem here was not that OLC was overruled, which is permissible but rarely happens. The problem lay in how it was done. As Ed Whelan, the legal writer who was principal deputy in OLC from 2001 to 2004, wrote at the time, “the right way” for the attorney general to over-

rule OLC is “to conduct a full and careful formal review of the legal question.” And if that review yields “the conclusion that [the attorney general’s] position [is] in fact the best reading of the law . . . then [the AG] would sign a written opinion to that effect.”

Instead, said Whelan, Holder “adopted a sham review that abused OLC’s institutional role”; he signed no opinion giving his reasons for reversing OLC. “Holder didn’t ask for [the deputy solicitor general’s] best judgment as to whether the D.C. bill was constitutional. He instead asked merely whether his own position that the bill is constitutional was so beyond the pale, so beneath the low level of plausible lawyers’ arguments, so legally frivolous, that the solicitor general’s office, under its traditional commitment to defend any federal law for which any reasonable defense can be offered, wouldn’t be able to defend it in court.”

A second item concerns Holder’s notable decision to stop defending in court the Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage (in traditional terms) for purposes of federal law. In his February 23, 2011, letter to Congress announcing that decision, Holder said it was consistent with the Justice Department’s “longstanding practice of defending the constitutionality of duly-enacted statutes if reasonable arguments can be made in their defense.” The implication was that there were no reasonable arguments that could be offered. That was not true—the procreation and childbearing argument surely is a “reasonable” one. No, Holder simply refused to make such arguments, a position inconsistent with “longstanding practice.”

The Supreme Court, which ruled against DOMA in the 2013 case of *United States v. Windsor*, was not impressed with Holder’s position. Said the majority: “[W]hen Congress has passed a statute and a President has signed it, it poses grave challenges to the separation of powers for the Executive at a particular moment to be able to nullify Congress’ enactment solely on its own initiative.” In his dissent Justice Scalia wrote, “There is no justification for the Justice Department’s abandoning the law in the present case.”

A third item pertains to the Internal Revenue Service and its targeting and harassing of conservative nonprofits. When the scandal broke in May 2013, President Obama called it “outrageous” and “unacceptable” and forced the resignation of the IRS director. Special prosecutors are seldom a good idea, but here the case is compelling, says Georgetown law professor Nicholas Rosenkranz, since the basic allegation is that the IRS treated some taxpayers differently

on account of their politics. The framers of the Constitution, he observes, would have been horrified at the thought of a government free to do that.

Holder should be, too. But for more than a year now, in what looks like another example of politicized lawyering, he has refused to invoke the department's special counsel regulations and name an outside lawyer to address a matter of very high public interest. The anti-conservatives at the IRS must be pleased.

A fourth and final item involves the National Voter Registration Act, which was enacted in 1993. It mandates that states remove from their registration lists ineligible voters—those who have died or moved away. But as John Fund and Hans von Spakovsky report in their timely new book, *Obama's Enforcer: Eric Holder's Justice Department*, the attorney general has refused to enforce the statute. "Not a single such lawsuit has been filed since the beginning of the

Obama administration, despite the fact that there are many jurisdictions all over the United States where the number of registered voters is larger than the voting age population, according to the Census Bureau."

What explains the absence of cases? The coauthors cite former employees of the department's Civil Rights Division who told them Holder imposed a policy of nonenforcement on grounds that maintaining accurate voter rolls is a "voter suppression" tactic and that it would reduce the number of minority voters—who tend to vote heavily Democratic.

There is much else regarding the department's less than faithful execution of the law that could be explored during the hearings. But this set of issues would suffice to illustrate what the country does not have but so plainly needs—a Justice Department guided by standards of justice uncorrupted by politics.

—Terry Eastland

A Teachable Moment

How to introduce students to conservative thought? It's hard. The colleges and universities aren't interested. The media and popular culture are hostile. What if young Americans nonetheless become aware of the existence of such a thing as conservative thought? How to convey its varieties and complexities? Even tougher. You can write articles and put things online, but there's an awful lot competing for young people's attention these days.

But there's good news nonetheless. Help has arrived. Its name? President Barack Obama.

The decomposition of the Obama presidency has created what Obama might call a teachable moment. This is, needless to say, a loathsome phrase, reeking as it does of liberal sanctimoniousness and professorial condescension. Still, who can resist appropriating it, if only for this one occasion? Because it is, really, a moment. It's a moment when minds can be opened to conservative truths, ears can be induced to hear conservative insights, eyes can be fitted with contact lenses so as better to see conservative arguments.

Are the young struck by the dashed hopes of Obamacare? Give them a copy of Friedrich Hayek's *The Fatal Conceit*. They can't believe the Secret Service farce? Introduce them to James Q. Wilson on bureaucracy. They're befuddled by the exploitation of an unfortunate incident in Ferguson? Have them read Edward C. Banfield's *The Unheavenly City* (especially the chapter he titled "Rioting Mainly for Fun and Profit"). Liberalism's domestic policies aren't working quite the way they were supposed to? Acquaint them with Irving Kristol: "I have observed over

the years that the unanticipated consequences of social action are always more important, and usually less agreeable, than the intended consequences."

Are they horrified by the results of Obama's foreign policy? Let them study Churchill: "For five years I have talked to the House on these matters—not with very great success. I have watched this famous island descending incontinently, fecklessly, the stairway which leads to a dark gulf. It is a fine broad stairway at the beginning, but after a bit the carpet ends. A little farther on there are only flagstones, and a little farther on still these break beneath your feet." Do they wonder what happened to the virtue of courage? They can ponder Solzhenitsyn: "A decline in courage may be the most striking feature that an outside observer notices in the West today. The Western world has lost its civic courage, both as a whole and separately, in each country, in each government, in each political party, and, of course, in the United Nations. Such a decline in courage is particularly noticeable among the ruling and intellectual elite, causing an impression of a loss of courage by the entire society."

Does it sometimes seem no one is saying what is obviously true? Read Orwell: "We have now sunk to a depth at which restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men." Does it sometimes seem no one is doing what is obviously right? Consider C. S. Lewis: "We make men without chests and expect from them virtue and enterprise."

So seize the day. Grasp the moment. Don't let the collapse of the Obama presidency go to waste.

—William Kristol

Appeasing Iran



Hands off our centrifuges.

Last week Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu went to the U.N. General Assembly and the White House to warn against letting Iran become a nuclear threshold state. He may be too late. With the Obama administration walking back its longstanding demand that Iran dismantle its centrifuges, the clerical regime in Tehran will soon be on the threshold of a nuclear breakout.

This fact is not lost on the White House. Recent appointments and statements underscore the administration's new posture toward Iran—*détente*.

Newly charged with overseeing Iran policy is Colin Kahl, appointed last week as Joe Biden's national security adviser. A senior fellow at the Obama-friendly think tank Center for a New American Security who worked at the Pentagon from 2009 to 2011, Kahl replaces Jake Sullivan as point man for the administration's secret talks with Iran. Sullivan's job was to persuade Iran to sit for talks at which the White House would deal away all its leverage in exchange for nothing. Kahl's job will be to convince U.S. allies and Obama's opponents on Capitol Hill that acknowledging Iran's right to enrich uranium and then easing sanctions is a really good idea—because, finally, the United States has no choice.

At his think tank job, Kahl oversaw a research project dealing with Iranian nuclear issues and coauthored a report, "If All Else Fails: The Challenges of Containing a Nuclear-Armed Iran." It was widely regarded as a trial balloon to gauge public response to a policy, containment, that the

administration claimed to oppose. Obama, after all, has said he means to prevent Iran from acquiring the bomb. However, Kahl and his colleagues argued, "prevention—up to and including the use of force—could fail, leaving Washington with little choice but to manage and mitigate the consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran."

The question that Kahl's paper failed to answer was this: Given America's vastly superior military, diplomatic, political, and financial resources, and an abundance of resolve in protecting our interests in the Persian Gulf as well as our regional allies, how could we, a superpower, fail to prevent a third-world regime from acquiring the bomb? The answer is that the White House could fail at prevention because it didn't believe success was worth the cost.

After all, Obama officials have contended, military strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities might force Tehran to retaliate by ordering terrorist attacks against American regional interests and allies as well as the U.S. homeland itself. It's worth noting, however, that the White House hasn't balked at waging a preemptive military campaign against the Islamic State and other Syria-based jihadist organizations that are planning, or may in time plan, attacks on American targets.

Applying to the Islamic Republic the logic the White House applies to the Islamic State would suggest a massive aerial campaign against Iranian targets. But that's not what the administration has in mind at all. As Obama has explained, the Iranians are rational. Yes, it's a shame they employ terrorism to advance their interests, but at least they have strategic interests. In contrast, as Obama told the U.N. two weeks ago, organizations like the Islamic State only understand the language of force. And yet a state sponsor of terror like the Tehran regime has earned the right to sit with the United States and other world powers and bargain over its nuclear weapons program.

So the Islamic State controls territory between Syria and Iraq and rightly has the administration's attention. Iran, an expansionist regime waging war throughout the Levant, controls four other capitals in the Middle East besides its own—Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, and Sana'a. Yet administration officials see a bright future ahead working with it.

"A nuclear agreement could begin a multigenerational process that could lead to a new relationship between our countries," said Philip Gordon last week. Gordon, the White House coordinator for the Middle East, was last heard from at the height of the Gaza war, when he advised Israel to treat its neighbors better. That Hamas rocket fire forced the evacuation of the Tel Aviv conference hall where Gordon was speaking is perhaps the perfect encapsulation of the White House's Middle East policy.

The Obama administration has a picture of the Middle East that is impervious to reality. The Islamic Republic is not more rational than the Islamic State simply because it is a real nation-state. Far more human suffering has been caused by states than by terrorist militias. And that is the

reason Iran is so dangerous: It has devoted the resources and institutions of a state to acquiring nuclear weapons and to creating a terror infrastructure outside its borders. *Détente* is really too euphemistic a term. The White House's new Iran policy is appeasement of the regime and acquiescence in its nuclear ambitions.

—Lee Smith

Support Hong Kong



Protesters sleep on a street near the financial district.

Hong Kong

Just before midnight on October 2, Hong Kong's top leader, CY Leung, rejected demands of democracy protesters that he resign and Beijing reverse an August 31 edict blocking political reform. Instead, he appointed his deputy to begin talks with leaders of the student-dominated protest movement. In a galling aside, he added, "I will not resign because I have to continue with the work for elections." Leung himself is unelected and supports the plan by China's leaders to screen candidates for loyalty to the Communist party that set off a student-led boycott of classes and the continuing protests.

Protesters had demanded Leung's resignation after the arrest of student leaders (later released) and the use of tear gas against protesters who have occupied downtown Hong Kong for the past week.

During that period, tensions mounted as Beijing backed Leung and castigated the protests in front-page editorials in the *People's Daily*, the Communist party mouthpiece. In the late afternoon Thursday, Hong Kong police openly resupplied riot gear at government offices. Protest leaders appealed for more people to join the crowds outside the chief executive's office. Shortly before midnight, students huddled around radios. Instead of the news they hoped for, they heard Leung designate his number two, Carrie Lam, to meet with students.

Leung's sop to the protesters may defuse tensions for a time, but it does nothing to solve the underlying problem—the clash between Hong Kong's values and those of its Communist rulers. Although the people of Hong Kong are realistic about the prospects for political reform in China—"impossible," several demonstrators said Thursday—they are firm about preserving Hong Kong as a society based on the rule of law, with freedoms of speech and association, underpinned by the autonomy they were promised when the United Kingdom returned Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1997. That means being able to speak openly about the Communist party's massacre of democracy protesters on June 4, 1989, in Beijing and jailed mainland dissidents like Liu Xiaobo, the Nobel Peace Prize winner. Such freedom is denied on the mainland.

It also requires a leader accountable to and chosen by them, rather than Beijing. Above all, it is Leung's illegitimacy that outrages the people of Hong Kong. Wall posters at the demonstration refer to him by his nickname, "689," the number of votes he received in the 1,200-member, mainly pro-Beijing, committee of local grandees that currently selects the leader for Hong Kong's 7.2 million people.

Allowing a democratically elected leader in Hong Kong would require a major concession from Xi Jinping, the most powerful general secretary of the Chinese Communist party in recent history. Like Leung, Xi Jinping has given his answer: More than a dozen mainland citizens who expressed support for the Hong Kong demonstrations online or in public have been detained or harassed, according to China Human Rights Defenders.

Xi and Leung appear to be trying to wait out the protesters. Beijing may prefer to avoid force, but a harder line is always possible, perhaps starting with more arrests, a curfew, or provocations designed to discredit the protesters. China's People's Liberation Army maintains a garrison in Hong Kong.

The Obama administration remains aloof. On Wednesday, neither the president nor Secretary of State Kerry pushed back publicly when China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, warned Washington to mind its own business, despite the fact that support for Hong Kong's autonomy and democracy is established policy and a matter of U.S. law. The next day Leung made his stand, backed up by images of the police force bringing ammunition into his office.

—Ellen Bork



Thousands of protesters occupy Hong Kong's Admiralty district, September 30.

Democracy in China?

The people of Hong Kong want a real say.

BY CLAUDIA ROSETT

Should it matter to the rest of us that Hong Kong has erupted this past week with demonstrations for democracy? China's rulers say this is an internal matter. Western leaders, while expressing concern, seem inclined to agree.

In the streets of Hong Kong, tear gas and arrests have not stopped the protests; they have fueled them. The growing turnout has raised the specter of China's Tiananmen Square uprising 25 years ago, and its grim suppression with the bloodshed of June 4, 1989. Many are warning that Hong Kong's bid for its basic rights cannot end well.

Let us set aside for a moment the temptation to second-guess the tactics of Hong Kong's democrats. It is important to understand what's at stake. For

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25 years, the world has admired the photo of a lone man standing up to a column of tanks in Beijing. Different time, different place, and a new cast of characters. But fundamentally, this is the same confrontation. The desire for democratic rights is again colliding in the streets with the interests of China's powerful dictatorship.

China will draw fresh lessons from how this shakes out. So will China's fellow tyrannies around the globe. Hong Kong is protected—at least in theory—under the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, which laid out the terms on which Britain handed this former Crown Colony back to China in 1997. Under the agreement, Hong Kong was promised 50 years of “a high degree of autonomy,” an arrangement summed up by former Chinese ruler Deng Xiaoping with the formulation “one country, two systems.” The result is that Hong Kong,

perhaps more than any other place on the planet, occupies an extraordinary position between the tectonic plates of dictatorship and democracy.

For Hong Kong and Beijing, the current earthquake has been decades in the making. I witnessed its early stirrings when I arrived in Hong Kong in 1986, to spend the next seven years working on the editorial page of the *Asia Wall Street Journal*. Hong Kong was then a British colony. There was no self-rule. But there were some major benefits. Hong Kong had free markets, British rule of law, and a colonial government that answered, ultimately, to British voters. There was accountability.

It was clear back then that Hong Kong had the makings of a successful independent nation—more so than many of the newly formed countries which in the postcolonial era following World War II were gaining independence. Hong Kong's people were never given that choice. Britain had wrested Hong Kong from China in the 19th-century Opium Wars, later leased the adjacent New Territories, and in 1984 decided to hand it all back—transforming Hong Kong in 1997 from a colony of Britain to what is effectively, if not officially, a colony of China—a Special Autonomous Region.

In this arrangement, Hong Kong

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was promised the opportunity to choose its own leaders. It was clear that genuine elections were the best hope for Hong Kong's free society insulating itself against China's tyranny. It was also clear even under the British, back in the late 1980s, that the fix was in. The British colonial government, prone to opining that Hong Kong's people were apolitical and had no real interest in electing their own leaders, had no intention of introducing direct elections. It was left to Beijing to interpret that promise.

And so, after years of evasion, delay, and creeping influence from China, came the trigger this August for the current protests: Beijing's decision that in 2017, Hong Kong's people would be allowed for the first time to vote for their chief executive—undercut with the cynical proviso that nominees for the post would effectively be chosen by Beijing. This is both repressive and insulting. Not only would it transform the long-promised vote into a sham, but it would present Hong Kong's people with the dilemma that in the very act of voting, they would be endorsing the fraud.

Last month I was in Hong Kong, and while there I went to speak with one of the most venerable figures of Hong Kong's democracy movement, 76-year-old Martin Lee. Eloquent, soft-spoken, and indefatigable, Lee still speaks and marches in the forefront of Hong Kong's protests, though he is no longer the most prominent face of dissent. That torch has passed to the much younger generation now wielding cell phones and parasols in the streets, in the movement quickly dubbed the umbrella revolution. But for a clear articulation of the big picture and basic issues, Lee has for decades been a clarion voice.

Lee is a barrister and former long-time member of Hong Kong's Legislative Council. We spoke in his chambers, where he keeps behind his desk a bust of Winston Churchill and a replica of the Chinese statue of liberty that protesters in Beijing, in 1989, built in Tiananmen Square. I asked him why Hong Kong's people would risk defying Beijing. He gave

a simple answer. For most of Hong Kong's seven million people, the territory is home. They are doing it, he said, for the generations to come, "For their children."

He pointed out that Hong Kong is a city in which the modern miracle began with huge numbers of refugees fleeing the horrors of China's 1949 Communist revolution. For many of them, at the time, it was enough to live under British colonial rule. Compared with China, Hong Kong was a place of enormous opportunity. But it was not theirs. In those days, said Lee, people saw Hong Kong as a "borrowed place, at a borrowed time"—a stepping stone to some more permanent home for themselves or their descendants. "Nobody thought of remaining in Hong Kong. Nobody took Hong Kong as our own city."

That changed, he said, in 1989, with the massacre of the Tiananmen protesters. Hong Kong's people turned out in huge demonstrations. They no longer looked at the city as a borrowed place. The refugees from China and their descendants had built Hong

Kong into one of the world's great cities. They had a sense of belonging, says Lee: "We treasure this place. We treasure particularly the things which cannot be found in China."

In that same spirit, the free world should treasure Hong Kong. Yes, the territory belongs to China, but the millions who call it home are steeped in the institutions of free societies. They are demanding the basic human rights that they were promised. The question now is whether China's president, Xi Jinping, and his Communist party cohorts will try to calm Hong Kong by acceding to the democratic demands, or try to crush Hong Kong with force and intimidation. Beijing is now running through the calculus. It would behoove the leaders of the United States, Britain, and the world's other great democracies to speak up far more loudly and clearly than they have so far. If Hong Kong's people are willing to face down Beijing, surely Washington, London, and the rest of the free world should be willing to stand squarely behind them. ♦

The Return of the GOP Hawks

Not that they ever really left.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

The Republican flirtation with dovish noninterventionism is over. It wasn't much of a fling.

For five years, we've been hearing that foreign policy and national security issues would split the Republican party. The new noninterventionists, we were told, buoyed by war-weariness and deep concern over government spending, would mount a serious challenge to the more

hawkish, internationalist traditions of the Republican party.

The supposed paradigm shift was always much more about big personalities and media hype than substantive change. That's not to say there was nothing to the speculation. Some Republicans celebrated the automatic cuts in defense spending required by the sequester, and others contributed to the misinformation about the terrorist surveillance programs. But whatever the real temptations of a GOP return to Robert Taftian

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isolationism and permanent cuts to national security budgets, they're pretty much gone.

Republican Senate candidates in North Carolina, Alaska, New Hampshire, Iowa, Arkansas, and elsewhere are running with a heavy emphasis on their hawkishness. New Jersey governor Chris Christie is hitting Barack Obama on his handling of ISIS. Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal will deliver a speech on October 6 at the American Enterprise Institute on rebuilding U.S. defenses—three weeks after Marco Rubio gave a speech entitled “American Strength: Building 21st Century Defense Capabilities.” Rand Paul, the most outspoken of the new noninterventionists, and a man who has spent much of his time in the Senate railing against hawks like John McCain and Lindsey Graham, is now echoing their calls for airstrikes on terrorists in Iraq and Syria.

“The conservative coalition has always been hawkish,” says Brad Todd, a Republican strategist involved in several campaigns this cycle. “The few doves in the Republican coalition like Rand Paul always get exposed for not being conservative on foreign policy in times of crisis. The doves believe in a false premise—that disengagement brings peace instead of chaos. The same theory has failed in every era of American foreign policy since the 1800s, and it will fail again.”

He adds, “I do think the mess Obama is creating overseas will be a major factor—and a disqualifier—in the 2016 primaries.”

According to a CNN/Opinion Research poll released last week, 69 percent of Republicans call themselves “hawks” and just 25 percent identify themselves as “doves.” Those percentages are even more interesting considering the hackneyed definitions the pollsters assigned to those descriptors. A hawk, they said, is someone “who believes that military force should be used frequently to promote U.S. policy” and a dove believes “the U.S. should rarely or never use

military force.” (I know many reputed hawks who believe that “the U.S. should rarely or never use military force,” but should be prepared to do so when absolutely necessary.)

Among the most-discussed prospective candidates, the reemergence

‘The conservative coalition has always been hawkish,’ says Brad Todd, a Republican strategist involved in several campaigns this cycle. ‘The few doves in the Republican coalition like Rand Paul always get exposed for not being conservative on foreign policy in times of crisis.’



Marco Rubio and Lindsey Graham

of these issues probably benefits Marco Rubio as much as anyone. Rubio, who serves on both the Senate Foreign Relations and Intelligence committees, has made a priority of national security since his arrival in Washington in January 2011. And it was a point of emphasis for him in the 2010 campaign that sent him to Congress.

According to several people close to Rubio, the senator has not made a final decision about whether he'll run for president in 2016. But a recent interview made clear that if he does run, he will do so as a proponent of U.S. global leadership and military dominance.

Rubio called for dramatic increases in defense spending. He said the United States should be prepared to

send ground troops to Iraq if necessary to defeat ISIS. He argued that the United States must “be able to project power into multiple theaters in the world.” He said that the United States should embrace its role as a superpower and “conduct a multifaceted foreign policy.”

These are views that will be popular with the Republican primary voters Rubio will need if he decides to run for president, and they will no doubt be shared by most of his prospective rivals. But Rubio didn't stick to arguments that will play well in focus groups.

Rubio said he wished President Obama had committed the United States more deeply in post-Qaddafi Libya. He called Republican support for the sequester “short-sighted and a mistake.” And Rubio not only embraced foreign aid, he contrasted U.S. foreign aid, which he says is driven by humanitarian and moral concerns, with China's transparently interest-driven aid.

“Our foreign aid is largely built on the idea of compassion—the notion that every human being has native and inalienable rights that are given to them, and we care about those issues. That's why we engage,” said Rubio. “There are ancillary benefits from a geopolitical perspective, but we're motivated to act out in the world because it bothers us that people are starving and hungry and people are dying of disease.”

None of this is new ground for Rubio, as some news reports have suggested. He's been making a similar case for American strength and leadership for years.

If Rubio is the likely 2016 candidate who benefits most from an extended public debate on national security, there are others who could be drawn into the contest because of the prominence of these issues.

In a recent, hour-long interview, Lindsey Graham said if he is reelected to the Senate in November, he will begin exploring a bid for the presidency.

Graham has long been one of the

most active and outspoken hawks in Congress. He has been a voluble critic of the Obama administration on a wide variety of national security issues—Guantánamo Bay, Benghazi, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Russia, Iran, and others. Unlike many of his colleagues, Graham often first seeks to engage the administration privately as it debates policy with the hope that he can help shape the outcome rather than just criticize it after the fact.

But Graham no longer trusts Obama enough to engage him on these matters.

In our interview, Graham repeatedly spoke of the challenges that will face the next president because of the mistakes made under Obama. And he suggested that he might just be the one to fix them.

“If I get through my general election, if nobody steps up in the presidential mix, if nobody’s out there talking—me and McCain have been talking—I may just jump in to get to make these arguments,” Graham said.

I asked Graham about Rubio. Hasn’t he been making many of the arguments you’d be likely to make? Graham wasn’t impressed. “He’s a good guy, but after doing immigration with him—we don’t need another young guy not quite ready,” said Graham. “He’s no Obama by any means, but he’s so afraid of the right, and I’ve let that go.”

McCain likes what he sees in the emerging GOP field, but acknowledges that he’s told Graham to think about running. “I’ve strongly encouraged him to give it a look. I think Lindsey has vast and deep experience on these issues that very few others have. I happen to like a lot of these guys—I like Jeb Bush, Chris Christie. Ted Cruz has gone out of his way to tell people how much he agrees with me on national security.” And Rubio?

“He’s articulate, intelligent, and has all the right instincts. He doesn’t have the background that Lindsey does, but he’s probably as articulate as anyone in our party. I’ve watched him carefully on the Foreign Relations Committee—he’s excellent. Very impressive.” ♦

Maybe the Center Can Hold

2014 and all that.

BY TOD LINDBERG

There seems little doubt that 2014 will go down as a truly horrible year for American foreign policy. From the Russian seizure of Crimea and further irregular incursions into eastern Ukraine, to the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, to a worsening security problem in Afghanistan ahead of an anticipated U.S. draw-down, to the rise of fringe political parties in Europe, to Iran’s onward march to a nuclear capability, to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa—combined with an American public portrayed by pollsters as weary of the burdens of U.S. global leadership as well as a solidly bipartisan majority in Congress for sharply declining spending on national security—well, it’s been quite a pile-on for the “world’s sole superpower.”

Tragically but also comically, in the way of the world, the only good news of 2014 has been the absence of still more bad news. Fareed Zakaria, one of the Obama administration’s more tenacious sympathizers, took to his *Washington Post* column on August 7 to herald “Global Success Stories” in Indonesia and Mexico. He of course promoted it on Twitter to his half-million followers. That happened to be the very day the president was announcing a military strike on ISIS targets to prevent the slaughter of thousands of Iraqi Christians and Yazidis holed up on Mount Sinjar. The juxtaposition led Rosie Gray of *BuzzFeed* to weigh in with a classic put-down: Linking to Zakaria’s exercise in self-promotion—“Wherever you look the world seems on fire. But some of the most populous

nations are making amazing progress”—she tweeted, “not now, Fareed.”

As a summary of the condition of world politics 2014, “amazing regress” would be more apt. This may not be our worst year since the fall of Saigon in 1975. There was 1979, after all, with the Iranian revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, “boat people” fleeing Vietnam, and gas lines at home. Also, we had the 12 months in 1993-94 encompassing the “Black Hawk Down” debacle in Somalia, the further bloody deterioration of former Yugoslavia, and genocide in Rwanda. Or perhaps 2005-06, with Iraq spinning into full-scale civil war, Afghanistan looking to be falling apart due to insufficient international support against the resurgent Taliban, and the lingering effects of genocide in Darfur. But 2014 is certainly going to make any short-list of *anni horribiles*.

Three of the contenders cited above are instructive in more than just the ways of U.S. international misery, however. They also marked inflection points. The tumult of 1979 contributed to the defeat of Jimmy Carter in 1980, and though a rebuilding of military power did begin under Carter after years of decline, Reagan would wed that new policy to a more confrontational stance toward the Soviet Union and a more assertive U.S. role internationally. For the Clinton administration, 1994 was the point after which policies and rhetoric based on a post-Cold War “peace dividend” and the ad-hoc stewardship (such as it was) of foreign policy under Secretary of State Warren Christopher gave way to a more robust view of the need for and value of U.S. leadership. Madeleine

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Albright encapsulated the transformation in her 1996 speech at Georgetown University calling the United States “the indispensable nation.” And in 2007, with Iraq slipping into chaos before his eyes, George W. Bush turned his back on the coalescing mainstream view in official Washington that the time had come to be done with it. Instead, he authorized the troop surge and the switch to a counterinsurgency strategy that would stabilize the country by the time he left office.

Of course the fall of Saigon in 1975 galvanized no such turnaround. The acute sense of limitation produced by military defeat, the debilitating effect of Nixon’s resignation on executive-branch power, and the view in the dominant “realist” policy circles of the day that the best the United States could do was manage decline through such policies as *détente* with the Soviet Union—all fed on each other to produce a long and deep period of U.S. retrenchment.

Which raises the question of where we stand in 2014. Are we heading toward another inflection point and a reassertion of U.S. leadership and influence, as in 1979, 1994, and 2006? Or are we at the beginning of what will turn out to be a protracted period of confusion, uncertainty, and decline, as in the years after 1975?

When the brightest minds of the Obama administration, including the president’s own, took up their positions in 2009, it seems fair to say that two consensus convictions about the United States and the world ran deepest among them. The first was that the United States had squandered much of the advantage of its position of post-Cold War power and influence through the mistakes and follies of George W. Bush and his administration. The second was that American power faced inevitable decline, at a minimum in relative terms, and that the United States should use its temporary position of strength to try to shape a more benevolent international environment for its less-dominant days ahead.

Hence the reset with Russia (designed to lock in Moscow’s active pursuit of a constructive role in

international politics); hence a new diplomatic initiative with Iran (presenting a united global front against an Iranian nuclear weapon and an extensive package of carrots and sticks, from the promise of normal relations on one side to “crippling sanctions” and Stuxnet on the other); hence the de-emphasis on the centrality of transatlantic relations (on the grounds that Europe could take care of itself); hence the “pivot” to Asia (to pay more attention to global powers on the rise)—and hence the president’s personal commitment to ending wars.



Hillary’s Reset Button: Well, that didn’t work.

On the latter point, it seems likely that of all the goals Obama set out in seeking the presidency in 2007–08, this was the one that came closest to and may even have surpassed in importance his top domestic policy goal, health care reform. The Iraq war, an endeavor Obama opposed as a mistake from the beginning, had become a huge drain on American resources essential to “nation-building at home.” Meanwhile, neither could the commitment to Afghanistan be permanent; states must take responsibility for their own security, and the United States must not permit them to perpetuate reliance on U.S. sacrifice.

It would be a mistake to view any of these policy initiatives apart from the convictions underlying them. “Decline is a choice,” Charles Krauthammer argued, and many Obama critics have followed him to that view. But policymakers don’t embark on courses of decline. As Stephen

Sestanovich convincingly demonstrates in his recent book *Maximalist*, American presidents have pursued policies of retrenchment when they believe U.S. commitments have come to exceed capabilities and they are unwilling or believe themselves unable to increase capabilities. That has been the Obama position.

But will retrenchment be successful? “Hope is not a policy,” critics have likewise insisted. But unless a favorable outcome from a policy choice is certain regardless of exigent circumstances, unforeseen consequences, and the decisions of others, hope is *always* an element of policy. One picks from one’s political choices having done one’s best assessment of the likely consequences of each. The accuracy of the assessment is the question, and the test is how the policy fares in action in light of subsequent events, including Donald Rumsfeld’s famous “known unknowns” and “unknown unknowns.”

If this sounds like a defense of the administration’s decision-making, it isn’t: In fact, it points the way toward a deeper understanding of the *failure* of Obama’s policy decisions. Obama set down markers of retrenchment across the globe based on his assessment of the problems facing U.S. policy and strategy. Whether because of those policies or despite them—his defenders will always be able to say, with Jimmy Carter’s national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, that things could have been even worse—the events of 2014 are before us. And no one would call 2014 anything but a bad year for the United States.

Because, really: With Russia’s military takeover of Crimea and irregular incursion into Ukraine, no one can say the reset succeeded in bringing Russia into a constructive role in global politics. As for the supposed decline of the strategic salience of Europe, would anyone now say this assessment was correct with regard to NATO allies on and near Russia’s borders?

With the rise of ISIS, no one can say the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq worked out as planned (or hoped). Nor has Obama’s personal decision (against

the united advice of his top advisers) not to involve the United States in the Syrian civil war on the side of the resistance earlier produced results to the liking of the United States or any of Syria's neighbors, including U.S. allies.

Meanwhile, Iran policy is still riding its grade of "incomplete," but is anyone optimistic these days that Iran is in the mood for a grand bargain bringing the country in from the cold at the cost of a nuclear weapons capability? How to assess something as amorphous as the "pivot" to Asia is a mystery, but would anybody say it is the most important focus of U.S. foreign policy?

Then there's the problem of counterfactuals: In politics, as they say, you begin where you are. We can't go back and un-leave Iraq, nor can we be more assertive in trying to work with the Syrian resistance early on. We can't retroactively admit Ukraine and Georgia to NATO to deter Russian aggression against them (nor would that likely have been a good idea when it was under discussion in 2008). The Iranian nuclear program is where it is, not where it was. And as we now know from events in Dallas, we won't be containing the spread of Ebola to a few hundred cases in West Africa.

So where do we go from here?

If at this point it sounds like I am painting an unrelenting portrait of the failure of Obama administration decision-making, well, that's not altogether right either. Because there are some interesting indications that the troubles of 2014 are closer in spirit to those of 1979 or 1994 or 2006 than to 1975. The administration is adapting to changing circumstances in a fashion that suggests senior officials are recalculating their choices.

A few headline observations: We are back in Iraq, this time at war with ISIS, and the war now extends into ISIS-controlled territory in Syria. Though Obama's plans are still limited in their dedicated means, he himself foresees a multiyear campaign that will "degrade and ultimately destroy" ISIS. This is, if anything, a more startling reversal of course than George W. Bush's surge, and accordingly as big or bigger a tacit admission

of policy failure. And the American people, though perhaps not a majority within the president's own party, seem to understand and support the necessity of this new war effort, notwithstanding their supposed war-weariness.

In changing course, Obama has been immensely aided by senior military commanders who have devoted considerable thought to the question of what might happen in Iraq in the wake of complete U.S. withdrawal. And it now seems that the senior leadership in the Pentagon is on guard against measures insufficient to accomplish the stated objectives of the new policy and is willing to push back internally and possibly in public. I would add that if we had indeed been able to obtain a "status of forces" agreement with Baghdad to maintain a significant military presence in Iraq, which senior military commanders believed was achievable, then it seems to me the Iraqi government would likely have been more tractable and Iraqi security forces more capable than in light of our departure. I also suspect the commander in Iraq and his boss at CENTCOM would have been raising high alarms about the spillover danger of U.S. inaction in Syria.

While Obama has not indicated any willingness to adopt a bellicose posture in defense of Ukraine, he has established U.S. disapproval of Russia's redrawing of international borders by force. The outward manifestation of this disapproval is a sanctions regime that will likely burden U.S.-Russia relations for the foreseeable future. In this, he has found reinforcement from our European allies. Germany has an *Ostpolitik* tradition stretching back two generations, and Vladimir Putin's adventurism has shaken it to the foundation. Obama has also found support from a generation of career Foreign Service officers in the State Department who have worked on Central and Eastern European integration into Western institutions since the end of the Cold War and are personally and viscerally disgusted by Russia's new course. Their ranks enlarge exponentially once you include former officials and the NGO world.

At the same time, Obama has indeed

adopted a more bellicose posture toward Russia in defense of our current NATO allies, especially those on Russia's borders. He traveled to Tallinn, Estonia, to meet with Baltic presidents, there to emphasize the commitment of the United States under Article V of the NATO treaty to defend our allies against armed attack. The renewed urgency of NATO's original mission of territorial defense galvanized what would otherwise have been a sleepy summit in Wales this fall. Here again, Obama found internal political support for such an affirmation in his own State Department as well as capabilities and a familiarity with the challenge inside the Pentagon. Again, I'd be astounded if anybody a year or two ago could have imagined the president taking a special trip to the Baltics to reassure Europeans about the integrity of our alliance commitments.

Now, as well, indications are we will have a much larger force in Afghanistan past 2014 than anyone foresaw a year ago. It looks like the administration may now deem a repetition of the Iraq withdrawal to be imprudent. And we now seem to be ready to go into Africa in numbers large enough to take Ebola seriously.

Of the hopes stemming from resets and diplomatic corrections, only those over Iran remain alive. And the notion that the United States can adroitly lock in gains in a period of comparative strength against the challenges stemming from its relative decline now seems a bit fanciful, if not a kind of hubris. Our normative aspirations may be locked in, but nothing makes them the governing principles of international politics or a meaningful moral core for U.S. foreign policy in the absence of American power and leadership.

And with a nod to Fareed Zakaria, may I note the strong "no" vote in Scotland on independence from the United Kingdom as a sign of "amazing progress"—in this case, against the centripetal forces threatening Europe? It looks like the center may be holding. There are grounds for hope that 2014 will also be the year in which the Obama retrenchment finally ran its course. ♦

Beware the Tortoise

Ed Gillespie plans to come from behind.

BY FRED BARNES

Some winning campaigns are late-breaking. The most famous is Ronald Reagan's surge in the last two weeks of the 1980 presidential campaign. And some candidates are elected after being far behind. Mitch McConnell trailed Democratic senator Dee Huddleston by as much as 30 percentage points in 1984, then won narrowly. To capture the Virginia governorship in 1993, George Allen had to erase a gap of 29 percentage points.

Republican Ed Gillespie's campaign in Virginia against Democratic senator Mark Warner is already late-breaking. A month ago, a poll by Christopher Newport University put him behind Warner, 53-31 percent. "Warner has solid Democratic support, but also strong support from ideologically moderate and conservative voters," the Newport pollster said.

Now Gillespie has cut Warner's lead to 50-41 percent in a Quinnipiac poll. "You can't completely dismiss his chances," Quinnipiac's Peter Brown said. "But no one should forget just how popular Mark Warner has been in Virginia over the past decade. . . . It will be a good deal tougher to go from 9 down to up anything."

Tougher, but not impossible. Gillespie is running for office for the first time, but he's an experienced politician. He spent a decade as an aide to House majority leader Dick Armey, was Republican national chairman, then a Washington lobbyist, took a pay cut to serve as an adviser to President George W. Bush for two years, and was a senior adviser to GOP presidential

candidate Mitt Romney in 2012.

The Quinnipiac poll showed Gillespie has room to grow among Republicans and in populous northern Virginia. He got only 78 percent of the Republican vote in the poll, while Warner was favored by 15 percent of Republicans and 94 percent of Democrats. Attracting more Republicans shouldn't be a stretch for Gillespie.

The Washington suburbs in northern Virginia are another story. It's been a graveyard for GOP candidates—for George Allen's Senate bid in 2012, Romney in 2012, and

Republican gubernatorial candidate Ken Cuccinelli in 2013.

Quinnipiac put Gillespie's support in four counties and the city of Alexandria in northern Virginia at 30 percent and Warner's at 60 percent. Reversion to the mean would move Gillespie closer to 40 percent.

There's a reason for Gillespie's weak showing there. His strategy has emphasized all of Virginia outside the Washington area—until now. He didn't buy Washington TV time until September 25. If he has the funds to stay on the air for the final month of the campaign and if conservative super-PACs get involved, he could pick up significant support in northern Virginia, particularly from Republicans and independents who had been inclined to vote for Warner.

"We have a plan to get Ed's message out and win," spokesman Paul Logan said. "We have the resources to do that. I won't telegraph where we will be spending money on TV over the last month." Warner has outspent Gillespie 3-to-1 on TV so far, Logan said.

And Gillespie is likely to benefit



Ed Gillespie

from the complacency of the Warner campaign. For most of the year, the press has treated Warner's reelection as a certainty, and he acts like he believes it is. There was speculation that Gillespie was running merely as a prelude to a future race in which he'd have a better chance of winning. With his improved poll numbers, that speculation has died. Gillespie says it was never true.

One of his ads in the Washington market is a hardy perennial of the 2014 campaign. It features a video of Warner saying he'd never vote for a reform that would "take away health care that you've got right now or a health care plan that you like." With the Warner video behind him in the ad, Gillespie says: "Mark Warner helped pass Obamacare, denying families the insurance and doctors we trust. I'll replace Obamacare with market reforms that create jobs, pull down costs, and let us keep our insurance and our doctors."

A second Gillespie ad attacks Warner for claiming he's bipartisan. In a Warner ad, the word "bipartisan" shows up three times and "working across the aisle" once. He fails to mention he's a Democrat. In his TV spot, Gillespie says Warner votes with the president 97 percent of the time. "That's not bipartisan."

With the race tightening, Warner has revived a largely forgotten issue, Enron. "The largest corporate fraud in history. Ed Gillespie was their lobbyist," Warner's new ad says. Warner earlier in the campaign cited Enron in billboards and a debate. However, "this six-figure statewide ad buy is by far Warner's most direct and substantial attack on Gillespie's career as a lobbyist," the *Washington Post* reported.

The Gillespie response was terse. "Attacking Ed over a client company at his bipartisan firm 13 years and four jobs ago is the definition of hypocrisy, since it's a company Warner himself owned stock in at the time," said Gillespie spokesman Logan.

Gillespie insists he never expected to be a threat to Warner until late in the campaign. "There's a lot of hares out there and I'm not one of them," he told me. "I'm the tortoise." ♦

Fred Barnes is an executive editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Underwhelming Growth

What the new GDP figures actually reveal.

BY LAWRENCE B. LINDSEY

Two weeks ago the Commerce Department released its final estimate of Gross Domestic Product for the second quarter. That marked five years since the recession ended—a period of massive experimentation with expansionary fiscal and monetary policy. While those policies were doubtless well intended, all they did was what standard economic theory says they would do—move future economic output to the present. They did not by any means increase long-term economic growth.

The headline seemed encouraging—4.6 percent growth in the second quarter. But the first quarter was negative, so the average for the first half of 2014 was just 1.25 percent. If we get, as expected, growth between 3 and 3.5 percent for the second half of the year, 2014 will come in with average growth of just about 2.25 percent. That compares with average growth of 2.2 percent over the last two years, 2.2 percent over the last three years, 2 percent over the last four years and 2.2 percent over the last five years. Does one see a trend here?

Politicians and the media tend to confuse the two, but there is a huge difference between short-term economic stabilization policy and a long-term growth strategy. Consider deficit spending, of which we did roughly \$5 trillion in the last five years. It helps in the quarter in which the money is spent, but creates a gap in

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government finances that requires either higher taxes or lower spending in the future relative to what would have been the case. So the “demand” created by the deficit is really just borrowed from the future.

Or consider the zero interest rate policy of the Fed and the further stimulus caused by its buying of government bonds. An ultra-low interest rate



The Federal Reserve, profligate bond buyer

is designed to encourage firms to build a factory or buy a machine today that they might otherwise not have done or done later. But once that factory is built or the machine purchased, there is less need at some point in the future to build another factory or buy a machine because the firm’s productive capacity has already been increased. So investment spending rises short term, but is merely “borrowed” from investment spending in the future.

The Fed’s bond buying program has a similar effect. By buying almost \$3 trillion of “extra” bonds, the Fed pushed down long-term interest rates and drove up the prices of other financial assets because those who would have bought those bonds had to buy

something else—higher yield corporate debt, or stocks, or even real estate. It is thought that the higher asset prices created a “wealth effect” that induced people to spend more than they would have. Now consider what happens when the Fed lets its balance sheet go back to normal. Those \$3 trillion in bonds have to be bought by someone else. That means less money going into higher yield debt, stocks, or real estate. That means the price of those assets is likely to fall. That in turn will put the wealth effect into reverse.

Let’s face it, if government deficit spending and money printing could produce economic growth, we may as well forget about working harder, getting more skills, or any of the other tedious things that actually generate growth. We could just print and spend. But that’s not the way the world works. So when demand was down in 2008 and 2009 we “borrowed” demand from 2010 and 2011. And when 2010 and 2011 were disappointing we “borrowed” demand from 2012 and 2013. Now we are “borrowing” demand from the second half of this decade. With this as a strategy, you never get to long-term sustainable growth.

The rest of government policy also didn’t really help. In 2009 the administration declared its goal to double exports in five years. It seemed possible at the time as exports had been artificially depressed owing to the global recession. But if the goal was 100 percent cumulative growth over five years, reality fell far short. In nominal terms exports grew only 47 percent over that period, and growth was only 31 percent in real terms. Import growth was only slightly slower, 45 percent nominally and 29 percent in real terms, but because of the larger import base, the net contribution of trade to growth was actually negative over the intervening five years. So much for trade policy.

Perhaps the most striking statistic was in the personal income arena. From the end of 2008, wages and salaries grew only 14.2 percent. Transfer payments in the form of government benefits rose 31.2 percent. This occurred during a period when

STEFAN FUSMAN

the unemployment rate declined 4 points—from double digits to less than a point above “full employment.” It is a safe qualitative conclusion that an economy that sees government benefits rise from 29 percent of wages to 33 percent of wages during a recovery with falling unemployment has some challenges regarding its dynamism. We now have 15 million more people relying on government benefits with 6 percent unemployment than we had six years ago with 10 percent unemployment. That too is hardly a recipe for long-term growth.

This also affects the “participation rate”—the percentage of working-age individuals who choose to join the labor market. Among the middle aged (25-55), participation is down roughly 3 percent in the last six years. These aren’t early retirees and they aren’t kids looking for their first job. They have left. Likely they lost their job, signed up for government programs, and now, particularly if their spouse is employed, face confiscatory tax rates (largely from lost benefits) if they return to work. The programs might be well intentioned. For example Nancy Pelosi noted that Obamacare allowed people to “pursue their dreams” instead of being “stuck in a dead end job.” That’s all well and good, but it does mean a lower labor force participation rate. And fewer people wanting to work is going to mean a smaller potential output for the economy.

So forget the hype about each quarter’s numbers. Last week’s GDP report gives us a five-year perspective that suggests more of the same. We have borrowed demand from the future—and that means the demand is not going to be there in 2015 and 2016 to give us some magic economic lift-off. More troubling, we have pursued policies that limit supply—lowering labor force participation, reducing energy supply, overtaxing entrepreneurship, and strangling the banking system. These also limit our long-term productive capacity. In case you’re on the spot and need an economic forecast for 2015 and beyond? Pick 2.2 percent. It’s worked for five years, and it’s likely to work in the foreseeable future. ♦

Who Lost Turkey?

An ally goes rogue.

BY DANIEL PIPES

Only 12 years ago, the Republic of Turkey was correctly seen as the model of a pro-Western Muslim state, and a bridge between Europe and the Middle East. A strong military bond with the Pentagon undergirded broader economic and cultural ties with Americans. And then, starting with the 2002 elections that brought the Justice and Development party (AKP) and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, first as prime minister and now as president, to power, Turkey dramatically changed course. Slowly at first and then with increasing velocity since mid-2011, Erdogan’s government began breaking laws, turned autocratic, and allied with the enemies of the United States.

Even those most reluctant to recognize this shift have been forced to do so. If Barack Obama listed Erdogan as one of his five best foreign friends in 2012, he showed a quite different attitude by having a mere chargé d’affaires represent him at Erdogan’s presidential inauguration a few weeks ago—a public slap in the face.

What caused this shift? To understand today’s unexpected circumstances requires a glance back to the Ottoman Empire. Founded in 1299, its control over substantial parts of the European continent (mainly the Balkan area, named after the Turkish word for mountain) made it the only Muslim polity to engage intensely with Europe as Western Christians rose to become the wealthiest and most powerful people on the planet. As the Ottoman Empire weakened relative to other

European powers over the centuries, how to dispose of it became a major concern of European diplomacy (the “Eastern question”) and the empire came to be seen as potential prey (the “sick man of Europe”).

Turkey’s defeat in World War I occurred against this backdrop, prompting the army’s outstanding general, Mustafa Kemal, to seize power and close down the empire in favor of the Republic of Turkey, far smaller and limited mainly to Turkish-language-speakers. For the new country’s first 15



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

years, 1923-38, Kemal (who renamed himself Atatürk) dominated the country. A strong-willed Westernizer, he imposed a sequence of radical changes that characterize the country to this day, and make it conspicuously different from the rest of the Middle East, including laicism (secularism on steroids) and codes of law based on European prototypes.

Starting almost immediately after Atatürk’s death in 1938, a reversal of his secularism began. But the Turkish military, in its dual role as the country’s ultimate political power and the self-conscious heir of Atatürk’s legacy, placed limits on these changes. The military, however, is a force for neither creativity nor intellectual growth, so the adages of Atatürk, unceasingly repeated over the decades, became stale and restricting. As dissent increased, the parties holding to his 1920s vision stagnated, degenerating into corrupt, power-seeking organizations. By the 1990s, their revolving-door governments had alienated a sizable portion of the electorate.

In 2001, Erdogan and another Islamist politician, Abdullah Gul,

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founded the AKP. Promising good government and economic growth based on conservative values, it performed impressively in its inaugural election of November 2002, winning just over one-third of the vote. Erdogan focused at first on the economy and racked up Chinese-like rates of economic growth. In foreign policy, he emerged as a powerbroker in the Middle East (for example, offering to mediate peace talks between Israel and Syria) and became the West's favorite Islamist. In the process, he seemed to solve a centuries-old conundrum of relations between Islam and the West, finding a successful blend of the two.

In reality, it seems that Erdogan sought to reverse the Atatürk revolution and return Turkey to an Ottoman-like domestic order and international standing. With that in mind, he weakened the military by contriving preposterous conspiracy theories its top brass had ostensibly engineered. For reasons still unclear, the leadership of the armed forces barely pushed back, even as its top officers were arrested and the general staff eventually fired.

As the military surrendered, Erdogan took aim at his domestic rivals, especially his longtime ally, Fethullah Gulen, an Islamist and leader of a massive national movement with networks placed in key government institutions. As Erdogan demonized his critics, he delighted his base—Turks who felt oppressed by Atatürkism. With each election, he accrued more personal power, as did Hugo Chávez in Venezuela.

International relations followed a similar pattern, with an initial set of modest foreign goals becoming, over time, ever grander and more dangerous. A “zero problems with neighbors” policy enunciated by foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu began successfully as Ankara managed warm relations with Syria and Iran, and mutually beneficial, albeit tepid, relations with Israel. Even longtime foes such as Greece and Armenia gained from Erdogan's charm offensive. The great powers sought good relations. The AKP's neo-Ottoman dream of acquiring primacy among

its former colonials seemed attainable.

But then Erdogan displayed the same arrogance abroad that he had unleashed at home, and to much worse reviews. If a majority of the Turkish electorate applauded his tongue-lashings, few foreigners did. As the Arab upheavals changed the Middle East beginning in 2011, Erdogan and Davutoglu found their accomplishments slipping away, to the point that Ankara now has poor to venomous relations with many of its neighbors.

The break with Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, perhaps the most dramatic of Erdogan's losses, has had many negative consequences. It saddled Turkey with millions of unwelcome Arabic-speaking refugees, led to a proxy war with Iran, obstructed Turkish trade routes through much of the Middle East, and gave rise to jihadist forces. Hostility to Israel ended Ankara's strongest regional bond. Erdogan's support for the short-lived Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt turned into open enmity toward the next government in Cairo. Threats against Cyprus in the aftermath of its discovery of gas further soured an already adversarial relationship. Turkish contractors lost more than \$19 billion in Libya's anarchy.

Internationally, a feint in the direction of buying a Chinese missile system brought security relations with Washington to a new low. Erdogan's urging the millions of Turks living in Germany to resist assimilation caused tensions with Berlin, as did Ankara's possible role in the murder of three Kurds in Paris. These outrages have left Ankara nearly friendless. It enjoys warm relations with Qatar, the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq, and the Muslim Brotherhood, including its Palestinian offshoot, Hamas.

Erdogan will face three challenges over the next year: electoral, psychological, and economic. Having ascended to the presidency on August 28 requires constitutional changes allowing him to become the strong executive president he aspires to be. In turn, those changes require the AKP to do well in the June 2015

national elections; or, alternatively, to make substantial concessions to Turkish Kurds to win their support for his ambitions. Now that the party finds itself in the untested hands of Davutoglu, recently promoted from foreign minister to prime minister, its ability to win the necessary seats is in doubt.

Second, Erdogan's fate depends on Davutoglu remaining his faithful consigliere. Should Davutoglu develop independent ambitions, Erdogan will find himself limited to a mostly ceremonial post.

Last, the shaky Turkish economy depends on foreign money seeking higher rates of return and a host of infrastructure projects to continue growing. Here, Erdogan's highly erratic behavior (ranting against what he calls the “interest lobby,” rating agencies such as Moody's, and even the *New York Times*) discourages further investment, while huge debt threatens to leave the country bankrupt.

With its youthful population of 75 million, a central location, control of a key waterway, and eight mostly problematic neighbors, Turkey is a highly desirable ally. In addition, it enjoys a position of prominence in the Middle East, among Turkic-speakers from Bosnia to Xinjiang, and among Muslims worldwide. The U.S.-Turkish alliance that began with the Korean War has been highly advantageous to Washington, which is understandably loath to lose it.

That said, one side alone cannot sustain an alliance. Ankara's record of friendly relations with Tehran, support for Hamas and the Islamic State, undermining the authority of Baghdad, virulence toward Israel, and threats against Cyprus make it a questionable, if not entirely duplicitous, NATO partner. The Obama administration can signal that the bullying tactics that have won Erdogan votes at home have won him only animosity in the rest of the world. The White House can make clear that unless major changes occur quickly, it will push for Turkey's suspension and eventual expulsion from NATO. If Erdogan insists on acting the rogue, then that's how its former ally should treat him. ♦

Sandstorm

The Middle East in chaos

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

The great medieval historian Ibn Khaldun centered his understanding of history on *asabiyya*, which is perhaps best translated as esprit de corps mixed with the will to power. In his masterpiece, the *Muqaddima*, or *Prolegomena*, the Arab historian saw as the primary locus of *asabiyya* the tribe—a smaller unit than the ethnic group, and the most powerful military unit in Islamic history until the Mameluks perfected the use of slave soldiers. The concept of *asabiyya* is helpful in trying to understand the Middle East today, after the second Iraq war (2003-09) and the Arab Spring (2010-12) together unhinged a dying political order throughout the region.

Today, no Muslim state in the Middle East has an *asabiyya* that peacefully and happily binds its citizens together. Unless new organizing ideas are embraced, we are likely to see the persistence of the Islamic militancy that has shaken the region. The prognosis isn't good, in part because of highly counterproductive American actions. U.S. air raids against the Islamic State and other radical Islamic groups, which only stir the hornets but don't destroy the nest, are unlikely to change the fundamental dynamic that keeps working against us. The surviving secular dictators and even the most religiously conservative kings see themselves as vulnerable to militant Islam because they know that their own legitimacy is questionable and that their rule strains against Islam's deep current of righteous rebellion. The Islamic State's call to the faithful is dangerous because its promise of a new conquest society appeals to young men. It offers the hope that this time the faithful might win.

As is well-known, modern Middle Eastern states, with the limited exceptions of Iran, Egypt, Morocco, and Turkey, were created intentionally or by default by Europeans and Westernized native elites who dropped older imperial or tribal ideals for more empowering modern imports. National consciousness, to the extent it existed, often wrapped around a monarch or an army or both. Even in Iran, Turkey, and Egypt, where geography, language,

common culture, and shared travails forged the strongest sense of nationhood among Muslims, internal differences in ethnicity, language, and faith made the ruling elites always a little uneasy about where the people's affections lay. Would most Kurds stay loyal to the Turkish Republic without the Turkish Army repressing them? Would Iran's Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, and Azeri Turks be attached to the Persian enterprise if Iranian armed might disappeared? Did Egyptians, searching for something beyond the tight confines of the Nile Valley to unite them, want to be pan-Arabist or pan-Islamist or both? Even in Iran, where an ancient culture put up stiff resistance to the Arab legions that conquered everything from the Pyrenees to Central Asia in the 7th and 8th centuries, the Islamic identity never lost that much ground as modern nationalism began to heat up under the Qajar (1794-1925) and Pahlavi (1925-1979) shahs. Despite the best efforts of Western or Western-inspired modernizers, everywhere in the Middle East, for everyone, religion is the primary identity—cherished and nurtured by fundamentalists and the common faithful or constrained, submerged, and coopted by nationalists and secularists.

Secular military dictatorship among Muslims has been a double-edged sword: It helped to build nationalist consciousness; but its injustices and brutality degraded the legitimacy of the state, collapsed traditional mores and elites that had checked centralized power, and fueled the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, which inevitably questions, and often denies, nonreligious affections and loyalties. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his clerical successors, who put mullahs at Iran's political apex, would have been unthinkable without the Pahlavis' bulldozing of the country's traditions. The growth of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood since its founding in 1928 wouldn't have been possible without the Westernization and militarization of the country's ruling elite. Ditto for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which grew as the Baathism adopted by the ruling Alawites (a minority in Syria who follow an offshoot of Shiism) became more savage and sectarian. The successes of al Qaeda and the Islamic State spring in part from the moral convulsions that have come from secular Muslim elites' pounding the old orders into dust and conservative religious elites' recoiling from secularism and feeling guilty about their own moral and political compromises with power and an alluring modernity

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(think of the oil-fed Saudi, Emirati, and Qatari religious establishments, which have done so much to propagate a stern, head-chopping faith).

THE PROPHET'S COMMUNITY

Fundamentalists of all stripes have done well since World War II because others have done poorly. The Islamic State can attract hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Westernized Muslims from Europe and America—something that the Sunni jihad in Iraq against the invading coalition did not do—because it has tried explicitly to re-create the community of the Prophet Muhammad. As the Michigan historian Michael Bonner has put it, fundamentalists need “to create a link with an authentic Islamic past and recover an authentic Islamic practice.” All Sunni fundamentalists are obsessed with the Prophet Muhammad and his society, the first *umma* or community of the faithful. The neofundamentalists are primarily concerned with ethics and the salvation of each believer, while the Islamists want to build or seize a state and push Muslims closer to God by controlling the public square. Either way, this obsession with the prophet can extend to his first four successors, the *Rashidun* or “rightly guided” caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali (d. 661). The centripetal eminence of the prophet and his companions in fundamentalist thought cannot be overstated. It guides the educated—Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-appointed caliph of the Islamic State, reportedly has a Ph.D. in Islamic jurisprudence—as well as those with minimal knowledge of Islamic history and the holy law, like many Western recruits of al Qaeda and the Islamic State. The prophet and his first community, which set the stage for the astonishing conquests of the *Rashidun*, are the spiritual and political gateway to Islam for Sunni fundamentalists. (Shiites, who view Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet, and his descendants as the only rightful heirs to Muhammad, have a different charismatic history.)

In Western eyes, this attraction can look primitive, if not barbaric. In Muslim eyes, it's historically familiar and vibrant. The Islamic State by the act of territorial conquest reestablishes a hopeful connection to the past, something that al Qaeda under Osama bin Laden was never able to do. The Saudi scion had to piggyback on others: in Pakistan, during the Soviet-Afghan war, on the Pakistani military; in Sudan, between 1991 and 1996, on the Islamist general-turned-president Omar al-Bashir; and in Afghanistan, after 1996, on Mullah Omar. Bin Laden's theory of holy war—attacking the far enemy (the United States) over the near one (all the U.S.-supported despotic regimes)—was a tactical response to his predicament. Before 9/11, railing and plotting against America was less troublesome and religiously

more appealing to his hosts than making war on the Saudi royal family or Egypt's Hosni Mubarak. In theory, wounding America was supposed to set the example that would lead to a chain reaction by which good Muslims, in an unstoppable, indignant wave, would down them all.

After 9/11, when it became apparent that an Islamist revolutionary wave was not to be, al Qaeda became a noticeably less optimistic organization. The Anglo-American invasion of Iraq briefly reanimated the mirage of Sunni Muslims rising, but that, too, faded in the hideous, satellite-TV covered, suicide-bombing carnage of Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the founder of a group called Unity and Holy War that later became Al Qaeda in Iraq, itself a forerunner of the Islamic State. More devastating, the conversion of Iraqi Sunni tribes into an anti-al-Qaeda, pro-American, pro-surge fighting force especially confounded al Qaeda's propaganda.

Al Qaeda remains an association of believers that seeks salvation through terrorism. It has no real moral mandate beyond making jihad a pillar of the faith and portraying martyrdom as the ultimate, perhaps the only, means of individual redemption. That frightful aspiration has a very limited target audience since its language and methodology don't loudly echo Islamic history. What the French scholar Olivier Roy observed a decade ago about “radical militant jihadists”—that they “fight at the frontier to protect a center where they have no place,” that “they fight not to protect a territory but to recreate a [virtual] community”—is even truer of al Qaeda today. Bin Laden's successor, Ayman al Zawahiri, and the regional jihadist organizations that give him their allegiance and have conquered a bit of real estate, keeps al Qaeda grounded, closer to the real-world travails of most militant Muslim Arabs. Zawahiri's organization might otherwise become a much more eschatological group, pessimistic about the vitality and fraternity of Muslims, inclined to see most of them as irretrievably living in a state of *jahiliyya* or the ignorance of infidels. This is where the hard-core disciples of the Egyptian radical Sayyid Qutb live: in the depressing reality that they are eternally the vanguard, unable to convince or compel enough Muslims to join their cause. For such inward-looking militants, a good death is about the only reward.

By comparison, the Islamic State is much more optimistic and appealing. The scholar of militant Islam Emmanuel Sivan 30 years ago described Islamic radicalism as overwhelmingly in the “five-minutes-to-midnight” school. The Islamic State is more like “five-minutes-to-noon” in its promises. Baghdadi has rallied many Arab tribes in Iraq, as did the Prophet Muhammad in Arabia. The Islamic State has held its own in Syria, earning the tacit support of Turkey and Sunni fundamentalists in the Persian Gulf. Unlike al Qaeda, it has made the implementation of the holy law a central feature of its vision and rule. Westerners always

highlight the cruelty of the *sharia*. But it is central to Islam's communal identity. It's essential for fundamentalists who want something more than jihad as spiritual glue. And even though many less faithful, modern Muslims now view a rigorous implementation of the *sharia* as undesirable, even immoral, it is often difficult for them to take issue publicly with the idea of the holy law being the fountainhead of society. Historically, *sharia* was the boundary stone for any Muslim realm: The House of Islam is where the holy law is applied. For modern fundamentalists, who have inherited Islam's traditional uneasiness about prying into a believer's personal, spiritual relationship with Allah, it is the only reliable way for a community to maintain its pact with the Almighty. Orthodox Jews can readily understand this extraordinary reverence for God's law: It's what makes them the chosen people.

Lots of Sunni Muslim Arabs are undoubtedly horrified by the Islamic State's haphazard and draconian application of the law, but those who are attracted to it, or are not particularly repelled by it (sometimes because their lives are already more or less in accordance with its ethics), may be sufficiently numerous among Iraq's Sunni Arabs to keep the Islamic State viable on the battlefield—regardless of whether a new Iraqi Shiite government now tries to make nice with the most important Sunni tribes. Iraqi nationalism, though not dead, just isn't that compelling for Sunnis. The Iraqi state, even when it was ruled by Saddam Hussein's clansmen, inflicted a lot of pain on Iraq's Sunni Arabs. And Iraqi nationalism has now probably been permanently compromised by the Shiites' rise to power. Nationalism can no longer serve as camouflage for Sunni Arab hubris, the Sunni Arab birthright to run the country. In such tumult, for lots of Sunni Arabs, Islamists may not look so bad—so long as they don't take gross liberties, as Al Qaeda in Iraq enthusiastically did, with Sunni Arab women. This could be the Islamic State's Achilles' heel: its treatment of other Sunni men's women. The Islamic State's men may be killjoys and, towards Christians, Yazidis, and Kurds, butchers, but if they prove sufficiently attentive to a cardinal virtue of the holy law—the sanctity of a (Sunni Arab) man's home—they will likely be difficult to dislodge. For the faithful, since the Baath party seized the Iraqi state in 1968 and introduced the totalitarian's contempt for privacy, this has become a fundamental issue.

During the 20 years preceding the rise of the Islamic State, numerous self-proclaimed Islamic emirates popped up, in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Africa, and Yemen. The most famous, the Taliban regime of Mullah Omar, was similar to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's recent creation in Syria and Iraq. It enthusiastically embraced *sharia*. Though himself a Pashtun, Mullah Omar was hostile to tribal loyalties, Pashtun elders, and the famous traditional code of conduct, the *Pashtunwali*.

He gave no ground to clerics. He imagined himself the "commander of the faithful"—a term that harks back to the rightly guided caliphs and the early, hugely successful campaigns of conquest. It implies leadership based on merit (at least among Sunnis), on action as much as right belief. Mullah Omar's vision—ethically clear and tribe-free—has proved durable among the Pashtuns. It may not captivate a majority of Pashtuns, but it probably remains sufficiently compelling among young men, as it was in the mid-1990s, to outflank any other *asabiyya* on offer.

So far, the Islamic State has run roughshod over Arab Sunni customs in Iraq and Syria and has been more severe with religious minorities than were the Taliban in Afghanistan. It would not be surprising to learn that Baghdadi wants to make Iraq and Syria into a minority-free zone, just as Umar (d. 644)—the first caliph to bear the title *amir al-mu'minin*, an austere man beloved by Muslims for his burning faith and unyielding sense of justice—ordered the Hijaz, the heartland of Arabian Muslim power, off-limits to non-Muslim residents and made Mecca and Medina exclusively Muslim cities. When Baghdadi proclaimed himself a caliph, he suggested that he recognized no juridical authority above his own. Classical Islamic jurists stressed that caliphs were servants of the *sharia*, that their legitimacy depended on its faithful execution. Yet the early caliphate also had a charismatic dimension. Caliphs could interpret the law; they could innovate.

For today's commanders of the faithful, juristic free-lancing has a cost: Mullah Omar and Baghdadi have angered Muslims who love the color and custom and eccentricity that traditional Islamic societies can nurture or ignore. Yet Omar and Baghdadi attract young men. Baghdadi's promise of a new conquest society—a chance to get even for young men who've not hitherto enjoyed much fortune, in the Middle East or in the West—is naturally tempting. Add the Islamic State's anti-Americanism, and it's not surprising how well the organization has done. Even before Barack Obama started bombing its soldiers, the Islamic State was more explicitly and violently anti-American than the early Taliban. Even after the Clinton administration fired cruise missiles at al Qaeda/Taliban training camps in Khost Province in 1998, Americans could receive visas and safe-conduct passes for travel through Taliban-held territory. Decapitation wasn't a concern for Western journalists.

THE NECTAR OF ANTI-AMERICANISM

Part of the appeal of the Islamic State for European and American Muslims no doubt is its much more explicit but less costly anti-Americanism. The Sunni jihad against the Americans in Iraq was painful; the vast majority of the non-Iraqi holy warriors who confronted

American soldiers in Mesopotamia probably died. But Barack Obama's bombing campaign against the Islamic State is unlikely to greatly raise the fear factor for Western Muslims serving within its ranks, since the death tolls won't come close to what the U.S. Army and Marine Corps dished out in Iraq. The airstrikes, if that is all the United States does under Obama, may well make jihadist recruitment easier. Also, the anti-Shiite nature of the holy war in Iraq and Syria today is sharper than that of the fight against the Americans in Mesopotamia. The Iraqi Shiites, no longer depicted as victims on any major Arab satellite station, are no longer fighting American soldiers. With Iraqi, Lebanese, and Iranian Shiite support, the Alawite Bashar al-Assad has probably slaughtered more Sunni Muslims than any Shiite in history. The Islamic State will surely become even more intensely anti-American with Washington now at war with it—and not with the region's Shiite overlords.

Conspiracy is the coin of the realm in the Middle East. Washington has been in a de facto tactical alliance with the Assad regime since the president's red-line debacle in the summer of 2013. And it is clear to any sentient observer, let alone a conspiratorial one, that when Obama talks about Iran, his tone and manner change. Before Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei crushed the pro-democracy Green Movement in Iran in the summer of 2009, Obama's hopefulness about the possibility of better relations with the Islamic Republic was a defining feature of his Middle East policy. President Hassan Rouhani's election and the nuclear talks have partly reanimated this sense of possibility. As the president remarked to the *New Yorker's* David Remnick: "Although it would not solve the entire problem, if we were able to get Iran to operate in a responsible fashion—not funding terrorist organizations, not trying to stir up sectarian discontent in other countries, and not developing a nuclear weapon—you could see an equilibrium developing between Sunni, or predominantly Sunni, Gulf states and Iran in which there's competition, perhaps suspicion, but not an active or proxy warfare." In other words, the president envisions a regional entente where all parties act responsibly and cautiously and peacefully (that is, like him).

In Sunni Arab eyes, the president's words mean only one thing: Shiite Iranians—not Sunni Arabs—are the key to the Middle East. It is they who need to be propitiated. That's why the president backed down from bombing Bashar al-Assad, while he bombs fearsome Sunni fighters. That's why he keeps giving ground in the nuclear negotiations, ratcheting up American acceptance of the Islamic Republic's nuclear progress. That's why he abandoned the Sunni Arabs of Iraq to Shiite domination. Unintentionally, to be sure, the president may have created a perfect conspiratorial storm of Sunni Arab resentment. Sunni radicals, who underscore the equality of men before God, will not fail to note that the five

Arab states who joined the Americans in air attacks against the Islamic State are all monarchies dependent on the U.S. military—Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan.

NO RELIGIOUS COMPETITION

In the Middle East, there is now no significant religious antibody to the Islamic State. The region's dictators and kings have little religious authority. Saudi Arabia, which has been the great engine for spreading a stern, unmerciful interpretation of Islam throughout the world, cannot now preach a more benign faith. Its identity and internal political legitimacy are inextricably tied to its Wahhabi creed, an Arabian take on Sunni Islam's harshest school of law, the Hanbali rite. Also, as monarchies, Saudi Arabia and the other rich Gulf oil states will always be playing defense. Islam's relationship with kingship is uneasy, even though Islamic history, as Ibn Khaldun recounts, is mostly a succession of dynasties. The foundational period of Islam was so violent—three of the four rightly guided caliphs were murdered—in part because Islam's political-religious marriage creates standards that inevitably excite and disappoint the faithful. As Princeton's Michael Cook puts it: "It was the fusion of this egalitarian and activist tribal ethos with the monotheist tradition that gave Islam its distinctive political character. In no other civilization was rebellion for conscience sake so widespread as it was in the early centuries of Islamic history; no other major religious tradition has lent itself to revival as a political ideology—and not just a political identity—in the modern world." Many Westerners like to point to kings—the Saudi, Jordanian, and Moroccan usually top the list—as bastions against radicalism. The Jordanian and Moroccan kingdoms are, but whatever moral authority they still have at home (and King Abdullah of Jordan is nearly running on empty) isn't exportable. Against the Islamist and populist waves that have battered the region since 2011, they do their utmost just to hold on. And the Saudi way of holding on, imitated now by the lesser monarchies of the Persian Gulf, is to support the Wahhabi version of the faith, which inevitably means supporting fundamentalists who haven't (yet) turned against the House of Saud.

The dictatorships, however, are in even worse shape. Egypt's newest general-turned-president-for-life, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, likes to opine about the need for religious reform in Egypt, which, properly translated, means that he wants to find a way to deny the Muslim Brotherhood and other militants any religious legitimacy. This approach is well-worn—Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak all tried to shape Egypt's religious sentiments through police-state harassment, subventions, and direct control of Al-Azhar, the renowned religious seminary that has been losing

prestige in the Sunni world in direct proportion to its subordination to Egypt's modern rulers.

General Sisi apparently feels that he is in a strong position to redirect the faith in Egypt since he views his mandate, executed through a coup d'état and managed elections, as a populist backlash against the Muslim Brotherhood's short tenure in government. Although some in the West, especially among those who tend to view the region through an Israeli-security lens, really want to believe that Mohamed Morsi's turbulent, 12-month presidency was sufficient to discredit its version of Islam, this probably isn't so. Islamic fundamentalism has been gaining strength in Egypt for a hundred years, powerfully so since Israel's crushing military victory in June 1967. The Brotherhood and the Salafists together captured two-thirds of the vote in the parliamentary election held in late 2011 and early 2012. While massive street demonstrations against Morsi's presidency in June 2013 may well have signaled a collapse in popularity for the Brotherhood, it's difficult to know given the coordination between the military and the secular opposition in planning the coup. It's highly unlikely that the country's deeply religious culture has changed much at all. General Sisi's apparent and probably sincere conservative religiosity is actually part of this evolution, which has touched the army as it has every other part of Egyptian society. As it rapidly ages, Sisi's dictatorship is likely to give ground in exactly the same way that Sadat and Mubarak did to a more militantly religious culture as a means of fortifying the regime's base.

It's possible that a combination of Sunni Arab military forces on the ground could defeat the Islamic State, which would damage its appeal, especially for Western radical Muslims who've gone to Syria to participate in a reenactment of history. But it's hard to see this happening. The military forces of the nonjihadist Syrian opposition are under severe pressure from the Assad regime and have never been meaningfully supported by the West. They could not take control of territory from the Islamic State—assuming the United States could apply sufficient airpower to fracture the Islamic State (a dubious military proposition). The Nusra Front, a brave band of holy warriors affiliated with al Qaeda—but also tied to many within the Free Syrian Army because Nusra has behaved fairly well toward the nonjihadist Syrian opposition—would be the most likely Sunni beneficiary, at least in the short term. America's military campaign against the Islamic State in Syria is likely to seriously benefit only one party: the Alawites.

In Iraq, the situation isn't much better. Iraq's Sunni Arabs, who are only 20 percent of the country's population, are destined to be sorely disappointed in Baghdad regardless of who is prime minister. They want what the Shiites will not give: a veto on government policy. A permanent and

satisfactory devolution of power to the Sunni Arabs and the Kurds was conceivable under American auspices; without American power on the ground to husband the process, such an arrangement would probably be stillborn. It would take lots of American soldiers in Iraq to reassure the Sunni Arabs that the future could be different from the past. Hard power has a way of changing people's calculations. But it requires a commitment, costly in American blood, that simply will not be forthcoming under President Obama.

A new Iraqi Shiite Army, supplied and tutored by Washington and/or Tehran, might march forth to conquer northern Iraq. But that doesn't seem likely either. The Islamic State's victory over the Shiite-led Iraqi Army in northern Iraq strongly suggests that the Iraqi armed forces have sustained a systemic breakdown. There are many reasons for this collapse—salient among them President Obama's eagerness to withdraw military advisers, logistics, and tactical air support—but one important factor was surely that many Iraqi Shiites, even under Iraqi Shiite officers, aren't yet keen on military service. It's a job with a paycheck—an unalloyed good in a country where crushing poverty is widespread. But except for elite units, which the American military spent a lot of effort molding, the martial life has unpleasant memories for the Shiites. Lording it over the Arab Sunnis, their former tormentors, must have lost some of its appeal in urban combat on Sunni soil. And the Shiites—unlike Iraqi Sunnis, who are accustomed to rule and who deceive themselves about their numbers—have a strong sense of when they are moving beyond their realm. (This would not be true of former prime minister Nuri al-Maliki, a man of considerable hubris and ambition.) A new burning nationalism may arise among the Shiites—waves of Sunni suicide bombers in Baghdad and the holy sites might be just the thing to kindle the requisite aggression. Iraqi nationalism has long had a place among the Shiites, who always viewed the pan-Arab affectations of the Baath party as ideological camouflage for Sunni minority rule. Fondly recalling their large role in the 1920 revolt against the British, Shiites like to think of themselves as the truer Iraqis.

But the Iraqi Shiites don't yet appear to be burning to use their vastly greater numbers militarily. And there is little chance that Tehran will decide to send substantial armed forces into Iraq. Most radical Shiite Iraqis have a profound Arab side to their identity. Iraqis who have served with or been trained by Iranian Revolutionary Guards often are quick to tell you that the irrepressible Persian sense of superiority vis-à-vis Arabs got really annoying. The Iranians appear to be well aware that they cannot, outside of the holy pilgrimage cities in Iraq, show themselves in numbers, let alone openly try to command the Iraqi military. And as both Iraq's and Iran's leaders probably know, a little Islamic State, in both Iraq and Syria, is good for the Islamic Republic. In

Iraq it keeps the sectarian division hot and Iraqi Shiites dependent upon their Persian “uncle.” In Syria it creates a sharp contrast between Bashar al-Assad’s savage but Christian-friendly regime and the wild-eyed Sunni jihadists on the other side. It was unsurprising to find Muhsin al-Fadhli, the recently deceased leader of the Khorasan group, an al Qaeda outfit inside the Nusra Front, in Syria after a long residence in Iran.

FALLEN BROTHERHOOD

If one scans the Middle East, it’s hard to see any force capable of dismantling the region’s ever-more-virulent Sunni Islamic fundamentalism. Before June 2013, there was one. Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood was the Islamic State’s natural antithesis, since it sought to reanimate the Prophet Muhammad’s community through democracy. It’s quite likely that had the clandestine Syrian Muslim Brotherhood been able to gain greater ground against the Assad regime, it, too, would have embraced the ballot box. But under the Assads, membership in the Brotherhood has been a capital crime; the organization was completely unprepared when the Arab Spring struck Syria in 2011.

The Brotherhood may have started off as a secretive

organization that hoped to capture the state through murder and an alliance with the army, but it evolved into a vastly more populist outfit that firmly believed most Muslims to be good Muslims. The Brotherhood was trying to tackle the confounding question facing all Muslim fundamentalists in the 21st century: How do men of faith balance the holy law with the growing appeal of democracy among Muslims? Iran’s vibrant, often brilliant, and increasingly jailed and exiled dissident clergymen have tackled this question more forthrightly because the oppressors in the Islamic Republic are Shiite clerics. They have increasingly bent the holy law in the direction of popular sovereignty. Sunni Arabs are not nearly as progressive, in great part because they’ve been operating in an even more difficult, intellectually authoritarian environment. However fitfully, the Muslim Brotherhood was trying to adapt to modernity.

Its efforts earned it the wrath of the Saudis, who fear the Brothers and their lay populist Islamism more than they do the historical pretension of the “caliph” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. President Morsi and the Brotherhood were well on the way to getting slapped down by Egyptian voters in the next round of parliamentary elections when the Egyptian Army aborted the process. A rejection at the polls would have provoked further convulsions, dissent, and reflection

Keystone Delays = Lost Opportunities

By Thomas J. Donohue

President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

It’s been six years since TransCanada submitted its first application to the U.S. State Department to build the Keystone XL pipeline. The administration’s delays and the opposition’s distortions have made national headlines and have been fodder for Washington politics. But what’s actually happening in the communities along the planned route? How are they being impacted by the pipeline limbo that the administration has subjected them to for the past six years?

To find out, the U.S. Chamber sent a team to travel the 875-mile route in the United States and talk to people along the way. The team started in Morgan, Montana, where the pipeline will cross the Canadian border and ended in Steele City, Nebraska, where it will connect to America’s existing pipeline network. In every community, the message was the same: Keystone delays equal lost opportunities.

Delays equal lost property taxes.

The State Department estimates that rural counties in Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska would collect more than \$55 million in property taxes in the first year of the pipeline’s operation. Anticipating the influx of revenue, city officials planned and voters approved a brand new elementary school in Glasgow, Montana. But with Keystone revenue in doubt, the school still hasn’t been built. The story is the same all along the route—projects to improve infrastructure and education have been put on hold or jeopardized.

Delays equal lost jobs and growth.

In the three pipeline states, the project would generate 11,600 direct and indirect jobs, \$391 million in wages, and \$648 million in economic activity, according to the State Department. Businesses have been counting on new workers with good incomes to help lift their economies and invigorate their communities—they’re still waiting.

Delays equal lost economic development potential. Several places

see Keystone as their chance to become something more. Baker, Montana, near the Bakken shale boom, believes that a planned on-ramp for shale oil to the pipeline will help cement the town’s role as a regional energy hub. Winner, South Dakota, hopes that electricity infrastructure needed for Keystone will attract new businesses and allow for wind power so that it can diversify its economy.

These communities are acutely aware of what’s at stake—but Keystone delays have implications for all of us. Nationally, 42,000 new jobs and \$3.4 billion in economic activity are on the line. Our ability to enhance energy security and reduce our reliance on foreign oil is at stake.

All of these opportunities can still be seized. But first we’ve got to approve and build the pipeline.



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
www.uschamber.com/blog

within the movement and among fundamentalists beyond Egypt's borders. With the coup, an unbridgeable divide has opened up between secularists and Muslims who see politics as an extension of their faith. Secularists have wedded themselves to military rule, since any new embrace of democracy would bring back a vengeful Islamist threat. Islamists angrily view secularists as fair-weather democrats, unwilling to abide by majority rule. This is a recipe for much more violence, terrorism, and perhaps revolution if the Egyptian military ever cracks.

Westerners had a difficult time seeing Egypt's intra-Muslim struggles clearly, in part because the Muslim Brotherhood was, in so many ways, repulsive. Under the best of circumstances, democracy in Egypt would have been far from Western ideals. Its brief growth sharpened the expression of Egypt's vast ocean of anti-Americanism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Semitism—all of which flourish in both secular and Islamist variants. Democratic change in Egypt wasn't about establishing a liberal democracy; it was about making Muslims reconcile their conflicting passions through the ballot box. With time, with faction, a more liberal—though by Western standards still distasteful—society might have developed. That great debate—a chance for a new *asabiyya* expressed by Muslims voting and achieved by peaceful change—has been aborted. The Arab militaries and monarchies are resurgent, which means that they will build societies far more conducive to hard-core fundamentalist thought than fundamentalists on their own ever could have.

AMERICA IN RETREAT

The United States now faces only really unpleasant choices. It could have brought its considerable weight to bear in Egypt when Morsi was first elected, against the Egyptian military and security services, who so openly remained a threat to democracy's future, *and* against Morsi and the Brotherhood, whose authoritarian temptations were also apparent. Washington could have stayed in Iraq—both the cost and casualties in 2011 were small for a superpower. More and more U.S. soldiers will inevitably go back to Iraq if President Obama is serious about dislodging the Islamic State from its conquests. Without American boots on the ground, the Iraqis will not be able to do it.

American paramilitary support to the Syrian opposition revolving around the Free Syrian Army is long overdue, and perhaps the president, after all his trepidation, is now willing to commit serious resources and what's left of his credibility to the project. Back in the 1980s, however, it took years for Washington to finally supply the Afghan mujahedeen with powerful weaponry. And even longer for Washington to make the Central Intelligence Agency get

serious. And once the Soviet Army withdrew, Washington lost interest. Afghanistan was too far away, resources were too scarce, it was difficult to understand Afghan politics, Afghans were primitive, and we were tired. This time round, America could stay in Afghanistan—call it a 30-year project—and prevent a resurgent Taliban and al Qaeda from reclaiming the country. President Obama may think the “good war” has become an unnecessary one, but if he's still in office when Ayman al Zawahiri triumphantly returns to Jalalabad, where bin Laden arrived from Sudan in 1996, he may rethink his change of heart. A victory of the Taliban and al Qaeda could present a situation where Sunni jihadists and Arab and Iranian Shiite radicals actually control a majority of what historians used to quaintly call “the classical Middle East.”

And then there are the nuclear negotiations, where the White House keeps giving ground to Iran's continuing progress toward a bomb. The Islamic Republic's pursuit of nuclear weapons is a strategic game-changer, which is why the clerical regime, whether led by pragmatics or hardliners, has doggedly kept advancing. All of the region's problems, especially those that hurt us, will worsen when the mullahs go nuclear. President Obama could stiffen his spine and make his red lines as firm as those of the supreme leader. He could encourage Congress to pass more powerful sanctions instead of telling the *New Yorker* that he will veto any new bill threatening the Islamic Republic. He could go to Europe and thank our allies for the oil embargo and all the other sanctions that have brought considerable pain to Tehran, and lead them to do more. Obama could challenge Khamenei to blink and, if he doesn't, obliterate his nuclear program.

Against our Middle Eastern enemies, it seems doubtful the president is going to do anything particularly aggressive. The United States is in retreat, and our enemies and friends know it. It's a decent bet, a few months out, that Obama's bombing runs against the Islamic State will further this impression. The Middle East is in free fall. If Ibn Khaldun were observing the region today, he would say that the barbarians are at the gate and the dynasts are in trouble. He would look for the stronger *asabiyya*. He wouldn't find it in Cairo, Baghdad, Riyadh, Amman, or Washington. He'd look toward the frontier, in the fierce march lands of Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. A good Sunni but a better historian, he'd look at Tehran and linger. He'd warn that smaller numbers with the right motivation can often bring down larger, better-armed foes. He'd never say, as President Obama often does, that the radicals are just extremists, divorced from their fathers' religion. He'd remember the proud, and often successful, predecessors to these barbarians. He'd immediately recognize the *asabiyya* of a reborn faith. ♦



Dwight D. Eisenhower, Clare Boothe Luce (1955)

Brains, Beauty, Brass

The second act in the drama of Clare Boothe Luce. BY AMY HENDERSON

With this second, and concluding, volume of her biography of Clare Boothe Luce, Sylvia Jukes Morris completes the tantalizing saga of a woman who helped define the “pushy broad” in a century when men made the rules and women made the coffee. The result is an impeccably researched and thoughtfully written epic that crackles with the energy that defined her subject.

The first volume, *Rage for Fame*

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Price of Fame
The Honorable Clare Boothe Luce
 by Sylvia Jukes Morris
 Random House, 752 pp., \$35

(1997), focused on how the illegitimate child of a call girl evolved into the beautiful, intellectually dazzling author of *The Women* (1936) and the wife of media mogul Henry Luce, the enormously influential publisher of *Time*, *Fortune*, and *Life* magazines. *Price of Fame* opens in January 1943, with Clare (as she is called through-

out) basking in the blazing spotlight of celebrity as “the smartest, most famous, and most glamorous member of the House of Representatives.”

Clare’s dance with fame fueled her life, leading her from one passion to another with careless abandon. She was inescapably molded—in later life she would say “poisoned”—by her mother, a character who seems directly drawn from George Bernard Shaw’s *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* (1894). For Clare’s mother, and subsequently for Clare, money was essential to life itself. As Mrs. Warren tells her daughter in Shaw’s play, “What else is there

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for me to do? The life suits me . . . and it brings in money; I like making money.”

At her mother's knee, Clare also learned that power was entwined with beauty and brains. She would never out-vavoom Rita Hayworth, but she had a fresh-faced loveliness, and she was clever. She flaunted her intelligence and became known for a stinging wit. But above all, her character was defined by self-involvement. Her obsession to be the center of attention would keep her in the spotlight for decades, as she swooped from Broadway to Hollywood to politics and diplomacy.

Her early life was gutsy and ambitious in nontraditional ways. As a young woman, she worked side-by-side with suffragettes Alice Paul and Alva Belmont to lobby for women's equality. Later, she worked at the highest levels of the magazine trade and wrote Broadway hits. But because “The American Century,” as her husband labeled it in 1941, remained male-dominated, Clare became supremely adept at using her charm as well as her intellect to get what she wanted.

In the first half of her life, looks, smarts, and brassiness marked her path to wealth and fame. According to *Price of Fame*, however, Clare's Second Act was a much tougher performance. Aging was unstoppable, and while her beauty never disappeared, her ability to manipulate life sometimes failed altogether. The worst tragedy struck a year after she took her seat in Congress, when her only child, 19-year-old Ann, was killed in a car crash.

Despair aside, Clare traveled extensively to war zones as a member of the House Military Affairs Committee, developing important programs that assisted soldiers and, in the femme fatale mode that was part of her DNA, adding various star-struck generals to her string of male conquests.

At the end of the war, Clare was overcome by emptiness and insecurity. She had seen the camps at Buchenwald and Nordhausen, and was horrified by reports from Japan about survivors of the atomic blasts. Politics seemed irrelevant in such a world, and demons that she had once held at bay came to the forefront.

Morris writes that Clare's remedy for depression had previously been “to pursue a career packed with incident. But now, her professional achievements seemed of slight import, in a bloody and violent universe.” Instead of playwriting or politics, she turned to religion and studied Roman Catholicism daily—and not with any local parish priest, but with Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, the well-known radio host of *The Catholic Hour*. Her conversion to Catholicism in 1946, in an era when antipopey was still rampant, was splashed across frontpages throughout the country.

At the same time, she announced that she would no longer run for elected office. During her two terms, she was recognized as “by far the

*Aging was
unstoppable, and
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most sought-after public lecturer in the House of Representatives,” and her overall congressional record was impressive: She was responsible for 18 major initiatives related to human rights, including equal pay for equal work, racial and sexual fairness, and rehabilitation of veterans.

Even as she was leaving Congress, she winked at rumors of a possible run for president in 1952, however improbable the idea of a woman president was in midcentury America. When Dwight D. Eisenhower announced his run for the presidency, Clare became one of his staunchest and most effective campaigners. After Ike won, he asked her what she wanted: “Naturally, what I can't get. Rome.” But Eisenhower made it happen. On March 2, 1953, she was confirmed by the Senate as ambassador, and a month later, she sailed for Italy.

Overcoming Italy's raised eyebrows at the United States sending a woman, “La Luce” emerged as a diplomat extraordinaire during her ambassadorship. She was deeply enmeshed in helping Italy become a major partner in NATO, and she also finessed settlement of the complicated Trieste problem, resolving in Italy's favor the argument between Rome and Belgrade over the strategic port in the eastern Adriatic.

When Clare retired from her ambassadorship at the end of 1956, the *Corriere della Sera* wrote: “No one will ever know how much Italy owes to this fragile blonde.” Clare herself felt such relief at the release of the all-consuming stress of diplomacy that she admitted, “I seemed to fly apart, tangle and sprawl inside.” In this untethered mood, she traveled, worked on her memoirs, appeared at celebrity gatherings, experimented with LSD, and took up scuba diving.

As the significance of her activities on the world stage lessened, the importance of her relationship with Harry Luce grew. Much of *Price of Fame* is really a portrait of their marriage—the story of two complicated people who lived parallel lives that rarely connected. When she was younger, she had flings with whomever she wanted; so did Harry. But as she got older, she found Harry was more central to her life. A line she had written in *The Women* resonated: “It's being together at the end that really matters.”

Henry Luce died in 1967, but Clare would live for another 20 years. In her late 70s, she met Sylvia Jukes Morris at a dinner party, embracing her as they left and saying, “Good night, you sweet thing.” Thus was launched a collaboration that would take up the next several decades of Morris's life.

A quotation near the end of this biography seems apt: In a 1974 *Esquire* profile, Helen Lawrenson wrote of Clare Boothe Luce that “she made real friendship impossible, perhaps because she seemed to trust no one, love no one.” But with a will “as tough as lignum vitae beneath an exquisitely angelic façade,” she became one of the most “fascinating success stories of the century. Her technique was simple: aim for the top.” ♦

Faith on Trial

Exploring moral dilemmas on the good ship McEwan.

BY GRAHAM HILLARD

In his brief and fascinating essay “Subversion: Teaching a Blue Novel in a Red State” (2006), Professor Jesse Kavadlo identifies a shift in our cultural attitude toward the subversive—particularly among those stationed in the academy. In the 1950s, Kavadlo writes,

when the State Department was looking for closet “subversives,” the word suggested not just rebellion but sedition. Today, English departments look for closet subversives, although the connotation has been, perhaps appropriately, subverted—from high crime to high praise.

Although Kavadlo’s central analysis is crucial, just as significant is his title’s explicit connection of subversive novels to the political left: to the blue rather than to the red. Indeed, in the long decades of conservatism’s cultural ascendancy, the subversive novel was exclusively the property of radical progressivism, the canon including such countercultural standards as Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Lacuna*, Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, and Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club*—works condemning American xenophobia, evangelical totalitarianism, and Western consumerism, respectively. If your impulse is to roll your eyes at the “bravery” of the Ministry of Fiction, you are nevertheless left with questions: What, in our age of increasingly progressive orthodoxies, does subversiveness actually mean? Are we permitted to topple prevailing values even as those values move leftward? Or has the truly subversive novel gone the way of the medieval morality play?

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The Children Act

by Ian McEwan
Nan A. Talese, 240 pp., \$25



Ian McEwan

It was with these thoughts in mind that I picked up Ian McEwan’s latest novel. An exploration of a Jehovah’s Witness teenager’s refusal to accept a life-saving blood transfusion, *The Children Act* seemed exactly the sort of novel likely to be labeled “subversive.” Surely Ian McEwan, an outspoken atheist, would use his plot to create a materialist’s wish-fulfillment fantasy, whereby the heroic secular state—embodied by the novel’s protagonist, High Court judge Fiona Maye—liberates an innocent young man from the prison of his faith. Surely the media would trumpet the author’s courage in taking on religion. A longtime devotee of McEwan’s novels, I approached this latest work with no small measure of apprehension.

To say that I was wrong—deeply wrong—is a welcome relief. In *The Children Act*, McEwan has fashioned a narrative of adolescent faith far more compelling, and far more complicated, than mere secularist dogma. For that reason alone, the novel is a tremendous achievement.

Like much of McEwan’s work, *The Children Act* benefits from its author’s

talent for intricate and unpredictable plotting. Here, he begins not with the legal question that dominates the project—must Adam Henry, three months shy of his 18th birthday, accept the transfusion that will save his life?—but with an examination of Fiona Maye’s domestic circumstances. As the novel opens, Fiona, an eminent figure nearing her 60th birthday, is stunned by her husband’s demand for an open relationship, for “one big passionate affair” before a final settling into their happy but largely sexless marriage. Childless by (reluctant) choice, Fiona finds herself at once “a woman in crisis,” mere steps from the fate of “two close friends her age, long deprived by divorce of their husbands, [who] still hated to enter a crowded room unaccompanied.”

That these early pages read not as a superfluity but as the foundation on which the novel will build its moral purpose is a testament both to McEwan’s skill as a storyteller and the ease with which he interrupts the central narrative with recollections of cases long decided—previous intersections of religion and civil society on which Fiona has cut her teeth. Much like in *Saturday* (2005), in which McEwan inhabits the professional consciousness of his neurosurgeon protagonist, the details here feel exactly right. As the novel progresses, McEwan’s grasp of (and ability to wring narrative intrigue from) the relevant legal precedents facilitates his fairness to all parties. His seeming determination, echoed in Fiona’s oral judgment, to respect any religion that is “calmly expressed and profoundly held” allows us to see the limitations and prejudices of the legal system as clearly as we see the follies of the faithful.

To put it another way, even as Fiona began to read her judgment, I wasn’t sure which way she would rule. Yet rule she does, and her decision, which comes midway through the text, sets the sometimes shocking course of the pages that follow. As I moved through the concluding chapters, I found myself remembering Aristotle’s claim that the best work of tragedy is done “when the events come on us by surprise,” but, “at the same time, they follow as cause and effect.” Such is the

case here, in the novel's final pages, when the first signs of marital reconciliation are marred by a disaster that strikes before we begin to suspect it. In retrospect, wasn't it inevitable? Of course she didn't; of course he did; how did I not see it coming?

Is *The Children Act* destructive of contemporary norms? Perhaps, though not for the reasons I first suspected. Notable in McEwan's middle career has been his attention to what Michael L. Ross has called the "cherished humanistic" virtues of "domestic intimacy [and] fidelity between individual lovers." Though this attention is most pronounced in *Saturday*—a retelling in prose of Matthew Arnold's humanist masterpiece "Dover Beach"—the thread can be found in much of McEwan's work: *Enduring Love* (1997), *Atonement* (2001), *Sweet Tooth* (2012), and now *The Children Act*. Consider, for example, the language with which Fiona expresses her conception of the legal principles upon which the state's treatment of a child must be based:

Welfare, happiness, well-being must embrace the philosophical concept of the good life. She listed some relevant ingredients, goals toward which a child might grow. Economic and moral freedom, virtue, compassion and altruism, satisfying work through engagement with demanding tasks, a flourishing network of personal relationships, earning the esteem of others, pursuing larger meanings to one's existence, and having at the center of one's life one or a small number of significant relations defined above all by love.

To the contemporary ear, there's something edgy in this formulation, just as there was in McEwan's assertion in the *Guardian*, mere days after 9/11, that "love was all [the victims] had to set against the hatred of their murderers." Certainly the English departments identified by Jesse Kavadlo are unlikely to praise those words—or the way in which Fiona, in the closing pages, clings in her grief to her husband. "Ah, love," Arnold wrote, "let us be true to one another!" In this age of hookups, "rape culture," and a souring feminism, what could be more subversive than that? ♦

BCA

Football as Metaphor

Winning and losing, and whether to play the game.

BY MICHAEL NELSON

Concussions that lead to degenerative brain disease. Domestic violence committed by oversized men against women and young children. Rampant use of steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs. Bullying of the crudest sort.

Stories like these are enough to turn a person of good conscience against football, aren't they? Or perhaps just to inspire an erstwhile fan to write a divorce petition called *Against Football*, which is what Steve Almond has done. Almond claims to have authored "a manifesto," but that's an insult to manifesto writers—including Karl Marx, whose work Almond brutalizes for the sake of making several wildly overstated points. What he's actually written is a cliché-ridden, Dean-scream-volume screed whose belligerent tone undermines even the occasional smart observation he makes.

The National Football League, Almond claims to reveal, regards football as "a multi-billion dollar product." No surprise, then, that when bad stuff happens, the league seeks "to obscure the most disturbing aspects of the game." That's capitalism for you, always trying to "distract the proletariat from the aims of the revolution." Why, even his own former self, Almond confesses, "spent countless hours tracking the Oakland Raiders" rather than working to "enact my values, protest, [and] pursue my version of social justice."

In Almond's cartoon-Marxism, the mere fact that the NFL is wealthy and

Michael Nelson, Fulmer professor of political science at Rhodes College, is the author, most recently, of Resilient America: Electing Nixon in 1968, Channeling Dissent, and Dividing Government.

Against Football
One Fan's Reluctant Manifesto
by Steve Almond
Melville House, 192 pp., \$22.95

Why Football Matters
My Education in the Game
by Mark Edmundson
Penguin, 240 pp., \$26.95

privately owned means that its power is irresistible. As evidence, he cites, accurately, the league's early efforts to discredit studies conducted by Ann McKee, M.D., the leading researcher on football-induced concussions. (These efforts, it's worth mentioning, eventually failed because her accumulated evidence became both overwhelming and widely publicized.) Almond concedes that McKee's Boston University-based lab is now "the league's 'preferred' brain bank" and that the NFL is "granting her millions in funding," no strings attached. Undeterred, he insists that football's embrace of Dr. McKee is all part of the plutocrats' plot—the "keep-your-enemies closer approach."

To anyone else, though, what better evidence could there be that the league's command, like that of other powerhouse enterprises, is highly resistible? In a pluralistic society with First Amendment freedoms and an elected legislature, to seek is not the same as to succeed when it comes to avoiding unwelcome change. More recently, after a series of player-related domestic violence stories triggered critical public statements by corporate megasponsors (Anheuser-Busch, McDonald's, Procter & Gamble, etc.), commissioner Roger Goodell abandoned his initial attempts

to mute the crisis and hired four prominent feminists to write new policies and create new programs for the league in time for the Super Bowl.

Steve Almond's authorial sins are numerous as well as grievous. Writing about Miami's desolate Canyon district, he laments that, in the near-universal absence of fathers, football coaches provide the only noncriminal male influences on neighborhood boys. Martin Luther King, Almond writes, "would have been heartbroken at the notion that football is the dominant form of empowerment in communities like The Canyon." Well, sure, it would

approvingly quotes him calling the NFL "modern-day slavery," they both sound silly. Elsewhere in *Against Football*, Almond claims that the pre-Super Bowl singing of the national anthem and flyover by the Blue Angels "represent a kind of national passion play."

Does he know what a passion play is?

University of Virginia English professor Mark Edmundson, author of the literate, engaging *Why Football Matters*, is not blind to the darker side of the game: "Brutality, thoughtlessness, dull conformity, love for the herd mentality and the herd—

dedication and *loyalty* without inflecting them with doubt." Character, courage, teamwork, and resilience in the face of loss are the irony-free qualities that Edmundson, with considerable help from his coaches and (most of the time) his teammates, fostered in himself as a result of playing football.

Character was the product of showing up for two-a-days even when the certain pain that awaited him meant he "cried in my sleep" in anticipation. "I simply never got very good," he confesses. "But . . . I was able to show up every day and work hard at something that was extremely difficult for me and to improve little by little." Courage came from taking to heart a coach's rebuke—"You ain't *never* gonna play"—and forcing himself to compete in physically challenging practice drills. Like Hector ("not a natural warrior," Edmundson writes), he "*learned* how to step into the middle of the fray." Like Achilles, he drew on his "hunger to redeem his humiliation and restore his lost manhood." A child of the '60s, Edmundson celebrates the handful of teammates in his strongly pro-military town who spoke out against the war in Vietnam: "What gave those three guys the wherewithal to part company from the group? . . . Part of their courage came from what football had given them."

While Edmundson was playing, his 6-year-old sister died, and his family nearly came apart at the seams. But he hung in there. In football, "we get a chance to learn, to prepare ourselves and to grow, so that when the real losses come, as they will, we may be half-ready for them." No sport requires more teamwork than football, if only because the team is so big and every player's role so closely tied to every other player's. "Not for nothing do so many Wall Street firms and high-powered law offices want to hire guys (and now women) who have played team sports," Edmundson points out. "These people can get together and form a group and the group can make something happen." Add to this football's ability to act as leveler: It's all performance, no matter who your parents are. "Football



The Harvard backfield (1932)

be great if fathers acted like fathers; but in their absence, isn't a coach's influence a good thing? They "live in the ear," James Dickey wrote of football coaches. "They want you better than you are."

Invoking the 70 percent of NFL players who are African American, Almond asks, "What does it mean that football fever tends to run so hot in those states where slavery was legal?" Of course, it means nothing. Football fever ran just as hot in the South when all the players were white. Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson may be an expert on many things—drunk driving, fighting with police officers, child beating—but when Almond

these can be products of football," he concedes. Edmundson writes from personal experience, vividly recalling the night, nearly a half-century ago, when he and some high school teammates roused each other to smash the windows of a local ice cream parlor—just because. Even now, he says, his "capacity for violence" is greater than he would like.

On balance, however, Edmundson credits football with turning him from a large but "buttery, sensitive boy" into, well, a man. "Sports are an irony-free zone," he observes, a major concession for an English professor. They are "maybe the only irony-free zone in our culture. Talking about sports, people can use terms like *raw courage* and

is God in its own way,” he writes. “It’s uncertain whether the God above is just, but the God of football tends to be.”

Edmundson credits (and slightly misquotes) “the poet,” who turns out to be William Wordsworth: *Diversity of strength / Attends us, if but once we have been strong*, wrote Wordsworth in *The Prelude*. Be resolute, courageous, resilient, and cooperative on the playing field, and there is a very good chance these qualities will be ours for life.

Sports are important, Edmundson and Almond agree—and they’re right. Just think of Menelaos in Book XXIII of the *Iliad*: He has been a battlefield warrior for nearly 10 years but is driven to “relentless anger” only when he loses a chariot race for sport. Football is imperfect—again, no argument. But Edmundson is surely right that the good in the sport strongly outweighs the bad. And Almond is just as wrong in thinking the opposite. ♦



An Icy Summit

Reagan, Gorbachev, and the beginning of the end of the Evil Empire. BY GABRIEL SCHOENFELD

What brought the decades-long Soviet-American confrontation to an end? Here, Ken Adelman stakes out an answer in his book’s subtitle: He maintains that the 1986 summit between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev was one of the critical turning points of the 20th century. Is he right? As director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency under Reagan, Adelman was in attendance at the Reykjavik conclave as one of the president’s briefers. He has also plumbed the documentary record of both sides—much of it now declassified—to make his case.

The key issue under discussion at the summit was nuclear weapons. It was the vast arsenals, possessed by both superpowers, of these awesomely destructive devices that made the Cold War so terrifying. Adelman begins his reconstruction of the episode by making evident the unsurprising fact that both leaders came to Iceland with radically diverging objectives. Reagan came in quest of nuclear disarmament. Ironically, Reagan, reputed by the left

Gabriel Schoenfeld is the author, most recently, of Necessary Secrets: National Security, the Media, and the Rule of Law.

Reagan at Reykjavik

Forty-Eight Hours That

Ended the Cold War

by Ken Adelman

Broadside, 384 pp., \$29.99

to be an incorrigible anti-Communist warmonger, had dreamed of a world without nuclear weapons long before our current nuclear-zero movement got off the ground. He saw Reykjavik as an opportunity to move in that direction without compromising on his larger objective—openly voiced to the British Parliament in 1982—of placing the Soviet system “on the ash heap of history.”

A 1979 visit to NORAD, the American strategic command center, had left Reagan appalled by what, to him (in Adelman’s telling), was a revelation: The United States had no means of responding to a Soviet nuclear strike other than by striking the Soviet Union in return, with both sides suffering millions of deaths. That bleak reality planted a question in Reagan’s mind that he voiced to an aide: “We have spent all that money, and have all that equipment, and there is *nothing* we can do to prevent a nuclear missile from hitting us?” Two years later,

having trounced Jimmy Carter in a landslide, and now in the Oval Office controlling the levers of power, Reagan worked with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to formulate an answer to the question that so troubled him. The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was born.

“Star wars” was how Reagan’s ballistic missile defense program was derisively dubbed by its critics. In their eyes, it was an exorbitantly expensive technological fantasy that knocked the legs out from under the central premise of the postwar peace: the nuclear standoff known as Mutual Assured Destruction, or MAD. According to MAD doctrine, security depended on the mutual ability of the United States and the Soviet Union to annihilate each other. But as Adelman points out, in many quarters “the *descriptive* fact that each side was vulnerable . . . became a *prescriptive* tenet, that each side *should* be vulnerable.”

That belief in the virtues of vulnerability was enshrined in the anti-ballistic missile treaty of 1972, which, by banning defensive systems, guaranteed that the United States and the Soviet Union could annihilate each other. Reagan, however, rejected MAD root and branch, believing that both sides would be better off erecting defensive systems while—and here his thinking was strikingly utopian—simultaneously reducing their offensive nuclear arsenals to zero.

Mikhail Gorbachev came to Reykjavik with very different concerns. He was desperate to curtail arms spending that was bankrupting the Soviet Union. Adelman, drawing on once-top-secret Kremlin documents, recounts how, on the eve of the summit, Gorbachev told his fellow Politburo members that if Reykjavik failed, “we will be pulled into an arms race beyond our power, and we will lose this race [because] we are presently at the limit of our capabilities.”

Of particular concern to Gorbachev was SDI, which he saw as a major new weapons program that the Soviet Union could not match. It was high-tech, drawing on the latest in computerization, miniaturization, and advanced materials, while the Soviet Union was vividly demonstrating its ineptitude in handling even more

primitive technology. The Chernobyl nuclear disaster had occurred only months before Reykjavik, costing many lives and billions of rubles and spewing a plume of radioactive particles across Europe. On the very eve of the summit, a leak of seawater caused a missile to explode aboard a Soviet nuclear submarine in the Atlantic, prompting Gorbachev to tell his colleagues: “Because of the submarine which just sank, everybody knows, everybody saw, the shape we’re in.”

Of course, the irony here was that the technology for SDI that so alarmed Gorbachev was then only in its infancy. But with Reagan convincingly professing (and quite possibly believing) it to be nearly ready for deployment, and with the KGB offering the Soviet leadership an inflated estimate of its capabilities, SDI was perceived as a game-changer that would give a decisive advantage, in both military power and national prestige, to the United States.

For the Russians, Reykjavik was the arena in which the strategic disaster of SDI could be brought to a halt. In fierce exchanges with Reagan, Gorbachev declared himself ready to accept deep cuts in the Soviet nuclear arsenal if the United States would agree to confine SDI to the research laboratory. Again and again, Gorbachev insisted; again and again, Reagan demurred. The negotiations broke down. Both sides returned home with expectations dashed. Criticism rained down on Reagan for having blown an opportunity to secure world peace: “bumbling . . . a fiasco,” declared then-freshman senator Albert Gore.

Adelman recounts all of this engrossingly, taking us blow by blow through the talks and the aftermath while also offering numerous amusing asides about the comings and goings in Iceland during the summit. With little news to report while the talks were underway, the world’s media obsessed over Raisa Gorbachev,

focusing on her sense of fashion. “I’m not crazy about her hair. It looks like it has a freeway or a grand canal coming down the middle,” was the quotation one news outlet garnered from Nancy Reagan’s hairstylist.

As for whether the summit really brought the Cold War to an end, the author equivocates: “Reykjavik alone did not end the Cold War,” writes Adelman at the conclusion of this book. “Only the uninformed or the sensationalistic could claim that it did.” (Never mind that this statement baldly contradicts the subtitle of his own book!) Adelman wisely switches gears to endorse the more modest claim that Reykjavik was a



Leaving the final session at Reykjavik (1986)

critically important junction on a road whose destination was, as yet, unclear.

It was critically important because, above all else, Reagan’s insistence on proceeding with SDI shook Mikhail Gorbachev and his entourage to their core. Returning to Moscow empty-handed, Gorbachev well knew that the Soviet Union could not compete with the United States if it did not embark on far-reaching reform. As he was later to acknowledge: “We were increasingly behind the West . . . and I was ashamed for my country—perhaps the country with the richest resources on Earth, and we couldn’t provide toothpaste for our people.”

Gorbachev’s chosen method of providing toothpaste and rescuing the Soviet Union from its stagnation—a sprinkle of political freedom under

the banner of *glasnost* and a dash of economic liberalization under the banner of *perestroika*—destabilized a system that was both too rigid and too rotten for any leader to reform. In short order, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics collapsed.

Reagan at Reykjavik is well worth reading for its persuasive demonstration of the thesis (as stated in Adelman’s toned-down reformulation) that Ronald Reagan’s refusal to negotiate SDI away “accelerated a series of events that brought down the Soviet Union.” Along the way, Adelman does an admirable job of conveying Reagan’s extraordinary talents as a leader.

Reagan knew where he wanted to take the country, and he was not reluctant to say or to do what was necessary to get there. From the inception of his presidency, he embraced the audacious goal of bringing down the “evil empire,” a characterization of America’s Cold War adversary for which he was lampooned at home but which resonated powerfully inside the Soviet Union and the captive nations. He was not afraid to challenge the Soviet Union frontally, as he did in the face of dire warn-

ings about the consequences when he traveled to Berlin to declare, “Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

If *Reagan at Reykjavik* has a single significant shortcoming, it revolves around its treatment of the campaign for “nuclear-zero.” Adelman credits Reagan for having “mainstreamed” this “formerly flaky movement,” a movement that he himself endorses and which President Obama has turned into national policy. Adelman approvingly notes that, on the 20th anniversary of Reykjavik, the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed a resolution supporting the summit’s goal of a world without nuclear weapons. He hails this as a “true Kellogg-Briand moment” and comments that it “would have delighted Ronald Reagan.”

ASSOCIATED PRESS

That is a ridiculous inversion. The 1928 Kellogg-Briand pact, a treaty to renounce war as an instrument of national policy, was signed by some 62 countries, among them Germany, Italy, and Japan. As Adelman himself acknowledges, it was an epic failure. Reagan may have spoken on occasion of the noble aims of the pact; but if he believed anything, it was that pieces of paper like Kellogg-Briand could not be relied on to stop aggression. As Reagan told the United Nations General Assembly:

We should not confuse the signing of agreements with the solving of problems. Simply collecting agreements will not bring peace. Agreements genuinely reinforce peace only when they are kept. Otherwise we're building a paper castle that will be blown away by the winds of war.

Despite what Ken Adelman implicitly suggests, the Ronald Reagan who embraced the idea of eliminating all nuclear weapons has not an iota in common with those, like Barack Obama, who embrace the same idea today and employ it as a substitute for genuine action against mounting threats. Our 40th president may have had a utopian streak, but he was not a utopian: "Trust but verify" were his watchwords, and "peace through strength" was his credo. Reagan would have had nothing but withering words for a president who calls for the abolition of nuclear weapons while simultaneously slashing the defense budget, who publicly vacillates over major national-security decisions, and who practically begs the nuclear-aspiring mullahs of Iran for a piece of paper bearing their signatures. ♦

apparent rebellion by Spurius Maelius.

Ditto George Washington. After ceding command of the Continental Army, the Father of Our Country retreated in all earnestness to civilian life at Mount Vernon. Only the urgings of his countrymen restored him to public service as president of both the Constitutional Convention and the United States. And then it was back once again to Mount Vernon.

Other, more recent, political examples are more ambiguous. In 1951, after being relieved of command by President Truman and promising that he would "just fade away," Douglas MacArthur embarked on what Eric Goldman called "the most substantial and noisiest fading-away in history." But after a whirlwind of speeches and appearances, and amid speculation about his political ambitions, MacArthur did, indeed, fade away. He died, long out of the limelight, 13 years later.

In this regard, Rudolph Giuliani comes to mind. He knew that he couldn't legally serve a third term as mayor of New York, but, caught up in the public adulation he inspired in the aftermath of 9/11, he openly flirted with another four years. At the very least, he offered the possibility of an extended transition period in Gracie Mansion before realizing that such a move would yield only "division and litigation."

Enter Michael Bloomberg.

Would that others might follow these leads. Following his 1960 presidential loss to John F. Kennedy and his defeat by Edmund G. "Pat" Brown in California's gubernatorial race two years later, Richard Nixon famously declared, "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference." And we all know how that turned out.

Some of the most memorable grand avowals of withdrawal from the public eye have come from the world of media and entertainment. A couple of years before Nixon's first last act, Jack Paar walked off as host of *The Tonight Show* over the censorship of a joke about what was then called a "water closet." He returned a month later, to audience pandemonium, announcing, "As I was saying . . ."



Hello, I Must Be Going

The not-so-fine art of extenuated exits.

BY THOMAS VINCIGUERRA

Two years ago, Philip Roth announced, to rapt attention, that he had ceased writing fiction. Then, last May, following a sold-out appearance at the 92nd Street Y, Roth said that he would no longer engage in public readings. "You can write it down," he said. "This was absolutely the last appearance I will make on any public stage, anywhere."

Somehow, it is unlikely we've heard the last from Philip Roth. He may well have been telling the literal truth—that he will never again write fiction, nor will he continue to appear on a public platform. But that doesn't necessarily

mean he will be silent. He could publish fiction that he has pulled out of his trunk. He might write and print criticism. He could spout off on radio or some other nonvisual medium.

Roth's ostensibly bald-faced disappearing act actually constitutes an increasingly popular form of personal conceit. We're talking here about the Long Goodbye. Throughout history, many a public figure has declared his or her intention to slip back into obscurity, only to renege out of sheer egotism.

This wasn't always the case; traditionally, these avowals have been sincere. The archetype remains Cincinnatus: The Romans brought him out of retirement and appointed him dictator to defeat the Aequians, after which he resigned to go back to his farm—all in the course of about two weeks. For good measure, he did the same thing nearly 20 years later, to put down an

Thomas Vinciguerra is the author of the forthcoming Cast of Characters: Wolcott Gibbs, E. B. White, James Thurber and the Golden Age of The New Yorker (Norton).

Jack Paar's turnabout probably wasn't premeditated; he was famously high-strung and impulsive. By contrast, it's hard to trust the motives of contemporary boldface names. These days, their retreats from view tend to be drawn-out and weasel-worded. They're not necessarily untruthful, but they are carefully crafted to offer wiggle room that affords them the opportunity of continuing to bask in our lingering gaze.

Take Oprah Winfrey. Millions wept when she wrapped up her syndicated talk show in 2011, and she wept with them: "We won't say goodbye," she told her fans, and she was true to her word. Today, her namesake network, on which she is prominently featured, reaches more than 70 percent of American households with television. Another notable offender is Garrison Keillor, host of NPR's *A Prairie Home Companion*, which, after a successful run, ended in 1987. Two years later, Keillor launched the remarkably similar *American Radio Company of the Air*. Then, after a lapse of several years, he resumed the old name of his old radio show—and has hosted its current incarnation ever since.

In 2011, Keillor announced in the *AARP Bulletin* that he planned to leave that show in the spring of 2013. Yet he is still broadcasting, and, for good measure, he recently published his own anthology, *The Keillor Reader*.

Let's not forget music. Barbra Streisand conducted a series of (supposed) encore concerts in Las Vegas in 1999 that took place a few years before her "Streisand" North American tour. She performed live in Berlin seven years later. Indeed, she has yet to stop singing, having just released an album of collaborations with male vocalists such as Billy Joel and Andrea Bocelli. I'm looking to the press release about a series of live tie-in appearances.

In 2002, Cher embarked on what she planned would be a series of departing

gigs: They ended up lasting not three months, as announced, but three *years*. The event was subsequently dubbed the "Never Can Say Goodbye" tour. Never was a curtain call more appropriately titled. And, of course, Cher is currently performing her North American "Dressed to Kill" tour.

Of course, it would be hypocritical to omit the example of certain journalists. Last October, Bill Moyers announced that he would be ending his weekly PBS series *Moyers & Company*. Now, one year later, he is

hippest, most informative syndicated cartoon in existence, earning for its creator Garry Trudeau a Pulitzer Prize—the first one ever given for a comic strip. At the height of his powers, Trudeau told an astonished readership that he would take a hiatus. In 1984, after a 22-month breather, he took up pen and ink again; within a year, *Saturday Review* had declared, "The most publicized return since MacArthur's has produced a strip that is predictable, mean-spirited, and not as funny as before." A generation later, little has changed.

Rather more consequential is the case of Theodore Roosevelt. As Ken Burns's endless documentary about the Roosevelts has reminded us, TR shocked the nation on his victorious election night in 1908 by declaring, "Under no circumstances will I be a candidate for or accept another nomination." He went back on his word, in 1912, when he ran as a Progressive and succeeded only in splitting the Republican vote between himself and William Howard Taft.

Enter Woodrow Wilson.

Yes, it's hard to abandon the glow of general adulation. But there is a way to do so honestly and without wearing out one's welcome. No

one heard much from Johnny Carson after he stepped down as Jack Paar's successor (of three decades) as host of *The Tonight Show*—until we read his obituary. Now that was a class act. The same holds true for Ronald Reagan, who, in 1994, announced that he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease and would proceed "into the sunset of my life"—which he did, quietly.

Time was when a public personality, after a respectable stint in the spotlight, would execute a graceful bow and exit with equal dignity. Plenty of smart and famous people now appear incapable of doing so. Is it disrespectful to suggest that their farewells should be hastened by mandating the use of the vaudeville hook? ♦



Cher and colleagues (2014)

saying so again: "It's the real deal," he declared last month. This summer, Barbara Walters retired noisily from *The View*, her departure having been reverentially covered from the moment she announced it a year earlier. At this point, it would probably be premature to rule out a future abundance of bandwidth from the woman S.J. Perelman once called "the most insincere, brassy nitwit in the business."

Let's face it: It's probably best to honor your pledge to step down, especially when you're at the top of your game, if for no other reason than that sticking around too long tends toward embarrassment. In the 1970s and early '80s, "Doonesbury" was the

Men at Work

When the going gets tough, these two get going.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Right now at your local multiplex, Denzel Washington is appearing in *The Equalizer*, a lousy picture in which he is required to display almost supernatural killing skills—and he is entirely believable even though the movie is not, even for one second. You might say he's playing Liam Neeson, or at least the Liam Neeson character from *Taken*.

Which is funny, because just down the hall, Liam Neeson is appearing in *A Walk Among the Tombstones*, a pretty good film in which he faces down a knife-wielding, snuff-porn-addict gravedigger with the I've-seen-everything-and-done-everything anomie that typifies the actor's surprising late-career emergence as a movie star. Meanwhile, a trailer just popped up online for a film called (so help me God) *Tak3n*, in which Neeson's character will once again display his "particular set of skills"—among them the willingness to shoot an innocent woman in the arm to force her husband to provide a relevant piece of information.

The Equalizer is a hit; *A Walk Among the Tombstones* is not. What they share, however, is a downbeat tone, ultraviolence, and two formidably convincing leading men who would already have been retired on a full pension for a decade if they lived in Greece. Washington is 59, Neeson is 62, and there is no one who can touch either of them when it comes to the action genre.

This is odd. When John Wayne hit 60, he had begun to seem ridiculous climbing into the saddle or aiming a gun; indeed, it was just that ludicrous-

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

The Equalizer

Directed by Antoine Fuqua



A Walk Among the Tombstones

Directed by Scott Frank



Liam Neeson

ness that made his performance as an aging wreck of a federal marshal in *True Grit* (1969) so touching. The same was true of Henry Fonda, who tried to be Clint Eastwood a few times in the 1960s, and of Kirk Douglas, who made a laughingstock of himself as an ex-CIA agent in *The Fury* (1978). Well, you might say, 60 wasn't the new 40 back then; but even in the past decade, Harrison Ford, Michael Douglas, Al Pacino, and Robert De Niro have all embarrassed themselves when they tried to recapture the old magic of their younger, gun-toting, beating-guys-up days while receiving Social Security. And there was nothing quite so absurd as the team-up of Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger in the tough-guy prison movie *Escape Plan* (2013), their

faces as immobilized as any Botoxed Beverly Hills matron.

So what is it about Neeson and Washington? First, they both happen to be exceptionally good actors, even when they're slumming. I've said before in these pages that Neeson gave one of the towering stage performances of my lifetime in a Broadway revival of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* in 2002, and he was almost as good playing Oscar Wilde in a David Hare play called *The Judas Kiss* a few years earlier. Washington is not the stage actor Neeson is, but you would be hardpressed to find anyone else in Hollywood who could have played his three best parts over the past 30 years: his Oscar turns as the runaway slave-turned-soldier in *Glory* (1989) and as a dirty cop in *Training Day* (2001) and his should-have-been-Oscar turn as an alcoholic pilot in *Flight* (2012).

Of course, Pacino and De Niro are no slouches in the acting department. But Washington and Neeson have two things they lack. First, they are almost entirely without mannerism, which is important because they do nothing that comes across as self-parodic. And second, both have immense physical authority. You might think that this would be a quality any great actor could infuse himself with, or something a skilled director and his editor could help an actor convey. Not at all.

Just as in real life, authority is a mysterious thing. It's not clear it can be faked or mimicked. But it seems to deepen with age, and this is the key to understanding why it is so pleasurable to watch Washington and Neeson do their worst—even when they're in bad movies. They are the opposite of callow, unformed, smart-alecky, quippy, and jokester-y, which is what most action-movie types are like today. Nor do they need to turn on the intensity, the way Tom Cruise and Will Smith do when they want to seem like formidable adversaries. If anything, Washington and Neeson turn it down a notch.

In other words, they're men. ♦

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India reminded the world on Saturday of his country's abiding battle against extremist groups, and took a swipe at countries that give them shelter before capping his speech with a call for an International Yoga Day."

—New York Times, September 27, 2014

PARODY

OCTOBER 6, 2014

ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

WORLD SPLIT OVER MODI'S 'INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY'

Pakistan Scoffs, China Urges Tai Chi

By HELEN DERRY

A global crisis has erupted following Indian prime minister Narendra Modi's call for an International Yoga Day. Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif has placed his nation's armed forces on full alert, stating, "We would rather go to war than adopt those silly chants and posing in even sillier positions!"

Other nations have since joined the fray. The Chinese are calling for an International Day of Tai Chi, while the Israelis are pushing for a day of krav maga (which the Arab League quickly denounced). Cuba supports Salsa Night, but Brazil prefers an International Evening of Samba.

Vladimir Putin is certain the world can use an International Vodka Day. "Your morning should begin with a shot of vodka," said the Russian president. "And if you cannot do the shot, then you are weak. Go back to your crib and cry like baby."

Others were more cautious. "While yoga is admirable, not everyone can do those stretches," said French president François Hollande. "I can barely tie my own shoes." Instead, he prefers spending "a whole day lingering over a café noisette and reading 'Being and Nothingness.' I think that would make the world a better place, n'est-ce pas?" Or just take a nap, which Spain is suggest-



A Spaniard in a park demonstrates the appeal of International Siesta Day.

ing with its International Siesta Day. This notion, however, does not sit well with Germany's chancellor, Angela Merkel, who asked, "Who is paying for Spain's nap? The German taxpayer, that's who."

According to White House press secretary Josh Earnest, the president has been monitoring the situation carefully. But thus far, Obama has issued only one statement, calling for calm and insist-

ing Yoga is not Indian. "It is exercise, pure and simple. And it has no vision other than stretching." Meanwhile, Vice President Biden wondered, "Why don't the Indians offer another meditation option, like smoking a peace pipe?" But former President Bill Clinton said he has found the solution: National Hot Tub

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