the weekly
Standard

TOWARD A FREE CHINA
DAN BLUMENTHAL & WILLIAM INBODEN

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The Rise of the Victim

JOSEPH EPSTEIN
on Hillary Clinton
and other underdogs

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

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COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

Don't Trust Studies, Studies Show

No phrase in modern journalism is more suspicious than "studies show," unless it's "research reveals." Mention "science" and the average scribbler's eyes grow gauzy as his brain shuts down, and too many readers have the same reaction. This is especially true when the science involved is of the "social" variety: fields like social psychology, sociology, social anthropology, and all their bastard children. Entire mountains of baloney would come tumbling down if reporters applied an ounce of skepticism to the research findings shoveled at them by eager university publicists and happily repeated in print or on the air as settled fact.

Fortunately we don't have to wait for our journalists to apply the skepticism. In a long-overdue act of self-policing, a brave band of social scientists are doing the job themselves. They know what many journalists—including those who routinely cover the sciences—evidently do not: You can't really have confidence in the results of an experiment until the results are replicated, preferably by other scientists attempting the same or a similar study. This can take time, but deadlines are deadlines.

Beginning in 2011, under the guidance of the Center for Open Science in Virginia, more than 250 researchers have been trying to reproduce the findings of 100 studies published in journals of social psychology. The journal *Nature* reported last month that the results, while still preliminary, confirm the skepticism. Of the 100 studies, only 39 could be repeated with similar results. And of those 39 attempts at replication, only 4 produced results that were "virtually identical" to the originals.

Social psychology suffers what one researcher calls a "replicability crisis." For young researchers all the incentives point away from careful work. A social psychologist without published papers is unlikely to find a job, yet journals and universities like to publicize "counterintuitive" findings and see no value in research that produces inconclusive results. And of course at the other end of the pipeline are reporters and editors desperate to declare on their website or morning show that science has established some new and surprising truth of human nature.

In real life, as distinct from life as it's simulated in a university psych lab, new truths about human nature are hard to come by. (The old ones can be pretty rough, too.) It's a great advance in social science that research at last reveals—indeed, that studies show—this to be true. ♦

The Constitution According to Cuomo

It's been a full week since The Scrapbook inveighed against the assault on free speech, so we have a new parade of horribles to shake our head at. The precipitating event this time was the killing of two armed assailants at an event in Garland, Texas, that was displaying Muhammad cartoons. It should go without saying that free speech means supporting the right of people you don't like to say things you don't like. But since the event was organized by Pamela Geller, a controversial figure whose notoriety hinges on her willingness to insult Muslims, the media for the most part rushed to condemn Geller, rather than the men who tried to kill her.

There was an aggressively stupid bit of news "analysis" from McClatchy's Lindsay Wise and Jonathan Landay headlined: "After Texas shooting: If free speech is provocative, should there be limits?" The piece proceeds to list ways in which the display of cartoons might not be protected by the First Amendment. On the substance, the article is as erroneous as you might imagine, but it does reinforce a truism useful for understanding such debates. Exceptions to the First Amendment are so narrow that the easiest way to tell someone doesn't support the First Amendment is how quickly he rushes to talk about the exceptions.

As if to prove this point, CNN's Chris Cuomo tweeted this nugget of legal wisdom: "Hate speech is excluded from protection. Don't just say you love the constitution . . . read it." The Scrapbook would very much like to see Cuomo's copy of the Constitution; ours is missing the footnote about hate speech. Under a barrage of ridicule, Cuomo tried to backtrack, claiming he was referring to "case law," not the Constitution, specifically the "fighting words" doctrine. Not only is this not applicable, we'd note that Cuomo recently told a judge on air that "our laws do not come from God, your honor, and you know that." The judge promptly humiliated him by quoting the Declaration of Independence, so we're not inclined to give Cuomo the benefit of the doubt—especially since he has a degree from Fordham Law School.

The competition for the most inane thing said about the Texas attack is fierce. The *Washington Post*'s "social change reporter"—let's pause to note the mere existence of such a job—wrote an article headlined "Event organizer offers no apology after thwarted attack in Texas." We can't believe we keep having to restate the facts, but two men tried to kill Geller, and the implication is that she owes an apology? That's bad enough, but here's how the article began: "If the contest was intended as bait, it worked." Just imagine the *Washington*

Post covering an attempted rape with "If dressing provocatively was intended as bait, it worked."

In the end, the media's unwillingness to overlook the substance of Geller's opinions in favor of protecting her right to have them in the face of armed gunmen is more than troubling. Such attitudes legitimize violence as an effective response to speech. And so long as they insist on arguing there are limits to the First Amendment, the establishment media are far more dangerous to a free society than the impolitic portrayals of Muhammad they would like to outlaw. ♦

Papal Progressivism

Last week, Pope Francis hosted a Vatican summit on global warming where one of his cardinals called for a "full conversion of hearts and minds" to the fight against the "almost unfathomable" effects of fossil fuels on the environment. The pope will soon issue an encyclical on the subject, which—according to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon—will "convey to the world that protecting our environment is an urgent moral imperative and a sacred duty for all people of faith and people of conscience."

This came shortly after the pope's seeming endorsement of the proto-Iran deal, saying, "In hope we entrust to the merciful Lord the framework recently agreed to in Lausanne, that it may be a definitive step toward a more secure and fraternal world."

Late last year, President Obama thanked Pope Francis for his role in the Castro-lifeline Cuba deal; according to a "senior administration official" quoted in *Time*, "Pope Francis personally issued an appeal in a letter that he sent to President Obama and to President Raul Castro . . . encouraging the United States and Cuba to pursue a closer friendship."

Each of these forays (and others) into pontifical progressivism has disappointed conservatives, many of whom have been Francis enthusiasts. Each has gotten ample media attention. Another worrying papal maneuver, however, was mostly overlooked.

Last December, not long after the Cuba deal, the pope declined to meet with the Dalai Lama. Tibet's spiritual leader-in-exile was visiting Rome and had requested an audience; the papal spokesman said the request was denied in light of the "delicate situation" of the Vatican's relationship with China and China's with Tibet.

Needless to say, no one will blame the pope for hoping to build influence with Communist China, whose rulers are world leaders in oppressing Christians. However, his efforts to curry favor with Beijing have, so far, failed: Over the last year, the situation for China's Christians has grown dramatically worse. In 2013, according to the Texas-based China Aid Association, about 7,500 Chinese Christians were persecuted for their religious beliefs. In 2014, that number spiked to nearly 18,000. During 2014, 400 churches in the province of Zhejiang—just south of Shanghai—were defaced; some 35 were demolished. Perhaps the pope's refusal to meet with the Dalai Lama was a response to this Kristallnachtian campaign. If so, it hasn't worked. This month, two new Zhejiang churches were defaced, by order of Chinese authorities.

Separate from the issue of Chinese Christians, of course, is the issue of Tibet, whose people are on their last legs. Tibetan Buddhists may not be the pope's constituency, but surely his remit includes defending downtrodden masses of every religion. And the

Tibetans are about as downtrodden as you can get.

Pope John Paul II met with the Dalai Lama in 1980, 1982, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1994, 1996, and 1999, as did his successor, Benedict XVI, in 2006. In deference to the Chinese Christian situation, John Paul II was discreet on the subject of Tibetan independence—but he never kowtowed to the Communists. The Vatican has consistently refused to de-recognize Taiwan, as Beijing demands.

After rallying Catholics during his 1979 visit to Warsaw—John Paul II wrote a letter to Brezhnev, in 1980, that persuaded the Soviet dictator to stand down 20 Soviet divisions poised to invade Poland. Ultimately, John Paul II's steel-spined approach to communism contributed to the liberation of all the Soviet bloc's Christians, without a shot being fired. Sic semper tyrannis. History tells us appeasement would have had the opposite effect.

John Paul II was one of the great men of the 20th century. Certainly, Pope Francis is a good man, with good intentions. As Soviet Christians and the Soviet Union were defining issues of the tenure of John Paul II, the papacy of Francis may in part be defined by the plight of Chinese Christians, and everyone else under Communist China's thumb. Or at least it ought to be. The Vicar of Christ has an awesome responsibility as a moral leader of Catholics and non-Catholics all over the world. Just as we hope American and European leaders remember the lessons of Reagan and Thatcher, we will have to hope Francis takes a page from his troublesome-priest predecessor.

Write your bishop. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'For months I'd been seeking a way into my first book, a memoir about returning to New York City after a six-month stay alone in a cabin in the woods of Canada. And there . . . " (Charles Siebert, *New York Times Magazine*, May 13). ♦

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Burning Fr. Neuhaus's Diary

It took me six hours to destroy it all, that cold, wet winter day. Freezing rain coating the leafless trees and the slush of snow left from the previous days' storms. A weak fire in one of the stingy, grudging little fireplaces they used to build in Manhattan apartments. And me, alone with thousands of pages of unpublished writing by Richard John Neuhaus, burning the record he'd kept of his life.

Reading the new biography by Randy Boyagoda, seeing the clips of Fr. Neuhaus on websites discussing the book, I've had that day come back to mind recently—replaying, this time in doubt, the decision I made to destroy his diary. Certainly Boyagoda's work would have been considerably easier if he'd had the diary to guide him. Substantially different, too, I suspect, Richard's internal narrative shaping in entirely different ways the external actions of his life.

TOM LABAFF

But, now that I think again about that destruction, I realize I was conflicted even at the time. In the hospital, a few days before his death on January 8, 2009, Richard John Neuhaus asked me to go to the basement of his New York house, find his diary, and make sure no one else saw it. And about a month after he died, I did.

What I was expecting were a few notebooks or leather-bound journals. What I found were mounds and mounds of paper—stacks totaling maybe ten feet of the stuff. The man seems to have had hypergraphia every moment of his life: all those days spent writing his books and essays, finished by evenings spent writing thousands of words of diary entries. Running from the pages of the 1960s, typewritten on both sides, to the pages of the 2000s, printed every evening from his computer, the stacks were a guide to their own age, fading from brownish yellow at the bottom up to white on top, and all of them reeking of Fr. Neuhaus's ceaseless cigars.

Virgil on his deathbed wanted the manuscript of *The Aeneid* to be destroyed, although the emperor Augustus wouldn't let it happen. Max Brod refused to follow Kafka's instruction to burn his stories, and in 2009 Nabokov's son Dmitri ignored his late father's wishes and published the unfinished novel *The Original of Laura*. The case of Nabokov was much discussed around the time of Fr. Neuhaus's death, and I think I may have been influenced by my general feeling that the son had violated his duty.

Of course, the personal notes of a theological writer, priest, and public intellectual are not the same as manuscripts by famous artists. History is full of holes where the diaries of the famous and the interesting were destroyed. And that often seems a good thing, at least to those who knew the person. I remember I slipped on the narrow basement stairs, my shoes slick from the ice, as I hauled out the first load of ashes, and for weeks afterward I had bursitis in the arm with which I'd painfully caught myself. And perhaps that throb in my arm made me sensitive to the dark tone in Richard's writing as I browsed random pages.

The intricacies of his turn from Lutheranism to Catholicism were fascinating, but neither denomination needs to hear the criticisms he indulged when the only audience was himself. That's particularly true given that he used his diary to try ideas on for size: developing positions to find out whether he agreed with them. And then, in its more personal elements, he used the diary as a kind of pressure valve, a way of describing, and thus releasing, the annoyances of the day. The observations he made about the people he met were often sharp witted and sharp edged—and this, more than anything else, was probably what made him ask me to destroy it.

In the end, the deciding factor for me was not inside those pages, but in the fact of his asking and the fact of my agreeing. The promises we make the dead are more absolute than promises we make the living, for the dead are no longer able to keep their secrets or defend their privacy. Richard John Neuhaus's biography, the stories told of his life, would be different if the biographers had his own account to rely on. But he didn't want it that way, and, having given my promise, I felt I couldn't later refuse.

And so I spent a cold, dark day in the middle of a New York winter alone, burning paper in a narrow grate.

Joseph Bottum

the weekly Standard

The Kerry Guarantee

John Forbes Kerry is the 68th secretary of state of the United States of America. If you're ever tempted to ponder American decline, or for that matter the decline of the West, you might pause to reflect that John Kerry was preceded in his august office by, among others, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, William Seward, John Hay, Elihu Root, Charles Evans Hughes, Henry Stimson, George Marshall, Dean Acheson, Henry Kissinger, and George Shultz.

But leave aside such melancholy thoughts of the glories of the past. Let's focus instead on the (admittedly grim) present. Let's focus on something John Kerry said early last week. It is, even in light of his own sad record and by his own low standards, startlingly foolish. Here's Kerry, in Jerusalem, attempting to reassure Israelis about Iran's nuclear program:

> I say to every Israeli that today we have the ability to stop [the Iranians] if they decided to move quickly to a bomb and I absolutely guarantee that in the future we will have the ability to know what they are doing so that we can still stop them if they decided to move to a bomb.

Not reassuring

This Kerry guarantee is ludicrous. History shows, and every serious expert understands, that there can be no guarantee—let alone an absolute guarantee—that we will know everything the Iranian regime is doing in its efforts to acquire nuclear weapons technology. This would be the case even if Kerry were able, in the current negotiations, to secure a thoroughgoing and intrusive inspections regime, which he is not. With the inspections regime the Obama administration looks likely to settle for, we won't be able to guarantee, we won't even be able to have much confidence, that we'll know what Iran is doing.

To get a sense of how farcical Kerry's "absolute guarantee" is, here's what two of his illustrious predecessors, Kissinger and Shultz, have to say about the prospective deal:

> Negotiations that began 12 years ago as an international effort to prevent an Iranian capability to develop a nuclear arsenal are ending with an agreement that concedes this very capability, albeit short of its full capacity in the first 10 years. . . . Under the proposed agreement, for 10 years Iran will never be further than one year from a nuclear weapon and, after a decade, will be significantly closer. . . . In a large country with multiple facilities and ample experience in nuclear concealment, violations will be inherently difficult to detect. . . . Any report of a violation is likely to prompt debate over its significance—or even calls for new talks with Tehran to explore the issue. The experience of Iran's work on a heavy-water reactor during the "interim agreement" period—when suspect activity was identified but played down in the interest of a positive negotiating atmosphere—is not encouraging.

Now, one could imagine a sophisticated case for a not-fully-reassuring deal, made by a more sophisticated negotiator than John Kerry: It's not perfect, but some visibility into the program is better than none; we'll probably pick up cheating once it's been going on for a while; and, as Clint Eastwood put it, "If you want a guarantee, buy a toaster." But we don't have a serious or sophisticated negotiator. We have John Kerry. So the deal will be catastrophic. And the defense of it will be dishonest.

That's why a group of senators fought over the last couple of weeks to strengthen the Corker-Cardin legislation—seeking to add to it standards that would make clear what an acceptable deal would be, and to create a process that would establish a fair playing field for debate and votes on the deal. The junior senators did their best. We salute them for struggling against the odds. But they could not overcome Corker's resistance to modifying what he'd negotiated with the Democrats, other senior Republicans' unwillingness to challenge a committee chairman's work, the pro-Israel establishment's commitment to bipartisanship, and a general lack of urgency about acting now to stop a bad Iran deal.

The effort was not entirely in vain. These senators at least began to educate their colleagues and the country in the many ways in which the deal toward which the Obama administration is hurtling is a very bad one. And perhaps the House will improve the legislation as it comes over to that body.

What is crucial now is that the broader anti-nuclear Iran effort not take the next two months off while Kerry

NEWSCOM

negotiates. What is crucial now is that opponents of a nuclear Iran put aside tactical differences to focus on the fundamental task: preventing—or laying the groundwork for defeating—a deal that paves the way toward a Middle East dominated and intimidated by a terror-sponsoring, America-hating, Israel-denying, nuclear-weapons-capable Iran, whose economy will be strengthened with sanctions removed and whose nuclear weapons infrastructure the "international community" will have blessed.

For our part, we "absolutely guarantee" that if there is no further effort to rally opposition to this deal until after it's signed, it will be too late. That's why some senators had a sense of urgency about shaping the debate now. They were rebuffed by their elders in the Senate. But the fight goes on. It is a fight against strengthening the Iranian regime at home and abroad, a fight against a nuclear shield for Iranian terror, a fight against a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, a fight for a strong America and for a secure Israel.

The battle over Corker-Cardin may be over. The fight to stop the Iran deal has just begun.

—William Kristol

Ex-Im and Beyond

Conservatives have been disappointed with the track record of Republicans in Congress since their 2010 takeover of the House. There have been a few bright spots—the cuts in domestic discretionary spending brought about by the sequester, for instance—but from Obamacare to Iran to taxes to financial services regulation, President Obama and the left seem to retain the upper hand. Yet there is one issue percolating in Congress that could provide a rare victory. Conservatives are working hard to take down the Export-Import Bank, and they might succeed.

The Export-Import Bank is a New Deal-era relic whose purpose is to facilitate American trade. According to William Becker and William McClenahan, authors of a major study of Ex-Im, the bank has been an "entrepreneurial" institution that has evolved over the years to retain the favor of the nation's foreign policy establishment and top economic policymakers. Today, its main role is to provide credit to foreign purchasers of American manufactured goods, especially heavy equipment and airplanes. Last year it authorized about $21 billion in government-backed loans. Few of these loans go bad, so Ex-Im has little budgetary impact, but then its critics don't base their opposition on grounds of budget busting.

So what *is* their complaint? First, the bank is grossly inefficient. To support American businesses, Ex-Im extends credit to foreign governments and enterprises. Surely there is a less roundabout way to promote domestic business than to subsidize foreign business! The Ex-Im Bank's defenders retort that foreign governments already do precisely this, so Uncle Sam must respond in kind to protect American jobs. Even if this is true (and many experts raise doubts), it does not justify wasteful inefficiency. While some exporters might be hurt if the Ex-Im Bank were decommissioned, its credit could be redirected in ways that bring more bang for the buck.

In addition, Ex-Im creates distortions within domestic industries because its subsidies benefit certain American companies over their domestic competitors. Worse, who wins and who loses is determined by the preferences of foreign companies or governments, which may be susceptible to cronyism and other illiberal impulses. Moreover, Ex-Im plays favorites across domestic industries, favoring certain types of businesses over others. For instance, guaranteeing foreign loans for new airplanes may be great for Boeing, but it creates more competition for domestic carriers like Delta, a staunch opponent of Ex-Im.

At present, Ex-Im's benefits flow overwhelmingly to big corporations. Many of its loans go to foreign-owned airlines seeing to purchase U.S.-built planes, making Boeing far and away its biggest beneficiary. In 2013, 30 percent of the bank's benefits flowed to Boeing. General Electric took another 10 percent, while Bechtel received 7 percent, and Caterpillar took 5 percent. This runs contrary to the claim that Ex-Im favors small business, a group that is politically sacrosanct.

Finally, the bank is a breeding ground for cronyism. Major corporations are deeply invested in politics, but not out of civic duty. In 2013, Boeing received about $8 billion worth of benefits from Ex-Im; during the 2013-14 election cycle, it spent about $35 million on lobbying, in part to keep the bank afloat. From Boeing's perspective, its lobbying investment brought a fantastic return. However, this is inconsistent with republican government. Ex-Im survives not because it enhances the general welfare, but because its clients lobby the government aggressively.

Unsurprisingly, all that corporate cash has purchased some very powerful supporters. Barack Obama opposed

the Export-Import Bank when he ran for president in 2008, but now he supports its reauthorization. The bank enjoys support from almost all Democrats and many Republicans. Normally, that would ensure survival, but this time conservatives have the upper hand in Congress. The charter for the Ex-Im Bank expires on June 30. If Congress does not act, the bank will die.

It is good for conservatives to take on such a defective program, but there is a larger point about the health of our government that an intensive focus on the Ex-Im Bank risks obscuring. American economic policy is a mess—a tangle of client-patron relationships between government and business that costs taxpayers a princely sum while inhibiting economic growth. The Export-Import Bank is not the worst offender. Rather, it is the easiest to attack. Because it benefits a narrow band of domestic manufacturers, Ex-Im cannot build the sort of broad interest-group alliances that protect other agencies from congressional assault. Moreover, since it requires congressional reauthorization, its critics do not have to overcome our system's bias in favor of the status quo in order to eliminate it. Instead, it is up to Ex-Im's advocates to persuade Congress and the president to renew it.

And yet, one can only marvel at the struggle over this program. If an agency as questionable as Ex-Im can be eliminated only by a herculean effort, what hope is there of doing away with corporate tax preferences, domestic profits held overseas, onerous regulations that benefit large businesses, farm subsidies, affordable housing payola, rampant overpayments in Medicare, and the like? None of these subsidies will go quietly. All are deeply entrenched in our political economy, not because they are good for the nation, but because the interest groups that benefit from them are the most heavily invested in the political process.

Ex-Im, in other words, is just the weakest link in the regime of interest-group liberalism that has slowly come to dominate Washington. For generations the government has been picking winners and losers in the private sector under the guise of national development. Those who have been winning will not gladly give up their spoils. They will do all they can to keep their benefits flowing, and the fight over Ex-Im shows that they can do quite a bit.

Conservative reformers who have been fighting the Export-Import Bank should be applauded, but this is not a game of dominoes. If Ex-Im falls, farm subsidies will persist. So will corporate welfare in the tax code. So will our absurd housing policies, which somehow withstood an economic calamity they had helped cause.

Politically speaking, the only hope is to get the public involved in the fight against the inappropriate alliance between business and government. Few voters are aware of Washington's tangled web of crony-capitalism, and this allows it to become entrenched. Thus, Republicans talk a good game about smaller government in their districts, then go to Washington and vote for programs like the farm bill. The folks back home are unaware that this is even under discussion. Interest groups with much at stake win, thanks to public ignorance and apathy.

What could change this is strong presidential leadership. To be sure, no president can change the people's minds at will, and his hold over Congress is fleeting and limited. Still, a determined president can focus the people's attention on problems they might otherwise overlook and try to force a reluctant Congress to adopt changes. To curb crony capitalism, conservatives will need such a commander in chief.

The historical precedent is Ronald Reagan. Corporate welfare embedded in the tax code has been a problem since the 1910s, when the income tax was first implemented. In every decade since the 1920s, reformers complained, but nothing got done because too many interests benefited too much from the way things were. Only when Reagan threw his substantial political muscle behind reform in 1985-86 was the opposition overcome. Today, too, major change will come only if the White House demands it.

As conservatives weigh the candidates lining up for the Republican presidential nomination, they could consider the candidates' priorities. A president has only a limited opportunity to accomplish anything big before his political capital is depleted. Each candidate will promise an endless array of reforms, but the winner will accomplish only a fraction of that agenda.

Republicans are endlessly caricatured as the party of plutocrats. What if they nominated a candidate for whom cleaning the rot out of America's economic policies was a top priority? If that candidate won, and our next president succeeded in pushing through genuine reforms, it would do the economy and the federal balance sheet enormous good. It would also redistribute political power, giving more to the people at large, a valuable goal in an age of growing inequality. And it would help the GOP rebut Democratic accusations that they are in the pocket of big business.

The question for Republican voters, then, is whether there is among those vying for the nomination one who, if elected, would make such a costly investment of presidential effort for the nation's good.

—Jay Cost

GETTY / PAUL J. RICHARDS

A Walk Past the Mass Graves

A survivor of the Khmer Rouge looks back.

BY LES SILLARS

The sign was clear, in English, and made an entirely reasonable request: "Please don't walk through the mass grave."

I was visiting Choeung Ek, memorial site for Cambodia's infamous "killing fields," last December. It was the execution grounds for the Phnom Penh prison called Tuol Sleng, where the Khmer Rouge tortured some 14,000 prisoners into ridiculous confessions of spying for the CIA or the Vietnamese. Underneath stands of chankiri trees, the path meandered beside grassy depressions and sandy hollows where thousands of bodies had been dumped after people's heads were bashed in or their throats cut.

A little further along were the "killing trees" against which cadres had smashed the heads of infants, and a bit beyond that was a tall Buddhist stupa. Inside I came face to face with hundreds of human skulls on shelves in cases with glass on all sides. Visitors can look through the cases to the sunlit grounds, or up to see the shelves of skulls, one after another, rising to the ceiling.

With me was Radha Manickam, now 62, who survived the Khmer Rouge's brutal attempt to create a Marxist agrarian utopia between 1975 and 1979. His father and six of his seven younger siblings were among the 1.7 million people the Communists murdered as a matter of policy and with stupefying violence. Mao and Stalin killed more people, but no other regime in modern history has killed nearly a quarter of its own citizens.

April 17 marked the fortieth anniversary of the fall of Phnom Penh to the Communists. In Phnom Penh today, two top officials of the Khmer Rouge regime, already convicted last summer on human rights charges, are on trial for genocide: Nuon Chea, known as "Brother Number Two," and Khieu Samphan. (Pol Pot, leader of the revolution, died in 1998.) It's a good time, then, to remember what happened.

A memorial wall of victims' skulls at Tuol Sleng

Early in the morning of that April day, Communist troops drifted into Phnom Penh and the other major Cambodian cities like clouds of poisonous gas. It was the end of a brutal, five-year civil war between the Khmer Rouge and the U.S.-backed Khmer Republic. Giddy residents welcomed the Communists with cheers and flags. But almost immediately the Khmer Rouge began herding at gunpoint the city's 2 million residents into the streets and from there into the countryside.

They started with the hospitals, forcing gravely ill and wounded patients out of their beds to hobble into 100-degree heat. *Murder of a Gentle Land*, by journalists John Barron and Anthony Paul, published two years later, relates how relatives or friends pushed the beds of patients unable to walk, holding up bottles of dripping plasma: "One man carried his son, whose legs had been amputated. The bandages on both stumps were red with blood, and the son, who appeared to be about twenty-two, was screaming, 'You can't leave me like this! Kill me! Please kill me!'" Thousands were shot or beaten to death, and many more died of dehydration or dysentery in the evacuation, with corpses dotting the sidewalks and ditches as crowds shuffled down the major boulevards.

Cambodia went downhill from there. Over the next weeks the Communists emptied the cities, cut off communication with the outside world, and turned the country into one big labor camp. The plan was to grow and export enough rice to purchase modern, industrial equipment, so they put millions of people to work. Some dug irrigation canals and dikes with hoes and baskets, and others planted, tended, and harvested the crops by hand. They lived in "cooperatives" and ate in communal kitchens, while the cities stood abandoned.

It's difficult to explain the horror of life under the Khmer Rouge. It wasn't just the starvation-level rations that left so many vulnerable to wasting diseases or the brutal field work from before dawn to long after dark, followed by hours-long propaganda meetings.

There was also the totalitarian control over people's lives; the constant fear of being dragged off and murdered for some tie to the old society or some imaginary crime; the abyss of isolation because sharing anything personal was dangerous; the overwhelming feeling of helplessness as the Khmer Rouge with shocking speed

IMAGES: LES SILLARS

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smashed all the institutions of Cambodian society: family, religion, business, government—everything.

Manickam, a member of the country's ethnic Indian minority who had become a Christian in 1973, saw all of these things firsthand. He spent the first months of the regime digging canals and much of the rest working with plowing crews. He witnessed cadres cut the liver out of a live prisoner tied to a tree and then cook and eat it as the man died, screaming. He was hauled out of bed to help dig a hole in a termite hill and then watched the soldiers saw through prisoners' necks with a palm branch and kick the corpses into the grave.

But perhaps Manickam's wedding gives the best picture of day-to-day totalitarianism. In April 1977, village cadres called Manickam in from the fields near his cooperative for a chat. "Comrade," they said, "we want you to get married." With the population in free fall, Angka (the name of the revolutionary organization) determined that the workers needed to produce more loyal revolutionaries. Angka would train the children to ensure they developed the proper revolutionary fervor. "Angka is your father and mother now," they would tell the kids.

So local officials arranged mass forced marriages all over the country. At about 90 pounds, Manickam knew he was in no shape to get married. Plus, as a Christian, he knew he ought not marry an unbeliever. He protested mildly to the cadres and complained bitterly to the Lord. His father and most of his siblings had died by then. "If you make me do this," he prayed, "I'm not going to be a Christian anymore."

On the appointed day he showed up and joined a line of 19 grooms across from 19 brides. They all filed into the communal dining hall. But the woman across from Manickam took one look at him, shrieked, "Not that one!" and dashed from the room. Manickam was relieved. Had he, as one of the "New People" evacuated from a city, tried that, he'd have been summarily beaten to death. The woman, however, was "Old People," one of the country folk who had supported the Khmer Rouge's march to power. She went unpunished.

This happened three more times.

Above, a mass grave at Tuol Sleng. Below, Manickam's first return visit to the site of his forced marriage in 1978.

One woman refused the match because Manickam was "too dark." An attractive girl paired with him was, at the last minute, given as a reward to a crippled old soldier. And the third bride ran away the night before the wedding.

Next year came a new round of weddings, and the cadres called him back: "Comrade, we want you to get married." If he didn't, they warned, he'd get his own plot of ground—three feet by six.

As Manickam recounts, he went back to his rice field and prayed desperately that he would get married; his life depended on it. In late June 1978 the entire village, over 1,000 people, gathered in the communal dining hall for another group wedding ceremony. The partners made their vows to Angka, not each other. Each couple, including Manickam and his new wife, Men (pronounced "Main"), pledged with as much enthusiasm as they could fake to raise seven tons of rice per hectare per year (three would have been incredible, seven was absurd).

Manickam and Men became leaders of a new "model village" made up of the couples in their ceremony. Part of Manickam's job was to meet with a cadre to skulk under the village's stilted huts at night, eavesdropping to make sure the new couples were fulfilling their revolutionary marital duties. This disgusted him, and he tried to drift ahead of the cadre so he could whisper warnings up through the floors.

After a month of losing sleep, Manickam became seriously ill and could hardly walk. Perhaps his malaria flared up. He staggered out to ask his supervisor for a day off and received the standard answer: No work today, no food tonight. He didn't care—there was hardly any food anyway—and lay down in his hut.

About noon Men came in unexpectedly. They hadn't spoken much, but she brought him a couple of cakes of rice dust (in better times rice dust was animal feed). "Thank the Lord," he breathed when he saw the food. Men's eyes grew wide. "Are you a Christian?" she asked.

Manickam panicked. Religion had been outlawed, and she should turn him in immediately. He started to shake and raised himself off his mat. Please, he begged in whispers, because spies were everywhere, yes, I'm a Christian, but don't turn me in, don't tell anybody.

Then he looked into her eyes, really for the first time. Tears rolled down her cheeks. She leaned close. "That's okay," she whispered, "I am too."

Men turned out to be the daughter of a well-known evangelical pastor in Phnom Penh. Together, they survived the remaining months of the Khmer Rouge regime, which ended when the Vietnamese invaded in January 1979, after Pol Pot's repeated provocations. They then escaped to the refugee camps in Thailand and eventually settled in Seattle, where they raised five children.

Today Manickam has a ministry to Cambodian churches in the Pacific Northwest and in Cambodia. The country is still suffering the aftereffects of the Khmer Rouge, whose overweening confidence in their ideology led them to launch a mind-bogglingly tyrannical social engineering project. Determined to create the "new socialist man," Pol Pot and his cronies believed that they could shape human nature in any way they chose—that there is no such thing as a fixed human nature.

But Christian orthodoxy teaches that people are not blank slates; rather, they are creatures made in the image of God, but also sinners. Because human nature is real, there are limits to the malleability and perfectibility of human institutions. One of the things that weakened the Khmer Rouge was many peasants' refusal to deny their family ties or their faith (which for most was Buddhism). The Communists tried to exert more and more control over their victims, leading to more and more violence, but the effort was futile.

In the decades since the atrocities, many, notably those on the political left, have dismissed the Khmer Rouge as homicidal maniacs, but in truth they were good Communists applying the principles of Maoism with the speed and violence of Stalin. Brother Number Two spoke some years ago with the makers of a Cambodian documentary called *Enemies of the People*. Why, he was asked, did all those people have to die? After some stonewalling he finally blurted out, "If we had let them live, the party line would have been hijacked!"

Exactly. In the name of building utopia, you can justify mass murder. ♦

Taxes and the GOP Candidates

A surprising divide on a core issue.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

Senators Marco Rubio, right, and Mike Lee outline their tax plan, March 4, 2015.

AP / SCOTT APPLEWHITE

Wisconsin Republican Paul Ryan has an unusual decoration on the wall of his Capitol Hill office: a framed Laffer curve. This totem of supply-siders everywhere is drawn on a napkin and signed by the economist Art Laffer himself. "To my friend, Paul Ryan," reads the note.

Ryan is the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, which makes the memento all the more fitting. For decades, the concept illustrated by Laffer's curve—that raising the rate of taxation past a certain point actually lowers revenue—has been the organizing principle of the Republican policy of lowering taxes by cutting marginal rates. Republicans aren't ready to abandon that idea in spirit, but as the 2016 presidential election nears, there are signs of some divides within the party about what's a priority—and what isn't—when it comes to tax reform.

Ryan himself is pretty direct about where he sees the debate over taxes. Recently, a reporter in Washington asked him if lowering individual and corporate tax rates is still a top priority for him. "Yes," he said immediately. Has interest in lowering rates waned? "No," he said just as quickly. Is the goal to push the top marginal rate down below 30 percent? "Absolutely," he said.

That may be the case for Ryan, but the path to a Republican consensus on taxes isn't so straightforward. Texas senator and contender for the presidential nomination Ted Cruz has argued for a flat tax that would allow an American taxpayer's return to "fit on the back of a postcard." John Kasich, the Ohio governor who also may run for president, told reporters in Washington this month he's been "in conversation"

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with conservative activist Steve Forbes about the flat tax as well. And the newest declared presidential candidate, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, used his announcement speech to reiterate his support for the FairTax, a single-rate consumption tax replacing numerous federal taxes including the income tax.

But at the center of the debate is the proposal put forth by first-term senator and White House hopeful Marco Rubio of Florida. Coauthored by fellow senator Mike Lee of Utah, it's the first serious tax plan by any presidential candidate this cycle. It's also the first to break the strict "lower the rates" Republican mold. Briefly, Rubio and Lee propose two individual income-based tax brackets of 15 percent and 35 percent; a corporate tax rate of 25 percent; stripping the code of all deductions except those for charitable contributions and mortgage interest; and—perhaps the most controversial feature on the right—a significant increase to the child tax credit. Rubio and Lee called it "pro-growth, pro-family" tax reform.

For the run-of-the-mill Republican voter—a middle-class homeowner, married with a few kids—the plan sounds too good to be true, and some tax wonks on the right think it is. The economists at the conservative-leaning Tax Foundation rained on the Rubio-Lee parade when it issued a report on the plan stating the federal government would likely lose $1.7 trillion in revenue over the first 10 years before seeing gains. Daniel J. Mitchell, a tax scholar at the libertarian Cato Institute, found "several very attractive features" of the plan but called the top individual rate of 35 percent "disappointing." Avik Roy of *Forbes* and the Manhattan Institute (and an adviser to former Texas governor Rick Perry) calls the child tax credit provision "social engineering" that would "increase the deficit without expanding the economy."

Paul Ryan hasn't exactly embraced Rubio-Lee. "I don't want to be critical of any tax reform proposal on my end because I want to encourage people to put plans out there," he said when asked about it. His counterpart on the Senate Finance Committee, Utah's Orrin Hatch, was characteristically judicious but said he worried about how the proposal would add to the deficit. "I'd say Rubio-Lee is the first one I've seen recently that has some good ideas," said Hatch in an interview. "But on the other hand, it has some real big problems, too, as almost any suggestion will."

The editorial board at the *Wall Street Journal* was perhaps the harshest in its assessment of the child tax credit provision. Shortly after Rubio announced his candidacy for president, the paper wrote that the Florida Republican had become "the party's most visible ally of the 'new' Republican idea that the Reagan tax-cutting agenda is a political dead end, and that the party now must redistribute revenue directly to middle-class families." Hatch has reservations about the idea as well. "If you expand the child tax credit, to a lot of the economists, that doesn't have a lot of the pro-growth elements," he said.

What's striking about the Rubio-Lee proposal is its subtly radical departure from the belief that lowering rates to generate growth is necessarily the best policy for middle-class families. In defending the bigger child tax credit, Rubio makes a case that's less economic and more philosophical. "This is not a redistribution because this money doesn't belong to the government in the first place," he told an audience at the Heritage Foundation last month. Rubio and Lee describe the expanded child tax credit as a way to help offset the "parent tax penalty," the fact that parents pay an extra "tax" in the form of the cost of raising children, the next generation of taxpayers. Looked at this way, the credit isn't more "spending through the tax code"; it's a correction to an inequity in the code.

They may be on to something politically. A January Gallup poll found that 46 percent believe Americans should pay less in taxes, the highest percentage since 2008. But in a Pew Research poll released in March, researchers found the top complaints about the tax code were that corporations and wealthy people "don't pay their fair share." A *Huffington Post* and YouGov poll from January had similar findings, with 62 percent saying the system favors the wealthy over the middle class and poor. That's not a great political environment for lowering top marginal rates without some kind of benefit for middle-class taxpayers. Growth is important, Senators Rubio and Lee seem to be saying, but perhaps fairness ought to be a priority.

That's not how all, or even many, top Republicans see it. Paul Ryan sums up the prevailing view: "In my mind, growth is the ultimate goal for tax reform because growth gets you upward mobility, growth gets you more wages, growth makes it easier for families to raise families."

Some of Rubio's rivals for the GOP nomination have echoed that sentiment.

"Yes, they have provided a lot of child tax credits," said former Hewlett-Packard executive Carly Fiorina, who recently announced her candidacy, in an interview. "But if you're a single person or a young married couple, and you're trying to work your way up, you're going to be hit with a big tax bill, and that doesn't strike me as particularly motivating or fair."

"The focus ought to be not on targeted elements of the code but on a broader conversation about how we can eliminate as many of these tax expenditures as possible and lower the rates as low as possible," said Jeb Bush, the former Florida governor and potential presidential contender, at an event this month in Washington.

The truth is, Rubio and Lee have started that "broader conversation" over tax reform already, with other Republican candidates and leaders playing catch-up. That may explain the sense of urgency in Ryan's voice when pushed for his thoughts on Rubio-Lee. "I want people to put plans out there, and I think we should have a good robust debate about big tax reform, and I think that debate ought to occur sooner rather than later," he said. ♦

They Can't Deny It

Same-sex marriage and the threat to colleges' tax-exempt status. BY TERRY EASTLAND

The most notable exchange during the argument last month in the same-sex marriage case before the Supreme Court, *Obergefell* v. *Hodges*, likely occurred between Justice Samuel Alito and Solicitor General Donald Verrilli.

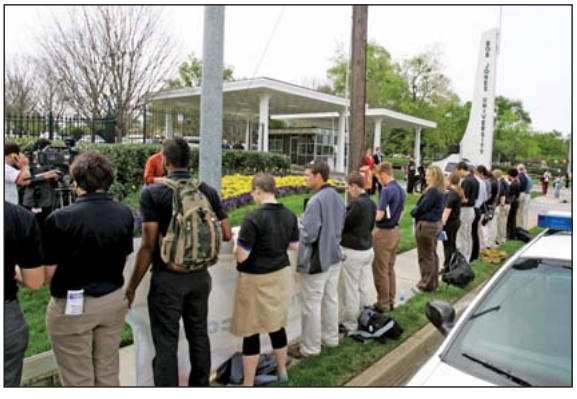
"Well, in the *Bob Jones* case," began Alito, "the Court held that a college was not entitled to tax-exempt status if it opposed interracial marriage or interracial dating." In fact, as Alito and Verrilli of course know, what the Court held in *Bob Jones* was that the Internal Revenue Service acted *within its authority* in revoking the school's tax-exempt status. Alito continued: "So would the same apply to a university or a college if it opposed same-sex marriage?" That is, would the IRS be acting within its authority if it decided it could revoke the tax-exempt status of a school opposed to same-sex marriage?

Verrilli's response was, "You know, I—I don't think I can answer that question without knowing more specifics, but it's certainly going to be an issue. I—I don't deny that. I don't deny that, Justice Alito. It is—it is going to be an issue."

What to make of that answer, which Verrilli has yet to clarify, and probably never will?

While unlikely in the extreme, what if, for Verrilli, the reason "it is going to be an issue" lies in doubts inside the administration about the validity of the *Bob Jones* ruling? What if Verrilli believes the case was wrongly decided and that Justice William Rehnquist, writing in solitary dissent, had the better argument—that in fact the IRS exceeded its authority in the matter?

Some background: Until 1970 the IRS granted tax-exempt status to private schools, including Bob Jones University, regardless of whether they had racial admissions policies. A year later, as a result of litigation in which the agency was prohibited from extending tax-exempt status to private schools in Mississippi, the IRS changed its position in a "revenue ruling": Henceforth, the agency would not approve tax-exempt status for any school without a policy against racial discrimination.



Gay-rights activists protest outside the entrance to Bob Jones University, April 4, 2007.

Enter Bob Jones University, which prohibited interracial dating and marriage; the school denied that those practices, which it said were based on its religious beliefs, were discriminatory. When the IRS advised the university of its intention to enforce the new ruling, and thus challenge the school's tax-exempt status, Bob Jones initiated its lawsuit, which dragged on for a dozen years before ending in 1983 with an opinion for the Court written by Chief Justice Warren Burger.

The Court approved the agency's construction of the tax code: that an entity granted a tax exemption must be a charitable institution, and that under the common law of charitable trusts an entity that acted contrary to public policy was not charitable. The Court also affirmed the agency's judgment that eradicating racial discrimination in education was a "fundamental public policy." Furthering that policy, said the Court, "substantially outweighs whatever burden denial of tax benefits places on [the university's] exercise of [its] religious beliefs." That Congress refused to intervene, the Court said, was proof that it approved of the agency's construction of the statute. "We therefore hold that the IRS did not exceed its authority when it announced its [new] interpretation" of the tax code.

Rehnquist agreed that there was such a fundamental policy against racial discrimination, and that it could indeed be enforced against "educational institutions that promote racial discrimination"—but only if Congress said so. And that was the problem: "Unlike the Court, I am convinced that Congress simply has failed to take this action." The IRS took the action, with an interpretation of the tax code that gives it "a broad power which until now Congress has kept for itself."

Again, it is hard to imagine that administration lawyers actually question *Bob Jones*. After all, they work for a president notorious for his frequent resort to unilateral executive action, spurning Congress time and again. Yet the speculation is a useful exercise, for if you agree with Rehnquist in *Bob Jones*, then the right venue for deciding whether "a university or a college . . . opposed to same-sex marriage" (to use Alito's words) could be denied tax exemption is Congress, not the IRS. Not incidentally, the tax code says nothing about same-sex marriage.

Of course, Verrilli's response to Alito deserves to be read as recognizing

AP / MARY ANN CHASTAIN

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"the issue" that will arise if (when?) President Obama bypasses Congress and orchestrates the development of a new revenue rule by the IRS, under which the agency can strip tax-exempt status from religious colleges and charities (such as homeless shelters and adoption agencies) that dissent from same-sex marriage. Suffice to say, such action would be sharply contested in Congress and in the courts.

As for the "specifics" that Verrilli said he needed to know, note that the Court in *Bob Jones* seemed to set forth a test of sorts for whether something is a "national" or "fundamental" policy that the IRS may enforce. The Court said that "over the past quarter of a century, every pronouncement of this Court and myriad Acts of Congress and Executive Orders attest a firm national policy to prohibit racial segregation and discrimination in public education." The Court then proceeded to identify those government actions. It's an impressive and familiar list, starting with *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (1954). Advocates of same-sex marriage can't match it; there aren't enough "specifics" to say that "eradicating opposition to same-sex marriage" is a national policy to which the IRS may require a nonprofit's adherence on pain of losing tax-exempt status.

Lawyers with varying positions on the *Obergefell* case have told me that it could be another 10 years before that objective might qualify as such a policy. Of course, if the Court in *Obergefell* sides with advocates of a constitutional right to same-sex marriage, as most Court observers expect, the movement toward a "national policy" on the matter, and gay rights more broadly, will quicken. And far more than with the movement that bequeathed a national policy against racial discrimination, there will be conflicts with religious liberty, since most opposition to same-sex marriage is grounded in religious belief.

Alito's question happened to anticipate the struggles that lie ahead, after *Obergefell*. To quote Verrilli, a master of understatement, "It's certainly going to be an issue." ♦

The Answer to 'Hybrid Warfare'

Arrest (or shoot) those little green men.

BY TOD LINDBERG

Troops from the U.S. Army Second Cavalry Regiment in Estonia, March 22

NEWSCOM

Tallinn, Estonia

It's an especially tense time for the Baltic states and Russia's other Western-leaning neighbors. Wariness with regard to Vladimir Putin and long-term Russian intentions toward the "near abroad" has long been the norm here, well before the 2007 cyberattack on Estonia and Russian military action against Georgia in 2008. But with the annexation of Crimea and military intervention in eastern Ukraine, general wariness has given way to focused concern about the new threat Russia poses.

Call it "hybrid war," "unconventional conflict," "political warfare," or "little green men." The sense is not only that Russia is now unwilling to abide by such twenty-first-century principles as "no changing borders by force," but that Putin has developed sophisticated new methods of asserting power unconstrained by conventional notions of warfare and even the law of armed conflict between states.

As to whether "hybrid warfare" is really new, opinions differ. At the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson Center, Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojansky have written a short paper dismissing the utility of the concept, preferring to think in terms of "a combination of previously defined types of warfare, whether conventional, irregular, political or information." General Ray Odierno, on the other hand, finds the concept useful, describing a hybrid threat as "a tailored mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior in the same time and battlespace." Frank Hoffman of the National Defense University says he would add to Odierno's description "instruments including economic and financial acts, subversive

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political acts like creating or covertly exploiting trade unions and NGOs as fronts, or information operations using false websites and planted newspaper articles" as well as other "diplomatic and financial and information tools."

All these elements were at play in Russia's intervention in Ukraine, which involved Russian soldiers in and out of uniform, covert border crossings, a bogus narrative in which ethnic Russians in Ukraine were in mortal danger, rigged elections, gunrunning, grave threats, economic pressure, and serious atrocities, the biggest of which was blowing a civilian airliner out of the sky.

Valery Gerasimov, the Russian military chief of staff, published an article in early 2013 drawing attention to "a tendency toward blurring the lines between the states of war and peace. . . . The role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness."

You said it, Val. To be fair, the Russian view is that the United States is the master of this dark art of blurring lines; Russia is just catching up. But the cumulative impression coming out of Ukraine is of the emergence of an insidious and potentially unstoppable new mode of aggression.

In truth, it may be that the real novelty here is simply the return of aggression and conquest as such, at least to Europe. One thinks of the Bill Clinton-era scandal defense that "everyone lies about sex": If your intention is to take a chunk of your neighbor's territory by force, why wouldn't you include in your plan blithely lying about your intentions and actions while playing for time, all the while making counterallegations that portray you as the real victim? The laws of war are the last thing states agree to before they decide to quit fighting each other altogether. Marquess of Queensberry rules are for suckers.

I would be all in favor of a Russian embrace of what the Obama administration likes to call "twenty-first-century norms." In the absence of such a move, however, it's time to get back to basics—which may turn "hybrid warfare" or "little green men" into a more manageable problem.

The most important issue here is not from the twenty-first century but the seventeenth: the sovereign power of states. The most basic test of sovereignty is a state's ability to maintain a monopoly on the use of force in its territory. Not just the "legitimate" use of force, but something close to all forceful means that bear on the continuity of the state and its territorial integrity.

Criminal violence is not the concern. The objective of criminals is to keep what they steal, not to promote conditions in which no one has secure possession of anything; if they commit murder, it is not with the view that murder should be legal. Although order can break down if authorities lose control of criminal activity, in most cases, criminal violence is not political.

No, the violence that states must be effective in suppressing in order to exert sovereign authority is of two types: revolutionary violence at home and enemy intervention from abroad. This observation may help clarify what went wrong in Ukraine.

The sovereign power, within its borders, is a *police* power, not a military power. The correct response to the appearance of a little green man is not to bemoan the inability of conventional military power to cope with such a threat. It's to *arrest* the little green man. More precisely, it's to arrest the *very first* of the little green men, to prevent his establishment of a local sphere of control beyond the reach of the authorities.

This may not be a simple task, nor may it be possible without resort to violence. But it hardly defies summary: "Drop the gun and put your hands up."

This was not well understood in Ukraine, whose problems were myriad. The Ukrainian police seem to exemplify the country's estimable tradition of corruption, and it certainly does not appear that anyone gave much forethought to the problem of securing order from breakdown under various possible types of pressure. The generally nonviolent response of the

national government to the Russian move in Crimea made a virtue of necessity, namely, the inability to coordinate an effective response in the first place. Nonviolent resistance may be a useful tactic for protesters in opposition to state authority, but when adopted by a state against a violent aggressor, it simply misconstrues the *nature* of state authority, which is the monopoly on violence.

Would a more assertive response in Crimea, had one been possible, have prevented the Russian takeover? Perhaps not. Putin seemed determined, and if it came to blows, the Russians had the advantage in military power. But the lessons of Crimea and eastern Ukraine have not been lost on others in the neighborhood.

I ended up at exactly the right place in Tallinn to get a sense of how Estonians are thinking about the problem. No, I was not visiting the Estonian Ministry of Defense. The military balance is important, of course. But Estonia is a NATO ally, and the United States and all other members are obliged under Article V of the NATO treaty to regard an attack on any of them as an attack on all of them. To that end, energetic defense planning is under way. The United States now has troops rotating through the Baltics, and the value of such tripwires as a caution to Russia can hardly be overstated. The question of how to defend the Baltics in the first days of a Russian military incursion, and in subsequent days and weeks, is one military planners are assessing. Their answer needs to be convincing, because the need for old-fashioned deterrence is at a 30-year high.

The place to discuss the "little green men" was the office of Estonia's interior minister, Hanno Pevkur. He briefed me on a training exercise his special operations police units had conducted earlier that week. The scenario was a small number of individuals crossing the southeastern border into Estonia from Russia without permission. The police task was to find and apprehend them. The exercise was successful.

I asked, how many infiltrators? Unsurprisingly, Pevkur declined to give specifics. But he did note that large numbers crossing the border would be an invasion—and treated accordingly. In a "little green men" scenario, the first contingent over the border would likely be a small number seeking to probe resistance and establish sufficient control to allow more to stream across. That's why the first contact is so important. Pevkur told me he had just returned from Washington, where he met with Department of Homeland Security officials to talk through capabilities and procedures for border monitoring and protection.

We also talked about such matters as ensuring that Estonia's ethnic Russian population feels secure and appreciates the advantages in prosperity of living on the Western side of the Russian border—a key theme in conversations I've had with Estonia's president, Toomas Ilves. This, too, is an important element in countering instruments of hybrid conflict.

One implication of the Gerasimov view is that threatening uncompliant neighbors is now a matter of doctrine: Every relationship Russia has is, in principle, a conflict calling for "blurring the lines" between peace and war in pursuit of "political and strategic goals." It's an ugly view, but it seems to be the vogue in Moscow these days. Countering it begins with understanding what sovereign authority means and its importance in maintaining a country of one's own. ♦

Between the Well and the Pump

The oil sector's midstream needs beefing up.

BY THEODORE E. GENEROUS

With hundreds of miles of shoreline and the world's leading Navy and Coast Guard, the United States is the globe's most logical stable exporter of energy. Too bad Congress effectively banned exports a generation ago. Lifting the ban won't be enough to displace the Venezuelas and Irans of the market, though. Stifling regulation—and the threat of more to come—on the means of moving the products of innovative technology like fracking is a critical check on an otherwise burgeoning industry.

Missing from many stories about America's energy revolution is the industry's midstream sector. This is the chain of transportation and rough processing of raw oil and natural gas, and the link between the upstream and downstream sectors. Whereas the term upstream concerns the actual extraction process and downstream refers to final refining and the creation of certain consumer products, midstream is infrastructure and logistics.

Midstream is not just pipelines: Rail and trucking systems and processing and pumping centers are getting a makeover in the wake of the American gas renaissance. Prior to 2012, U.S. gas and oil companies focused primarily on domestic or foreign sources of oil (upstream) and final processing and delivery to the customer (downstream). With more natural gas reserves being discovered and harnessed in the continental United States, a robust midstream infrastructure is now essential. Everything from gas prices to the domestic job base is at stake.

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The most high-profile midstream issue is the Keystone XL pipeline, which remains a lightning rod despite strong House and Senate approval. Keystone's final phase has been stalled for seven years during the height of the recession. President Obama's Keystone veto this session is just the latest proof the project and its economic benefits are not among the president's priorities.

But with oil and natural gas flowing out of the shales of Canada and the barrens of the Dakotas, voters and policymakers alike should realize that without a modern midstream infrastructure, our energy influence is effectively neutered. The United States is the world's leading gas producer, but this materiel is useless if the industry cannot transport it to where Americans need it.

Russ Girling, CEO of TransCanada, the midstream firm constructing Keystone, is flexible about logistics, saying, "We are approaching 1.2 million barrels per day of rail-loading capacity—nobody has waited for Keystone XL pipeline to get built." Although pipelines have been acknowledged by both industry and the EPA as significantly more efficient and less risky forms of oil transport, U.S. federal trepidation is forcing the company's hand. The Keystone pipeline would take 800,000 barrels a day off train tracks, putting midstream facility jobs in the United States rather than in Canadian rail systems.

If pipelines and energy infrastructure facilities are not built and instead tarred and feathered in the public eye, progress will be impossible. A nascent sector is more easily targeted than an established one. Publicly torpedoing a major transnational energy deal discourages not only investors and policymakers, but also job creators. The last two years' increased gas production is not just a boon at the pump: Aside from tens of thousands of construction jobs, upgrading energy infrastructure is constructing careers.

Far from the Canadian border and almost directly between Houston and New Orleans, South African energy company Sasol is turning gas into jobs. "Plants use natural gas like a bakery shop uses flour," according to Dan Borne, president of the Louisiana Chemical Association. Local environmental activists and national nonprofits are demanding more regulation of midstream plants like the $8 billion ethane cracker Sasol is currently constructing.

Ethane crackers—processing facilities for raw natural gas—are essential for breaking apart gas on the molecular level to produce ethylene, the building block for hundreds of modern plastics and chemicals. This midstream plant in southwest Louisiana provides ethylene to facilities downstream in the chain and is ideally situated near the refinery hub of Houston. Surrounded by states that have had little or no growth since the recession, Louisiana has seen a 3 percent job growth rate since U.S. hydraulic fracturing started, more than double the national average. While the average factory/production job in the state pays $40,100 per year, the Sasol plant will permanently employ at least 500 workers earning $80,000 annually, in addition to 5,000 construction workers during peak times.

From the workers manning ethylene crackers and gas-to-liquids plants to the manufacturing jobs necessary to make and maintain them, these facilities along the supply chain will yield thousands of jobs. Furthermore, cheaper energy and a wider network of pipelines means entrepreneurs and heavy manufacturing have the option to keep jobs in the United States, including the parts of the country recovering most slowly from the recession.

In the heartland of Oklahoma, a combination of oilfield work and pipeline construction has created an income spike visible in IRS records. Locals say new shale techniques drove change in their economy: County average filings rose $20,000, from $66,000 to $86,000. Having opened a mobile home park a few years prior, Medford, Oklahoma, resident Gary Aebi specifically cites the influx of

industry workers: "Oil, pipeline construction—I had a lot of welders in the park." While pipeline welding (like all construction jobs) is not permanent work, increased economic activity in towns like Medford often leads to further development including new businesses and other construction work.

Back east in Pennsylvania, the last few months' decline in global crude prices is hardly affecting the expectation of state growth from hydraulic fracturing. Some natural gas prices there are about 30 percent lower than in the rest of the country, thanks to the Marcellus Shale reserve. This price difference may be caused not only by a localized supply glut, but also by the inability to take advantage of price differences in the U.S. market. Once again, a lack of transport logistics means a lost opportunity for interstate trade.

Politics over jobs: a White House protest against the Keystone pipeline, November 6, 2011

Drilling company Seneca Resources spokesman Rob Boulware views the lack of local and interstate pipelines as "a turnpike that no one is driving on, but people are lined up at the gate to go through." Further down the line in Philadelphia, entrepreneurs are looking to jumpstart the city with its own energy renaissance and rekindle industrial manufacturing. Philadelphia Energy Solutions CEO Phil Rinaldi's experience typifies both why there is a perception of an oil "bust" and why midstream expansion is significantly overdue. Having inquired with the city's energy utility about the availability of gas produced in the state's northwest, he was told none was available to supply potential factories. He was astounded: "All of the delivery systems are absolutely full. The gas is abundant and we can't get it because the highways are clogged." Pipelines do not have traffic jams or spills, and more local refineries and pumping stations mean a regular and reliable delivery time.

Whether it's small towns across the country suddenly flush with workers and cash or major cities looking to regain the glory of lost industry, it is clear that new gas and new techniques are limited by the ability to deliver energy. The boom did not reach anywhere near peak demand or production. The bust is not a bust at all, but merely a new national industry hitting an infrastructure and regulatory choke point. American industry has proven its capabilities; building pipelines is only limited by state and federal regulatory authorities. From national-level vetoes of Keystone to small-town politics and protests in rural Pennsylvania, government and industry need to cooperate to expand America's latent energy network.

While drilling/extraction sites and oil refineries are most present in the news cycle and collective consciousness when Americans think "energy," it is midstream operations that enable both. This sector is the most at risk: Pipelines and plants can only provide jobs if they are authorized, not politicized, and not under constant threat of frivolous lawsuits. Gas processing centers (and their inherent employment bonus) do not exist without an expanded energy transit network. Government weakening of the link between upstream production and downstream refining directly ignores the interests of the American people.

And the industry is perennially playing defense. The American Petroleum Institute's CEO Jack Gerard announced in January that API is forming a new midstream department targeting the unique issues facing the sector. Representing the needs of U.S. energy companies, API serves as a bellwether of potential threats to one of the country's most successful industries. Gerard declared that "in order for America's oil and natural gas renaissance to continue, we need a world class infrastructure system to deliver that energy to consumers." He is correct: It is consumers who miss out if regulations and politics strangle midstream development.

From CEOs to local business-owners, the tone of the pipeline debate in the United States is undoubtedly pragmatic. Americans still have much to lose, however, if a strategy of Canadian railroads supplants one of U.S. infrastructural growth. Is scoring political points with the environmental lobby more important than kindling the rebirth of energy production and manufacturing in the United States? We have plenty of gas and oil wells and strong industrial capacity in refining and manufacturing. It is time to fill the gap. With hindered development in the logistics and transportation sector, American energy will be stuck, ironically, midstream. ♦

NEWSCOM

The Unassailable Virtue of Victims

On the rise of Hillary Clinton and other underdogs

By Joseph Epstein

Our virtues lose themselves in selfishness
as rivers are lost in the sea.

—La Rochefoucauld

If Hillary Clinton wins the presidency in 2016 she will not only be the nation's first woman president but our second affirmative-action president. By affirmative-action president I mean that she, like Barack Obama, will have got into office partly for reasons extraneous to her political philosophy or to her merits, which, though fully tested while holding some of the highest offices in the land, have not been notably distinguished. In his election, Obama was aided by the far from enticing Republican candidates who opposed him, but a substantial portion of the electorate voted for him because having a biracial president seemed a way of redressing old injustices. They hoped his election would put the country's racial problems on a different footing, which sadly, as we now know, it has failed to do. Many people voted for Obama, as many women can be expected to vote for Hillary Clinton, because it made them feel virtuous to do so. The element of self-virtue—of having an elevated feeling about oneself—is perhaps insufficiently appreciated in American politics.

How have we come to the point where we elect presidents of the United States not on their intrinsic qualities but because of the accidents of their birth: because they are black, or women, or, one day doubtless, gay, or disabled—not, in other words, for themselves but for the causes they seem to embody or represent, for their status as members of a victim group? It's a long but not, I think, a boring story.

In recent decades, vast numbers of people have clamored to establish themselves or the ethnic group or sexual identity or even gender to which they belong as victims of prejudice, oppression, and injustice generally. E. M. Forster wrote of "the aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate, and the plucky." Owing to the spread of victimhood, we have today a large aristocracy of the suffering, the put-upon, and the unlucky. Blacks, gays, women, American Indians, Hispanics, the obese, Vietnam veterans, illegal immigrants, the handicapped, single parents, fast-food workers, the homeless, poets, and anyone else able to establish underdog bona fides can now claim to be victims. Many years ago, I watched a show on television that invited us to consider the plight of unwed fathers. We are, it sometimes seems, a nation of victims.

Victims of an earlier time viewed themselves as supplicants, throwing themselves on the conscience if not mercy of those in power to raise them from their downtrodden condition. The contemporary victim tends to be angry, suspicious, above all progress-denying. He or she is ever on the lookout for that touch of racism, sexism, homophobia, or insensitivity that might show up in a stray opinion, an odd locution, an uninformed misnomer. People who count themselves victims require enemies. Forces high and low block their progress: The economy disfavors them; society is organized against them; the malevolent, who are always in ample supply, conspire to keep them down; the system precludes them. Asked some years ago by an interviewer in *Time* magazine about violence in schools that are all-black—that is, violence by blacks against blacks—the novelist Toni Morrison, a connoisseur of victimhood whose novels deal with little else, replied, "None of those things can take place, you know, without the complicity of the people who run the schools and the city."

Public pronouncements from victims can take on a slightly menacing quality, in which, somehow, the roles of victim and supposed antagonist are reversed. Today it is the victim who is doing the bullying—threatening boycott, riot, career-destroying social media condemnation—and frequently making good on their threats. Victims often seem actively to enjoy their victimhood—enjoy above all the moral advantage it gives them. Fueled by their own high sense of virtue, of feeling themselves absolutely in the right, what they take to be this moral advantage allows them to overstate their case, to absolve themselves from all

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responsibility for their condition, to ask the impossible and demand it *now*, and then to demonstrate virulently, sometimes violently, when it isn't forthcoming.

Evidence of the taste for victimhood is abundant, and one sometimes discovers it in peculiar places, even among the rich, the famous, and those who have access to publishers. One finds it often in the spate of victim memoirs that have been published in recent decades. These memoirs are at bottom declarations of the victim status of their authors, whose stories are about their having been raised with abusive or alcoholic parents, having been sexually abused, having struggled against a debilitating mental illness. If the only standing higher than victimhood in contemporary America is celebrity, the celebrity victim book—starting years ago with *Mommie Dearest* by Joan Crawford's daughter—rings both gongs simultaneously to make the greatest public noise.

A relatively new subgenre of the victim memoir are books and essays about that ultimate victim status, those who are about to die, but aren't ready to depart the planet without first announcing it, often at book length. Christopher Hitchens's last book was about his encounter with esophageal cancer. The historian Tony Judt was able to compose a book about his dying from ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease, while in the grip of that nightmare affliction. The critic and poet Clive James announced his forthcoming death in 2010, and has been publishing several poems and giving interviews about it in the interval between then and now; a few months ago the neurologist Oliver Sacks took to the *New York Times* op-ed page to announce his own imminent death by melanoma. All this as if death, that most democratic of institutions, didn't make victims of us all, and wouldn't continue to do so as long as the mortality rate remains at an even 100 percent.

We might get our feelings hurt.

The contemporary university, where so many misbegotten ideas find fertile ground and ample watering, has been especially hospitable to the culture of victimhood. Two of the most consequential of these ideas, both catering directly to victims, have been multiculturalism and its twin sister, enforced diversity. Multiculturalism, with its insistence that all cultures are equal, has tended to diminish the centrality of Western culture, with its dominance of white male writers, artists, and philosophers, and push what one might call victim studies, or victimology, to the forefront of university curricula. The result has been the emphasis on race, class, and gender and the concomitant politicization—some would add trivialization—of much that goes on in the humanities and social sciences departments.

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Universities are proud of their diversity; some have deans of diversity. Every college catalogue shows blacks and Asians lounging languorously on their lush green lawns. Today the rarest item at Northwestern University, where I taught for many years, is a photograph of its current president unaccompanied by at least one black, an East Indian, a Chinese, Japanese, or Korean, and any other minority-group student with a few free minutes to kill on a photo op. Affirmative action itself was of course from the outset a victim compensation program.

Now that so many different minority groups have become part of the contemporary university, the sensibility of their members, it became evident, must at all costs not be offended, their self-esteem in no way deflected, let alone deflated. In their putative defense, political correctness inevitably followed multiculturalism and diversity in universities as what psychologists might term a support system. In classrooms the pronoun police were soon on the prowl, making certain no professor used such proscribed words as "lady" or "Oriental" or failed to use "she" at least as often as "he" when citing examples, even if some seemed more than a bit forced: Every construction worker knows she can readily be laid off. As both a prefix (mankind) and a suffix (chairman), "man" had to go. If a teacher mentioned Shakespeare or Tolstoy in class, he had better find a way to drag in, under an unspoken equal-opportunity pedagogy rule, Jane Austen or Virginia Woolf. If he used the word "Negro" instead of "African American," or "homosexual" instead of "gay," he acquired an instant reputation as a racist or a homophobe. Tell a slightly off-color joke, or make an indirectly sexual allusion, he could be hauled in for sexual assault. Victims, even if self-appointed ones, must be protected at all costs, and political correctness was there to do the job.

Meanwhile the already ample glossary of political correctness grows, with many old words proscribed daily. The most recent is "thug" or "thugs." The reason is that many people, including President Obama, have referred to the violent rioters and looters in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore as thugs. Thugs, it is now understood, means young, riotous black men, and therefore using the word marks its user as racist. The addition of newly politically incorrect language hastens apace; soon a daily bulletin will be required instructing which once commonly used words are now ruled *verboten*.

If the rigidities of political correctness were limited to universities, it might not be so bad. The inmates in the bedlam that has become the contemporary university, after all,

seem to get on cheerily enough with one another under this tyranny. Alas, these rigidities aren't so limited. Students graduate and many, if they take little else with them from their years in college, acquire the censorious sensitivities learned under the reign of political correctness experienced during those years.

I had lunch a few weeks ago with a lawyer in his late seventies who told me that, owing to the retirement of several of his partners, he planned to close his office and move in with a large firm where he would become, in the trade phrase, "of counsel." The deal was set, but before the actual move, he took 12 of what were to be his new firm's associates to lunch, to explain to them how he worked with his clients. The day after the lunch, he was called by a senior partner of the firm and informed that the move couldn't be made after all. When he inquired why, he was told that, at the lunch, he apparently made a joke about a fat man and more than once referred to women who had worked for him as "my girls." The associates, as a body, found this unacceptable and wanted no part of him. "When I was in college, there were certain words you couldn't say in front of a girl," Tom Lehrer remarked. "Now you can say them, but you can't say 'girl.'"

I happen to know that the lawyer in fact paid these women well, treated them respectfully, and as a result they were as loyal to him as he to them over the decades they worked together. None of which, though, signified, since the associates made their judgment of him on grounds of political correctness, and from the kangaroo courts of political correctness there is no reprieve, no time off for good behavior, and no parole.

In 1970, some 45 years ago, I wrote an essay in *Harper's* on the subject of homosexuality. The chief points of my essay were that no one had a true understanding of the origins of human homosexuality, that there was much false tolerance on the part of some people toward homosexuals; that for many reasons homosexuality could be a tough card to have drawn in life; and that given a choice, owing to the complications of homosexual life, most people would prefer their children to be heterosexual. Quotations from that essay today occupy the center of my Wikipedia entry. In every history of gay life in America the essay has a prominent place. When I write something controversial, this essay is brought up, usually by the same professional gay liberationists, to be used against me. That I am pleased the tolerance for homosexuality has widened in America and elsewhere, that in some respects my own aesthetic sensibility favors much homosexual artistic production (Cavafy, Proust, Auden), cuts neither ice nor slack. My only hope now is that, on my gravestone, the words Noted Homophobe aren't carved.

Political correctness excludes candor, or even complexity, in discussion of public problems, questions, issues. Might one bring up the high crime rates of blacks and black-on-black crime in the recent publicity of police shootings of black criminals without being called racist? Is it possible to mention the matter of potential pregnancy when hiring young married women for high-level jobs without being thought antiwoman? If one says sex-change operation instead of gender reassignment surgery is one hopelessly insensitive? The answer in each case is plain enough: To ask or to say any of these things disqualifies one instanter.

Thus has political correctness, the vigilantism of the victim, squashed discussion and in many realms of public life replaced ethics. Stefano Gabbana, of the clothing firm Dolce & Gabbana, in an interview with the Italian magazine *Panorama*, recently made the mistake of criticizing in-vitro births. "Wombs for rent," he called such arrangements, "sperm selected from a catalog. . . . Who would agree to be the daughter of chemistry? Procreation must be an act of love, now not even psychiatrists are prepared to deal with the effects of these experiments." The singer Elton John, who with his companion is raising two such children, shot back, "How dare you refer to my beautiful children as 'synthetic'! And shame on you for wagging your judgmental little fingers at IVF—a miracle that has allowed legions of loving people, both straight and gay, to fulfill their dream of having children. Your archaic thinking is out of step with the times, just like your fashions. I shall never wear Dolce and Gabbana ever again." In an Instagram Sir Elton called for a boycott of Dolce & Gabbana clothes, in which he was presently joined by Ricky Martin, Martina Navratilova, and Ryan Murphy, the producer of *Glee*.

Political correctness, the vigilantism of the victim, has squashed discussion and in many realms of public life replaced ethics.

Stefano Gabbana, who is himself gay, apologized profusely, claimed that his views are those of someone brought up in the traditional Sicilian family, that he wished all gay couples with children well. His partner Domenico Dolce even chimed in that he loved Elton John's music. "Boycott Dolce & Gabbana for what?" Gabbana asked. "They don't think like you? This is correct? This is not correct. We are in 2015. This is like medieval. It's not correct."

That there is a genuine issue up for serious discussion in IVF births—that it often requires women so hard-pressed for money that they agree to carry other people's children in what is a form of modern bondage—is ignored in this exchange. Political correctness, though, isn't about issues, about items in the flux of controversy. It's about denouncing people who don't think as you do,

and as such it is a key weapon in the arsenal of victims.

Because virtue is at the heart of so many political questions in our day, in victim culture things get to the contempt stage and beyond fairly fast. Elton John does not strongly disagree with Stefano Gabbana; he wants to put him out of business. Nor does one have oneself to be a victim to claim virtue for one's position. Many bask in the warm virtue of victims by coming out strongly on their side. These are the virtucrats, or those people whose political opinions are propelled by their strong sense of self-virtue. They are people who judge others, mercilessly, by their opinions. Some years ago a journalist with whom I found myself in a political argument closed off the discussion by claiming that the chief difference between us was that I did not care about people anywhere near as much as he, thus positioning himself as a much finer person than I. An old fellow traveler, a Stalinist in his day, once told me that he was of course wrong about Soviet communism, adding that nonetheless in his heart he was right, while I—who may have been correct in never falling for communism owing to having early read George Orwell, Arthur Koestler, and Sidney Hook on the subject—in my heart was ultimately wrong for failing to have been moved by the promise of communism.

Elton John and David Furnish, with sons Elijah and Zachary

One of the hallmarks of the virtucrat is his taste for underdogs, or what he takes to be underdogs, no matter how egregious their actions. With the underdogs, after all, is where virtue lies. The true virtucrat lines up with the oppressed (if rocket-launching) Palestinians against Israel, with black and Hispanic criminals apprehended by police, most recently against the French satire magazine *Charlie Hebdo* for mocking terrorists, who after all have feelings, too. In a presidential election between Al Sharpton and Mitt Romney, the virtucrat would have to go for Sharpton. In an earlier election between Louis Farrakhan and Ronald Reagan, he would, after much moral hand-wringing, probably have taken the high ground and abstained from voting. One of the reasons that virtucrats tend to be anti-American is that America, however correct its position in foreign affairs, however clearly on the side of justice and generosity, is never—at least not yet—the underdog and therefore can never have virtue on its side.

However repellent the professional victims, those who make a nice living off their victimhood—the race hustlers, the academic feminists finding a phallus in every chalice, and others—there is of course a core of truth to the oppression most victims have felt. Everyone knows of the travails of slavery and beyond, the battles of women for equality in the workplace and elsewhere, the mocking and shunning of homosexuals, and the degrading of other victim groups; it was genuine, and painful—its victims truly were victims, and a blot, though one would hope far from an ineradicable one, on our country. Anyone with a conscience in decent repair recognizes and regrets this.

Yet the victims of our day make their appeal not to conscience but to guilt. An appeal to guilt is almost entirely negative; rather than awaken the best in one, it insists those who disagree with one are swine. An appeal to conscience, on the other hand, is an appeal to one's ethical feeling, to one's sense of fair play; it is fundamentally an appeal to act upon the best that is in one, one's better nature.

The brilliance of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. was their appeal to conscience, reinforced by their nonviolent means of achieving their respective ends of Indian independence and the abolishment of vile segregation laws. The victims of our day work at inducing guilt, exacting punishment where possible through boycott and disqualification, and above all capturing, as they have no doubt they do, the high ground of superior virtue.

Given the large constituency of victims in America, Hillary Clinton, as a woman, has already climbed aboard the victim train in the hope of riding it to the presidency. "When women are held back, our country is held back," she said in a recent speech. "When women get ahead, everyone gets ahead. Our mothers and sisters and daughters are on the front lines of all of these battles. . . . But these are not just women's fights. These have to be America's fights and the world's fights. We have to take them on, we have to win them together." What a rich ragout of victimhood and virtue in those words!

In the next presidential election, Hillary Clinton figures to have pole position as the victim candidate. Behind her platform, her discrete policies, the merits of her case, her campaign for the presidency will stress, either blatantly or subtly, the great bonus in virtue that awaits, in the cant phrase, shattering the glass ceiling of politics by putting a woman in the White House. Whatever her baggage of malfeasance, her wealth and glittery résumé of good schools and top jobs, she retains, and will doubtless insist upon, her victim status. Even her most dubious supporters, Michael Tomasky writes in the *Daily Beast*, "want to see her succeed. They yearn for her to slay the beasts of sexism and gender-role definitions that she has taken it upon herself to battle." Hillary Clinton's victory would mean a great triumph for victimhood, no doubt about it. What it might mean for the country is of course another question altogether. ♦

NEWSCOM

Toward a Free and Democratic China

Overhauling U.S. strategy in Asia

By Dan Blumenthal & William Inboden

At the top of our next president's task list will be rescuing American foreign policy from the wreckage of the Obama years. The prevailing headlines detail a grim litany of new threats, each one emanating from an Obama administration policy failure. From the expansionist barbarity of the Islamic State, to the collapse of Libya into warring factions, to Yemen's degeneration into civil war and a terrorist safe haven, to unprecedented concessions that have strengthened Iran, to Russian adventurism forcibly redrawing Europe's borders, to the expansion of North Korea's nuclear arsenal, the threat environment that the Obama administration is preparing to hand over to its successor is grave.

Repression at work: The CCP assembles, March 8, 2015.

Not since the end of World War II has the American-led international system been under such severe strain from so many quarters. While the above threats all command attention, perhaps the greatest challenge to world order is the resurgence of the People's Republic of China (PRC). It is the only nation that has the size, wealth, and ambition to credibly threaten U.S. global leadership and international stability. At stake is not only the national security of the United States but the future of the international system our nation helped create and has led for seven decades. In truth, they are almost inseparable. At the end of the Cold War, the late Samuel Huntington argued that only by remaining the dominant world player could the United States ensure the continuation of a liberal order. Thus, the challenge from China is not only geopolitical; Beijing is also ideologically hostile toward democratic capitalism and free societies.

Our next president's China policy needs to address the heart of the problem: The external assertiveness of the Chinese Communist party (CCP) emanates from its internal repression. As Aaron Friedberg has pointed out, "the party's desire to retain power shapes every aspect of national policy. When it comes to external affairs, it means that Beijing's ultimate aim is to 'make the world safe for authoritarianism,' or at least for continued one-party rule in China."

The CCP has thus far successfully maintained its monopoly on power and avoided any meaningful political reform. American policy in recent years has conceded this monopoly to the CCP and done little to support Chinese reformers, dissenters, and voices for liberty. There may have been short-term rationales for this, but as a policy it has run its course.

A new strategy that aims for a freer China would, in the span of history, not be so new at all. It has been part of the strategic conception of most U.S. presidents since the Cold War opening to China.

U.S. POLICY AND DEMOCRACY IN CHINA

Nixon and Kissinger's justly heralded strategic opening to Beijing in 1972 realigned mainland China from a Communist revolutionary adversary to a "normal" authoritarian partner in the Cold War. This new relationship rekindled hopes that China might eventually transition from autocratic to democratic. A series of developments in the 1970s and 1980s—including

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Mao Zedong's death, the opening of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, the 1978-79 Democracy Wall movement, Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, and the collapse of Soviet communism at the end of the Cold War—provided some episodic momentum to these hopes. Many wondered if perhaps the words "Chinese democracy" might eventually become a reality and not just a Guns N' Roses album.

Accordingly, every American administration since 1989 has premised its China policy on a strategic bet: that as China becomes more prosperous, it will also become freer and a more responsible member of the international system. From George H.W. Bush to Bill Clinton to George W. Bush, each administration built its China policy on this assumption that economic reform would lead inevitably to political reform. This was a reasonable premise. Many of Washington's authoritarian friends in Asia had successfully embraced democracy, including South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia. As other Asian societies made this transition, it made sense to assume that China would follow the same path.

While encouraging closer economic ties between the United States and China, these presidents also attempted to engage China through outreach and dialogue. Treating China like an adversary would cause it to act like an adversary, the assumption went, whereas engaging with China would lead it to be more like us: peaceful, stable, and free.

This strategic bet has failed. China has become much richer, but it has not become freer. A few years ago James Mann perceptively called these dashed hopes that an engaged and prosperous China would become a peaceful and free China "the China fantasy." If anything, its increased wealth has equipped the Chinese Communist party to devote even more resources to maintaining its authoritarian rule and monopoly on power. It turned out that one critical difference between China and America's allies and partners in the region was that the United States had little leverage over Beijing. Its allies were dependent on Washington and more susceptible to inducements and punishments on the path to democracy.

Just as it has failed to encourage political reform, the current U.S. strategy of engagement has also not enticed China to become a more responsible member of the international system. Evidence otherwise abounds, including China's destabilizing aggression in the Asian littoral, its free-riding on America's preservation of the Indo-Pacific's open maritime order, its shielding of oppressive dictatorships in Syria, Sudan, and North Korea from human rights scrutiny, and its thuggish blockage of meaningful human rights and carbon emissions limitation initiatives in multilateral fora. Xi Jinping's repeated invocations of "Asia for Asians" provide one of the most explicit statements yet of what has become readily apparent to close observers of Beijing's strategy and intentions: It wants to push the United States out of the western Pacific and be the sole regional hegemon. No wonder virtually all of its neighbors—with the exception of North Korea—have distanced themselves from China and sought closer ties with the United States.

As far back as the Clinton administration, the United States began quietly contemplating the possibility that China's rise might not always be peaceful. This led to the development of a second prong to the U.S. strategy of engagement: hedging. As Washington deepened its relationship with China, it also began upgrading its security alliances in the region and modestly increasing its defense capabilities as a hedge against potential Chinese bellicosity. The Obama administration's "pivot" to Asia (once hyped and now largely forgotten) was, in fact, just a continuation of this two-part strategy of engagement and hedging as already pursued by Clinton and Bush.

Yet after almost three decades of U.S. engagement and two decades of hedging, China is more threatening externally and no freer internally. If anything, the CCP's hold on power under Xi Jinping is stronger than ever, even as China's erstwhile "peaceful rise" has turned into something more ominous.

THE ANSWER: THE FREEDOM PRONG

If this two-pronged strategy has not succeeded, should it be jettisoned? No. The U.S.-China economic relationship remains too important to our nation, to Chinese reformers, and to the global economy for engagement to be abandoned. In addition, China's military capabilities and intentions remain too threatening for the American defense hedge to be abandoned. Rather, the American strategy should be expanded: It needs a freedom prong.

A growing threat to liberty deserves a symmetrical response—a sophisticated defense of freedom. Just as the United States should protect its security and economic interests in Asia, the grand aim of U.S. strategy should be the measured yet persistent push for a free and democratic China. The freedom prong should be evolutionary, not revolutionary, especially given the abundant recent examples of the chaos that can emerge when dictatorships fall suddenly. But a gradual and prudent policy of supporting liberty is the most responsible course for China's longer-term future.

A free and democratic China would not only tame the increasingly dangerous strategic rivalry but also change the world: The Chinese people are enterprising and resilient, and more freedom in China would unleash their potential for innovation, commerce, and creativity. With a freer China there is a real possibility for Sino-American comity, especially in light of history. The United States

long tried to side with China, from the Stimson Doctrine calling for Chinese territorial integrity to Franklin D. Roosevelt's support for China against Japan's aggression and his strategic concept that China would act as one of the four "policemen" that would help govern the post-World War II global order. This history of American support for China has been obscured by the CCP's hostility.

Unfortunately, Washington has previously squandered some of its best chances to press for Chinese democracy. President George H.W. Bush and his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, decided to reinforce ties with Deng Xiaoping after the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. Before and immediately after the brutality, the CCP was split and weak. China was more dependent on the United States than it is today. Support for party leaders such as Zhao Ziyang could have prodded the Deng government toward compromise with China's student-led democracy activists. Skilled diplomacy could have quietly asked Deng to remove the hardliners and make room for Zhao's reformist faction. That would have followed Reagan's approach in the Philippines in removing Ferdinand Marcos, a longtime ally. Instead, Bush and Scowcroft chose the short-term security of dictatorial stability over the long-term promise of Chinese freedom.

President Clinton spoke forthrightly about his hope for "peaceful evolution" in China. His secretary of state, Warren Christopher, told Congress that the Clinton policy would be to encourage a "broad peaceful evolution in China from communism to democracy." But zeal for this push soon began to fade as Beijing and entrenched interests in Washington wore him down. Clinton's eventual support for China's membership in the World Trade Organization combined with the free-market instincts of Chinese premier Zhu Rongji allowed for greater economic openness in China, and the hope was that a real private sector would emerge and demand political liberty. Indeed, Chinese entrepreneurs then and now have struggled for liberty where they could, but it was a mistake to think that the procession toward political liberty was inevitable.

President George W. Bush complemented his focus on the commercial and security dimensions of the relationship with a genuine concern for human rights and religious liberty. Bush pressed harder than any other president for religious and political freedom. He supported political and religious activists in China, even holding high-profile meetings with Chinese house church leaders and lawyers and speaking out against Beijing's repression. This was all done in the hope that President Hu Jintao was a real partner under whose leadership China could become a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system. The personal diplomacy did not produce long-term change, as Hu lacked either the desire or the ability to reform his government. Almost a decade later, China's international irresponsibility has increased, and there is little talk anymore in Washington or Beijing of responsible stake holding.

Even if a democratic China did not materialize, at least Clinton and Bush based their policies on the goal of greater freedom in China, leading in turn to a better relationship between Washington and Beijing. President Obama has not made a freer China part of his agenda. Since he implicitly acknowledges that a clash of values—in the administration's parlance, "China's disrespect for international norms"—is an impediment to better relations, his theory of how the United States and China can build an enduring friendship is a mystery. There is today no meaningful U.S. policy to support economic or political liberty in China. The Obama administration's answer to China's authoritarian rise is rhetorical devotion to the policy of pivoting or "rebalancing." The strategic conception is that since America's economic and political future is in Asia, the region is too important to be dominated by China. In order to position itself for an "Asia-Pacific" century, the United States should largely divest itself of commitments in the Middle East and Europe.

The declared goals were worthwhile, ambitious, indeed aspirational. But in practice the policy has failed. Obama's first-term foreign policy team embraced Asia with verve. The Pentagon is doing its best to reposition a shrinking asset base into Asia, and the Obama administration is at last making a push for the Trans-Pacific Partnership. There has been hardly any other notable implementation. It is the very definition of strategic insolvency to increase commitments while decreasing resources.

The failure is not only in implementation. The strategic conception itself is flawed. The United States cannot abandon a century of successful grand strategy—a preponderance of power in and around the strategic centers of Europe, the Persian Gulf, and Asia. It cannot pivot away from any of these regions. They are profoundly interlinked by trade, energy relations, and security, not to mention America's alliance commitments across each region. The rhetoric of the "pivot" notwithstanding, it is impossible to seal off one region of the world from others.

The key problem with the pivot, however, is that it disregards the main competitive advantage of America: its historic support for liberty. Any great power can become the predominant security and economic power in Asia. Imperial China and Imperial Japan each filled that role at different times. Only the United States can lead by affirming the principles upon which the nation is based—principles that speak to the personal aspirations of many Asians.

Democracy's history in Asia offers both insight and hope. While U.S. power and influence certainly helped, the remarkable transitions to freedom by Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Indonesia were the product of the desire of Asians themselves for individual human

dignity after a legacy of colonialism and conflict. It is easy to forget how unthinkable democracy in Asia seemed to be just a generation ago. Asians were considered politically backward, dependent, and culturally hostile. With American support, Asians in several countries defied this crude cultural determinism.

Now China is in the awkward position of being surrounded by not only suspicious powers but democratic powers. Chinese entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and diplomats work in and engage with India, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and much of Southeast Asia. They wonder why democracy is good enough for these smaller powers, but not good enough for them. China is becoming the outlier, as in the arc from India to Indonesia to Japan most Asians live in democracies.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A NEW STRATEGY

China's isolation on the issue of political liberty is an opening for a return to a strategy of peaceful evolution. Consider economic liberty: The Chinese private sector that was allowed to sprout in the 1990s desperately wants to be part of an Asian system of free markets and political liberty. A cornerstone of a new China strategy should be to build free institutions like the Trans-Pacific Partnership and informal "freedom" groupings that China can join if it meets the criteria. There are good reasons to believe that, if given the choice, most Chinese citizens would rather be part of an aspirational Asia of free markets and political liberty than stifled amidst China's corrupt state capitalism.

China's loneliness in a majority democratic Asia is one basis for the freedom prong of a new U.S. policy. Another is the stunning growth of Christianity—a faith long associated with the West that is being adopted by Chinese believers on Chinese terms. As observers such as David Aikman and Evan Osnos have written, China is now in its fourth decade of a profound church expansion. By numerous estimates, China already has as many as 100 million Christians, one of the largest, most vibrant, and fastest-growing Christian populations in the world.

The growth of Chinese Christianity is a hopeful development for the cause of liberty. The Chinese spiritual awakening bears some resemblance to the religious revivals that occurred in the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries and considerably influenced such liberal movements as the American Revolution, abolitionism, and women's suffrage. Christianity also played a key role in the democratic transitions in Eastern Europe and South Korea.

While in the earlier years of the Chinese church's growth this development was concentrated in rural areas and was relatively apolitical, more recently many Chinese intellectuals, business leaders, and even Communist party members have embraced the Christian faith. As these Chinese Christians have matured theologically, they have also begun to work out the social and political implications of their faith, and are at the vanguard of movements against maladies such as corruption and forced abortion and for religious freedom, labor rights, free speech, and the rule of law. There are now Christians in every important profession in China, including the "Boss Christians" running Chinese companies, who are equipped to step into political leadership positions. As Osnos argues, the key social dynamic in China today is the conflict between the aspirations of the Chinese people for a more meaningful life and the party's continued repression.

A third basis for the freedom prong is China's burgeoning class of entrepreneurs and lawyers. After a hopeful period of dismantling statism that lasted from Deng through Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji, the state has reasserted itself in squeezing the private sector. Many Chinese private business leaders are quietly fighting back within the system. They are rich, powerful, and networked and have contacts and partners within the CCP establishment.

While China is not a rule of law state, it has many Western-educated lawyers skilled and experienced in complex commercial transactions. This cadre conducts much of its work within democratic legal systems and knows well the economic benefits of such rule of law fundamentals as an independent judiciary and depoliticized legal system. Chinese criminal and constitutional lawyers are now consistently taking on more controversial cases that challenge governmental authority—defending such imprisoned figures as Nobel Peace laureate Liu Xiabo and Uighur economist Ilham Thohti. They are using the rights guarantees already present in the Chinese constitution in arguing their cases, as well as appealing to international legal and human rights standards. A number of these legal activists form the influential *weiquan* movement of human rights lawyers, many of whom are also Christians.

In short, China is filled with latent democrats whom the United States and other freedom-minded allies can and should support. A first step for American policymakers is to expand the concept of engagement beyond just government-to-government contact and engage broadly with China's most courageous and dynamic citizens: its dissidents, reformers, and freedom activists. Right now the CCP tries to dictate the engagement agenda to the United States—whom U.S. officials may meet, what topics may be discussed, and so on. By one count the U.S. government maintains over 90 annual "dialogues" with the Chinese government, across a staggering array of departments, agencies, bureaus, offices, and commissions.

Over 90 dialogues a year—not including the countless

informal bilateral meetings constantly taking place between American and Chinese officials—provides a lot of business for luxury hotels in Beijing and Washington. But do these encounters do enough for the U.S.-China relationship? Ironically, these dialogues are at once too many and too few. It is far too many in that Beijing has become adept at managing and manipulating American expectations while diverting pressure from more substantive policy changes. Yet it is far too few in that the vast majority of these dialogues are only with Chinese government officials. Largely missing from these forums are the Chinese citizens who provide much of their nation's dynamism and productivity today and who will do much to shape its future. These are the entrepreneurs, intellectuals, house-church pastors, artists, and other reform-minded Chinese who love their country but loathe their government. They are America's natural allies.

The fourth building block is China's own century-long internal discussion of and attempts at democratic reform. The United States would be joining, not starting, a Chinese conversation about Chinese liberty. At first glance this might not seem apparent. Beijing tries to persuade its own people and the West that democracy is a foreign antibody in China. However, as Columbia Sinologist Andrew Nathan has written in his definitive book on Chinese democracy, as the Qing dynasty fell and the Chinese republic was formed in 1912, "all politically aware Chinese agreed that China must be in some sense democratic." Every Chinese constitution after the imperial fall recognized that the people must be sovereign. The ideological fight in China became a fight over two Western ideologies adapted to Chinese conditions: Marxist Leninism and democracy. While the former won out, the debate continues.

The greatest exemplar of Chinese democracy is the former president of Taiwan, Chiang Ching-Kuo, and his deputy and successor, Lee Teng-hui, who together led one of the most orderly and successful democratic transitions in history. Mainland Chinese are riveted by democratic Taiwan. Mainland Chinese leaders including Sun Yat-sen, Wei Jingsheng, Wu'er Kaixi, Fang Lizhi, Zhao Ziyang, Bao Tong, Ai Weiwei, and Liu Xiaobo have kept the fight alive. Under Deng Xiaoping the PRC promulgated a new constitution in 1982 expanding the rights and duties of the Chinese people. High-level study groups—often the drivers of Chinese reform—made up of officials and scholars have been allowed to discuss the role of an independent judiciary and an independent legislative branch and elections. In short, a strategy of encouraging peaceful evolution would work alongside China's own efforts at political reform.

Entrepreneurs, pastors, intellectuals, artists, and other reform-minded Chinese who love their country but loathe their government: These are America's natural allies.

IMPLEMENTING A NEW U.S.-CHINA STRATEGY

Building upon the existing democratic elements in China, a new China policy should have three main parts. First, as multiple astute observers have pointed out, getting our China policy right means first getting our Asia policy right. That starts with our regional alliances. The continued primacy of the United States through its alliance system provides the greatest means to deepen the development of an Asian liberal order. Asians simply cannot consolidate their democracies and grow economically if they face growing Chinese political or military pressure. The strengthening of an Asian democratic order could have the most consequential impact on China's political future, particularly if there is a way into such a system for a liberalizing China.

Second, U.S. policy should focus on enabling Chinese people to communicate with one another, debate their history, practice their faiths, and expand their constitutional and legal reform efforts. What is needed is a policy of meeting lies with truth. This will require counterpropaganda and informational resources including a reformed and expanded broadcasting and communications effort such as Voice of America and Radio Free Asia, efforts to circumvent the Great Firewall, and, perhaps through a new United States Information Agency, a mobilization against the propagation of illiberalism. We face a new battle of ideas in the 21st century on two fronts: the well-known ideological foe of militant Islamism and the less-appreciated challenge of state authoritarianism led by China and Russia. We need to reorganize our government to engage in this battle.

Third, senior-level engagement should be restructured. Washington should continue to engage the Chinese government diplomatically on economic, security, and diplomatic issues of common concern. But just as Chinese leaders can meet with whomever they want in the United States, senior U.S. officials (including the president and the secretary of state) should engage all of China, including reformers in the realms of the economy, religion, the environment, and law.

Specifically, senior American officials should hold regular meetings with Chinese reformers and dissidents, integrate human rights as a top-line priority in the annual Strategic and Economic Dialogue, and increase funding for Human Rights and Democracy Fund programs in China. They should devote more rhetorical attention to PRC oppression and freedom activists in

China. The United States should lead this effort, but not do it alone. Against Beijing's "divide and conquer" tactics of splitting the U.S. and EU countries into multiple low-level human rights dialogues, America and like-minded allies such as Australia, Japan, and the EU countries should present a multilateral united front to China on human rights.

RESISTANCE TO SOMETHING NEW

The CCP would obviously continue to fight any attempts to support Chinese reformers. Its propaganda machine works overtime to try to convince Chinese people and Western elites that: "the West pushes democracy to keep China down," "democracy is not for Chinese people, who need order," "democracy is a form of Western imperial spiritual pollution," and "a democratic China will be more hostile and dangerous than an autocratic one." If some of these messages sound familiar to American ears, it is because the CCP has aimed them at American audiences. As a result, some prominent Americans repeat these tropes back home, which can cut off debate about democracy in China. The United States needs to help Chinese democrats expose these lies within China and educate Western elites about the ways the Chinese themselves have been grappling with their democratic future.

In the past the U.S. business community greeted attempts at peaceful evolution with wariness. But today there might be more support from business leaders for adding a freedom prong to our China strategy than is commonly appreciated. After years of losing billions of dollars worth of intellectual property to China's state-sponsored cyber-theft and piracy, many in the business community have come to see that China's predatory state poses a threat not only to its own citizens but also to American corporate balance sheets. American businesses are victims of China's endemic lack of rule of law, transparency, and accountability: All these hurt the commercial environment as much as they prevent political freedom. In short, the CCP's pathologies are a bundled commodity. A stable business climate in China requires rule of law and transparent regulation and government. And then there is the question of where the next cycles of Chinese growth will come from. The great hope for a massive consumer class in China rests on economic liberalism: the freedom of ordinary Chinese to invest where they want, take their money in and out of the country freely, and compete, through their small businesses, with the Chinese state colossus of crony capitalism.

The main purpose of a new U.S. strategy is to create the conditions for more liberty in Asia and better relations with China as part of an aspirational vision for Asia. But the other reason to support democracy in China is to hedge against the possibility that the Communist party will fail.

Both tracks of the American dual-strategy of engagement and hedging rest on the assumption of internal stability and enduring CCP control in China. Engagement depends on this because it is predicated on working with the CCP as the sole authority in China. Paradoxically, hedging also depends on stable party rule because it is predicated on China's continuing on its current trajectory as a strong rising power. But what if these assumptions are both flawed? What if China internally is not stable but fragile, not strong but weak?

China is more brittle than many imagine. First, its slowing economic growth is not just a typical cycle but reflects some of the fundamental limitations of China's state-owned enterprises and low-cost export economic model and the challenges of shifting to a more decentralized domestic-consumption model. Second, China's massive environmental problems, long painfully evident to visitors to its major cities, are becoming ever more acute and engendering widespread frustrations.

Third, the endemic corruption that pervades Chinese society also undermines confidence in the government and inspires deep resentments among the populace. Xi Jinping's highly visible anticorruption campaign may seek in part to address these resentments, but it is primarily intended to purge Xi's rivals and cement his hold on power. Think of Putin's vendetta against many Russian oligarchs in the early part of his presidency: What may have appeared at the time to be a high-minded effort to suppress corruption turned out in hindsight to have been a craven, cynical, yet effective bid to consolidate his power. But if Xi's campaign continues, it could also create a political backlash and split the CCP as never before. A party split on top of an existing party crisis of legitimacy portends real trouble for one-party rule.

In short, China's ruling structures are brittle, costly, and strained by the corrosive effects of corruption, environmental calamities, and lack of popular consent. The fact that China spends more on internal surveillance and policing than on its military only confirms that the CCP's greatest fear is of its own citizens, not an external rival like the United States. The real threat to Chinese stability comes from possible state collapse or revolution, without a peaceful civil society to step in and help manage the subsequent vacuum.

Adding a freedom prong to the engage and hedge strategy is the most prudent course for dealing with this possibility. It helps answer the question "Then what?" If, through whatever course of events, the CCP were to lose its monopoly on power, what political authorities would emerge to take its place? Right now the CCP is successfully repressing all vestiges of civil society; Burke's "little platoons" of civic organizations and religious groups that mediate between the individual and the state are nowhere to be found. This does not mean that China's collapse is imminent. The CCP is resilient and acutely aware of the demise of past authoritarian regimes such as the Soviet Union. That said, when have we ever correctly predicted a massive political change in a major country?

Those who fear change in China fear—with justification—an Arab Spring scenario from which something much worse than the current leadership would emerge. But American policy does little to mitigate this scenario. A freedom prong would cultivate and support alternatives in anticipation of the day when the CCP as currently constituted might no longer be in control.

How might a greater American effort to support freedom in China affect the overall U.S.-China relationship? Probably less than one might think in the short term, and certainly less than the profound disruption some China experts fear. Beijing can always be counted on to act in its own perceived interest, and the CCP still prioritizes a stable bilateral relationship with the United States. Increased U.S. support for human rights and rule of law programs, and more meetings with dissidents, would doubtless provoke some annoyed démarches from Beijing and the usual grumblings about "meddling in China's internal affairs," but little more. The CCP is nothing if not ruthlessly pragmatic. It might note the continued existence of the KMT in Taiwanese politics and prepare itself to compete in real elections.

A new China strategy with a freedom prong is a high-risk and high-reward proposition. Before President Obama, all post-Cold War U.S. presidents favored encouraging China's peaceful evolution. Their mistake was a misreading of past Asian transitions to democracy, which they believed were inevitable. They were not. Instead, American presidents mixed sound political judgment with carrot and stick policies that sometimes risked far worse outcomes. But the reward for their successes is self-evident in our vibrant alliances today with Asian democracies. With China, the United States may be reaching an inflection point. Our present path is likely to lead to a high-risk, volatile rivalry with an increasingly unstable regime. The alternative path holds out the hope of leading gradually to Sino-American comity and an enduring peace. It begins with supporting those Chinese people who seek more freedom and a better future for their country. ♦

Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald (ca. 1960)

I Got It Bad

Setting that certain feeling to music. BY JOSEPH BOTTUM

I found an error in Ted Gioia's new history of love songs. It's late in this 336-page book, when he mentions that Simon and Garfunkel gave their 1968 hit "Mrs. Robinson" to the movie soundtrack for *The Graduate*. As it happens, the adulterous Mrs. Robinson was first a character in the 1967 movie, and the little *koo-koo-ka-choo* filler they composed for her they developed into a full song only after the movie's success.

It's telling that one has to go this deep into the text, and descend to this level of trivia, to find much wrong with Gioia's assessment. *Love Songs* is the definitive work on the topic—and like all comprehensive and topic-establishing texts, the fun comes in taking the author's work as the new "given," the added premise, from which we have to proceed in all our thinking about art and culture—about music, in this case, and sex. Ted Gioia has reached behind Freud and Darwin, behind psychology and evolutionary biology, to suggest that the inherent structures of art are what shape experience.

Love Songs
The Hidden History
by Ted Gioia
Oxford, 336 pp., $29.95

The love song invents love, in other words. The seduction song guides the encounter it describes. The sex song forms the expectations we have of sex. Before music, there was certainly brute rutting; but after song, there was tenderness, awkwardness, unrequited longing, fulfilled dreams, broken hearts, and the Beatles singing, "I want to hold your hand." Karen Carpenter bubbling, "I'm on the top of the world, looking down on creation." Rascal Flatts moaning their way through "What Hurts the Most."

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CORBIS

Bing Crosby charming his way through "Love Is Just Around the Corner." And Ted Gioia working his way systematically through it all.

Not that Gioia is loud about such things. As a Roman Catholic and (mostly apolitical) conservative working in an art world that has resolutely turned against both Catholicism and conservatism, he has nonetheless carved out a niche for himself as a popular scholar of music, particularly with his acclaimed standard, *The History of Jazz* (1997). In *Love Songs*, he genuflects toward current scientific preferences with an opening discussion of how even birds do it, this evolutionary mating-call thing, and he saves himself a world of hurt by nodding toward current academics in ascribing the general origin of love songs to the marginalized, outcast, and oppressed.

Still, he captures the essential, almost Straussian, political point in it all, for history shows love songs consistently occupying a curious middle ground in culture. On the one hand, they are instruments for rebellious impulse: They push against manners, social control, and political power in the name of an emotion so strong, they claim, that it cannot be constrained. On the other hand, the songs themselves are constrained—and constraining. Love songs domesticate sex. They bring it under control and reform it into love by putting it in an intelligible and useful frame.

The result is that, to any one culture, love songs will seem radical and dangerous, taking exciting risks in edging up to the edge of taboo. To the sum of culture, however, love songs have proved profoundly conservative: They make civilization itself possible, and they reshape some of the worst of human impulses into some of the best. "The history of the love song is also the history of the repression of the love song," Gioia writes. And yet, the love song has also successfully provided "the legitimization of romantic longing."

The artists of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance—the troubadours, Provençal poets, madrigal writers, and, especially, Petrarch—are usually given credit for inventing what we think of as the modern love song of Western culture. Gioia points out, however, the oddity of that kind of romance, in which men sing of themselves as slaves, chained in bondage by their passion. The refreshing of Europe through the return of classical learning certainly helped the genre develop: The Renaissance love song doesn't happen without the examples of Catullus, Propertius, and Ovid returning to cultural awareness.

And yet, Gioia notes, an even greater influence came from actual slaves. The *qiyan*, enslaved women performers in the Arab and Muslim worlds, converted their bondage into tales of love, the heart enslaved in sexual thrall. And, thereby, they taught even their masters to sing of love as slavery. The music spread through the Muslim presence in Spain and, from there, into Provence and eventually the rest of Europe.

To the sum of culture, love songs have proved profoundly conservative: They make civilization itself possible, and they reshape some of the worst of human impulses into some of the best.

> The master, who needs to maintain the values of the dominant society, with all its sanctions and proprieties, is nonetheless fascinated by the transgressive possibilities that can only come from the slave, the outsider, the infidel.

The influence of slaves on the American love song shows the same pattern. The European musical traditions were enriched with repeated borrowings from the marginalized culture. The mixing of Methodist hymns, British regional songs, and slave spirituals would produce what we think of as American folk music. ("Greensleeves," Gioia suggests, may have begun as a ditty about prostitutes.) It appeared again in the birth of jazz. And yet a third time in the creation of rock 'n' roll. Each has its songs about love—and each has its love songs expressed in terms of bondage and the enthralled heart.

Sex is both necessary and dangerous to civilization, and the role of sex in art has always been the simultaneous taming and enflaming of the dangerous elements. With the high risks of sex decreased by the Pill and the dissolution of the old chastities of the marriage system, the play with danger has had to reach far out into the exotic. But the love song was always there, at least metaphorically. When the Allman Brothers sang about being "tied to the whipping post" in 1969, they were just crossing the "t"s and dotting the "i"s.

As it happens, in that same song, the Allmans add, "Good Lord, I feel like I'm dying." I would have liked to have seen more from Ted Gioia on love in the love song as expressing the extra-bodily, equating fulfillment with the *petite mort*, and intermingling agape, eros, and philia.

To mock biblical commentators for failing to read "Song of Songs" as sexually driven love lyrics is easy—and wrong. For something in that text genuinely does drive toward the supernatural, and the metaphors of song, even love songs, derive from unexpected roots and issue unexpected fruit. Actual slavery lurks just outside the frame on one side, and God lurks just outside the frame on the other side.

With *Love Songs*, Ted Gioia has completed the trilogy that began with the publication in 2006 of both *Work Songs* and *Healing Songs*. In each case, what he has provided is the standard account of a genre and grist for any contemplation of art and its cultural roles. In the inner rooms of a Sumerian temple, the priestesses were singing sex songs and the king would leave the temple with their song on his lips. It's not much of a step from there to understanding that love songs are deep down at the root of culture, and any account of the birth of civilization has to include their pervasive, seductive, dangerous, and pacifying effect.

"I feel it in my fingers," as the Troggs once put it, "I feel it in my toes." ♦

B&A

Lessons Learned

Newman the educator, in theory and practice.

BY EDWARD SHORT

Site of the Catholic University in Dublin

In the debate about what needs to be done to make university education more coherent and more effective, no figure is cited more frequently than John Henry Newman, whose classic study *The Idea of a University* (1873) tackles educational questions that still exercise would-be reformers. Some of those questions include: whether the governing principle of university education should be utilitarian or nonutilitarian; whether teaching or research should predominate in the hierarchy of university priorities; and what truly constitutes university education.

Until now, the two most highly regarded books on Newman's treatment of the subject were Fergal McGrath's *Newman's University: Idea and Reality* (1951) and Dwight Culler's *The Imperial Intellect: A Study of Newman's Educational Ideal* (1955). Now, in *The 'Making of Men,'* Paul Shrimpton contends that past studies of Newman's educational achievement have suffered from failing to take into account the full scope of Newman's educational endeavors, and he has written his own book to rectify that.

The 'Making of Men'
The Idea and Reality in Newman's University in Oxford and Dublin
by Paul Shrimpton
Gracewing, 652 pp., $40

Deeply researched and persuasively argued, *The 'Making of Men'* is a major contribution to our understanding of Newman's commitment to university education. It will enliven and refine all future discussions of the subject by encouraging readers to revisit not only Newman's classic text but the practical challenges he addressed—first as fellow of Oxford's Oriel College, and then as rector of the Catholic University in Dublin. Shrimpton draws on Newman's copious correspondence and memoranda, as well as "accounts ledgers, buttery records, punishments books, timetables, rules and regulations, prospectuses, minute books, reports of all types, and a host of other documents," all of which give *The 'Making of Men'* an admirable richness.

In addition, the book includes vivid pen portraits of the men who joined Newman in his educational undertakings. Of Aubrey de Vere, for example, who was a close associate of Newman in the 1850s, Shrimpton notes how the Anglo-Irish poet and convert found Newman "not an aloof intellectual" but a man of "sweet gravity, simple manners and plain speech." In fact, his "quick sympathy and fierce moods before injustice" reminded de Vere of his countryman Edmund Burke. In such nicely chosen details, we can see why Newman commanded at once the respect and the affection of his colleagues.

The genesis of Newman's interest in education began while he was a student at Trinity College, when Oxford was just emerging from the bibulous torpor about which Edward Gibbon wrote so memorably ("At the most precious season of youth, whole days and weeks were suffered to elapse without labor or amusement, without advice or account"). By the time Newman entered Trinity, the intellectual tone of the university might have improved but not the tastes of gentlemen commoners. Writing to his father, Newman described how he had accompanied fellow undergraduates to their rooms:

> [T]hey drank and drank all the time I was there. . . . They sat down with the avowed determination of each making himself drunk. I really think, if any one should ask me what qualifications were necessary for Trinity College, I should say there was only one,—Drink, drink, drink.

Once a fellow at Oriel, Newman set himself against this dissolute ethos by developing the moral and spiritual life of the undergraduates in his charge. Together with his friends Hurrell Froude and Robert Wilberforce he

FRAN CAFFREY / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Edward Short is the author, most recently, of Newman and His Family.

gave his tutoring a pastoral attentiveness—until the provost demanded that he either stop tutoring along these lines, which the provost feared would foster favoritism, or leave off tutoring altogether. Newman duly relinquished his tutorial duties, though he remained a redoubtable force in college life and continued to offer spiritual counsel to students and dons alike. One of these was Mark Pattison, who would go on to become rector of Lincoln College and a lifelong champion of the tutorial solicitude that Newman advocated.

Before converting to Roman Catholicism, Newman also sent a series of brilliant letters to the *Times* opposing a reading room sponsored by Sir Robert Peel and Lord Brougham that would exclude all books of theology from its shelves. Later published as *The Tamworth Reading Room* (1841), the letters attacked the cult of knowledge, which Newman saw as an outcrop of the relativist and atheist rationalism of the Enlightenment. That the cult was adopted by the father of Utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham, did not make it any more palatable to Newman: Since the false god of knowledge still stultifies the study of the liberal arts, his objections to it remain compelling.

Newman would renew his criticism of the university's misguided faith in knowledge in *The Idea of a University*, which he based on lectures he gave in Dublin in 1852. In one of the lectures, Newman took issue with the trifling omniscience that universities had begun to require of their students for "distracting and enfeebling the mind by an unmeaning profusion of subjects" and "implying that a smattering in a dozen branches of study is not shallowness . . . but enlargement." Students were taught not a few things well but many things poorly, with the result that they left their colleges "frivolous, narrow-minded, and resourceless." Indeed, many left "so shallow as not even to know their shallowness."

Yet Newman's refusal to regard knowledge as the end of university education went beyond his contention that the mere accumulation of knowledge left the young uneducated. He also saw the inadequacy of such an end for the moral education of the young. Against any superficial reliance on knowledge per se, Newman extolled what he nicely referred to as "the sovereignty of Truth," convinced that "error may flourish for a time; but Truth will prevail in the end." Indeed, for Newman, "the only effect of error ultimately is to promote Truth"—a reassuring reminder to those who might otherwise despair of the manifold errors now entrenched in our current universities, where, as Steven Hayward recently reported, the ascendant "postmodern Left . . . openly rejects reason, objectivity, and truth as tools of oppression."

Cardinal Newman (1888)

Once in charge of the Catholic University in Dublin, Newman put many of his educational ideas to the test. While respecting the role that research should play in the university, he believed it should be pursued in academies that were close to, but outside, the university proper, where teaching should have pride of place. He encouraged his professors and heads of houses to take a pastoral interest in their charges; he made practical recommendations for remedial studies for undergraduates coming to the university unprepared for university work; and he gave students a degree of liberty that shocked the Irish hierarchy. In his Dublin lectures, Newman justified this latitude with a cogency that should appeal to those in our own midst who wish to roll back the salutary freedoms of students.

> If then a University is a direct preparation for this world, let it be what it professes. It is not a Convent; it is not a Seminary; it is a place to fit men of the world for the world. We cannot possibly keep them from plunging into the world, with all its ways and principles and maxims, when their time comes; but we can prepare them against what is inevitable; and it is not the way to learn to swim in troubled waters, never to have gone into them.

The results of Newman's efforts were mixed. By all contemporary accounts, they were not as impractical as later critics charged. Nonetheless, the sense of shared purpose that Newman inspired in his professors notwithstanding, the Catholic University failed. Never securing the requisite charter to confer degrees, it did not sustain its enrollment.

Then again, the Irish considered the Catholic University too English, and the English considered it too Irish. And Newman never received the support he needed from Archbishop Paul Cullen, who distrusted the considerable role that Newman was prepared to give the laity in his university.

However, despite these challenges, the Catholic University that Newman designed and put into practice continues to be the model for all truly Catholic colleges today, and *The Idea of a University* remains the best book ever written on university education. Those interested in learning how these two enduring achievements came about will find this study an enthralling, enlightening read. ♦

NEWSCOM

B&A

America's Blueprint

Words and pictures for your parents' Constitution.

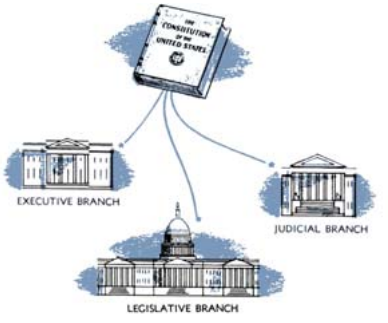
BY TARA HELFMAN

In explaining the process of design to an audience at Harvard, Charles Eames once resorted to parable. In India, he explained, people of the lowest caste would eat off banana leaves. People a bit higher up the social scale would eat off a ceramic dish whose shape was inspired by the banana leaf. Moving even farther up the social scale, these dishes—*talis*—might be elegantly glazed or made of fine bronze. "I suppose some nut has a gold *tali* that he's eaten off of," Eames speculated, "but I've never seen one." Eventually, though, people lacking in neither means nor knowledge chose to abandon the elaborate *tali* for the simple, uncomplicated, and functional banana leaf. In many respects, this return to the basic elements of design lies at the heart of this reissue of Bruce and Esther Findlay's *Your Rugged Constitution*.

First published in 1950 and last revised in 1969, it offers a thoroughly irresistible introduction to the United States Constitution, one of history's most durable, practical, and principled experiments in design. The Constitution is so called because it, quite literally, *constitutes* our body politic. It frames the structure of government, animates its departments with determinate powers, and balances each branch in delicate counterpoise. Its fundamental principle of design is liberty: liberty of government and liberty of the individual.

Your Rugged Constitution takes the form of a user's manual for every citizen. It offers a line-by-line explanation of each article, section, and clause, ending with the 26th Amendment. Like any good user's manual, this volume is illustrated. Almost each page features cheerful Eames-era drawings

Your Rugged Constitution
by Bruce Findlay and Esther Blair Findlay
Stanford, 296 pp., $14.95



depicting the concepts presented. When Article I, Section 4 requires that "Congress shall assemble at least once in every year," a sprightly member of Congress dashes across the page, suitcase in hand, to arrive at the Capitol in time. And when the 16th Amendment confers upon Congress the "power to lay and collect taxes on incomes," dutiful citizens queue up to drop dollar bills into a burlap sack held open by the taxman. (A chic French poodle looks particularly displeased in this scene.) But the 8th Amendment steals the show. When "[e]xcessive bail shall not be required," a dead ringer for Judy Holliday turns up to bail a slick nogoodnik out of lock-up.

Your Rugged Constitution also contains clear and explicit instructions. "As a citizen of the United States living in the House of Freedom," the authors write,

> you enjoy precious rights which the Constitution guards for you. These rights were won for you by brave men of the past who believed in the goodness and intelligence of ordinary people. Perhaps you are so used to these rights that you take them for granted. But it is only in the United States and other countries with truly representative governments that the common people are protected against mistreatment by their fellow citizens and by their governments. . . . These rights of yours are the same no matter what your race, religion, political beliefs, or wealth may be. . . . [Y]our most precious rights as a citizen can never be taken away as long as you and other Americans understand and maintain the Constitution.

The clarity of this prose is a tonic for the chronic dyspepsia that plagues much current writing on the Constitution. But this is no soppy bedtime story. There was a time when the book was required reading. In 1958, the American Bar Association recommended it alongside *The Federalist* for inclusion in each American's home library. From the 1950s to the 1980s, members of Congress invoked the book on issues ranging from American involvement in the United Nations to a school prayer amendment to the Constitution.

Yet those were also times when civics was a required course in public schools and students memorized the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. Today it seems most Americans are introduced to the Constitution not through the text itself but through press coverage of the Supreme Court—the equivalent of reading deconstructionists on Shakespeare while dispensing with the Bard altogether. The republication of *Your Rugged Constitution* presents an opportunity for current generations to familiarize themselves with our nation's founding document in a clear and engaging fashion.

True, the book is dated. Yet even when it shows its age, it is as illuminating as a time capsule, shedding light on the past and throwing into sharp relief the rapidity with which change occurs. For example, a passage on the Article 5 amendment process warns the reader:

> In the United States it is not necessary for the people to use revolution and bloodshed to change the government. You may sometimes hear of groups of people "going underground"—that is, acting secretly against the government—or "plotting to overthrow the government of the United States." . . .

COURTESY OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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> When you hear about such groups, you should be suspicious of them. These people may be unwilling to follow the rules for changing the government which are outlined in the Constitution.

During the Red Scare, when the book was initially published, this very suspicion led to grotesque abuses of political power and egregious violations of constitutional rights. Looking at the illustration on the adjacent page, the contemporary reader can only wonder whether the nefarious men taking pickaxes and drills to "Your House of Freedom" are Communists or members of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

The book also shows its age in its omissions. Last updated in the final year of Earl Warren's tenure as chief justice, *Your Rugged Constitution* alludes to many of the rulings on race, criminal due process, and voting rights that made the Supreme Court such a polarizing institution at the time. Absent is any mention of post-1969 rulings, but this is probably for the best: One shudders to think of the phantasmagoric illustration that might accompany a discussion of "penumbral rights" or the intestinally complex diagram needed to explain the difference between a tax and a penalty under *National Federation of Independent Business* v. *Sebelius*.

This is a welcoming, accessible, and, at times, profound book. Its charm is not to be mistaken for frivolity. In explaining the elegance, durability, and efficacy of our Constitution, the authors acknowledge that no design is perfect:

> Your Constitution is one of the best in the world. It was made rugged by earlier Americans. To keep it rugged is one of your first responsibilities. . . . But even the best constitution cannot guarantee that the government under it will be good. Since ours is a system of self-government, we have good government only when we, the people of the United States, play an active part in making it good.

The body politic can only be as robust as its citizens' understanding of the Constitution. *Your Rugged Constitution* is a valuable guide to the brilliance and complexity of our constitutional design. ♦

B&A

King John's Verdict

The good, the bad, and Magna Carta.

BY ANN MARLOWE

King John and the Road to Magna Carta
by Stephen Church
Basic Books, 328 pp., $29.99

In *Ivanhoe*, Prince John is thoroughly repugnant, displaying "a dissolute audacity, mingled with extreme haughtiness and indifference to the feelings of others," as well as a "libertine disposition." According to Stephen Church, Walter Scott's character is "almost wholly a later concoction"—except, presumably, for the love of fine clothes and jewelry that Scott depicts and Church's archival evidence proves. The reality revealed here is even rougher.

While Prince John didn't know what to do about his nephew Arthur, a rival claimant to the English throne, King John, after ascending the throne, contemplated blinding and castrating him—a punishment inflicted by Ottoman sultans upon their younger brothers. Ultimately, the king took the simplest route and had Arthur killed. The newly crowned John repudiated his first wife when a more advantageous alliance with a 12-year-old French heiress presented itself. Later, John incarcerated the wife and son of a rebellious baron and starved them to death.

Governance in John's administration was as personal and secretive as in Saudi Arabia. It was conducted "by the king himself along with his domestic servants." Our word "family," Church explains, derives from the Latin *familia*, applied to a lord and his retainers, whether or not related by blood. Money, not blood, was at the root of "family." But John's kingdom wasn't a savage backwater: The Angevins took their name from the French province Anjou, the capital of which was Angers. Now a sleepy university town, Angers is best known for its château containing the magnificent

John hunting with hounds (14th century)

14th-century Apocalypse tapestry. In the 12th century, though, Angers was at the center of the European world.

Church calls this book, in part, "a study in failure," referring to John's loss of his father Henry II's French lands to the French king Philip Augustus. But it's also a study in long-term success: While these Anglo-French battles would be re-fought in the Hundred Years' War, John's loss of territory and retreat to England was decisive for English history—and, indeed, for worldwide governance. His excesses led to Magna Carta (1215), which set the groundwork for Parliament and, eventually, constitutional monarchy.

Much of this lucid, workmanlike history could be ripped from today's headlines—although in places like Iraq and Libya, not England and France. The unstable, untrusting alliances; the identification of the ruler with the state; the

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extortion by the ruler of his subjects; the outright sale of state offices; the brutal fighting among members of ruling families—all are the stuff of Third World politics today. How did England move from a culture in which one contemplated blinding and castrating one's political rivals to the peaceable, money-laundering capital of the world? How did we English-speakers escape this past, and how can others for whom it is the present do so as well?

Church provides some answers. One is that medieval England had good luck. A major condition for stability was the state's monopoly of force within its borders. The English had this one solved for them by William the Conqueror, who controlled Normandy as well as most of England: "The English king was richer in lands by a margin so great that no mere baron could challenge the king for power." This isn't to suggest a very impressive level of security; piracy was a problem at the time, even in the English Channel. But it did put Angevin England ahead of most European societies.

An organized, relatively stable state needs bureaucracy and wealth, and each in turn requires a work ethic and some measure of the rule of law. All of this was present in King John's England, though still primitive. In fact, John's reign is the first for which the king's clerks recorded most of his correspondence. We don't know why this common-sense measure was adopted at the time, but these documents (called Chancery Rolls) enable historians to reconstruct John's movements and acts and also attest to a degree of organization. There was enough of a state apparatus that John could identify the lands of those who rebelled against him, as they would toward the end of his reign, and confiscate and redistribute them.

Wealth for most people in Angevin England meant land and agricultural produce; the use of money was still undeveloped. It wasn't necessary for most of England's three million people, but it was very necessary for those who would make war, such as the king. England had just one coin, a silver penny, and the total value of all those pennies was only £250,000 in today's currency. In 1207, John controlled nearly a fifth of England's wealth, raising £57,000 through an innovative tax called the Thirteenth. Earlier tax farming levied fixed amounts on the barons and landowners, who raised the money from their tenants in chief, who, in turn, raised it from their tenants. While responsibility was at the top, the pain was felt lower down the scale. John, instead, required *all* landowners, including churchmen, to pay 13 percent of their wealth to the crown, so the levies were not pushed down the social scale. Church believes that it was this tax that fatally alienated the nobility from King John, leading to Magna Carta. (He also notes that John, like other Angevin kings, used special taxes on the Jews to balance his budget.)

Education is essential for effective administration, and the events here took place around the time of the establishment of the University of Paris, the first university created north of the Alps and the second in Europe after Bologna. Oxford and Cambridge were still in the future, but a sufficient number of John's barons were literate that Magna Carta was translated into the French that most of them used day to day.

Speaking of the rule of law, I would have welcomed a few pages about the state of English law at the time. We learn that, in Henry I's Coronation Charter, he guaranteed that women would not be married without their families' consent (or, for widows, without their own consent) and that Magna Carta allowed women the right to bring murder cases only for the death of a husband. A bit more context would have been welcome, however: How did John's courts work? What access did ordinary people have to justice?

It is possible, of course, that the author prefers writing about battles and governance rather than laws and charters, for there is disappointingly little here about Magna Carta and how it relates to other royal charters. And while a perfunctory genealogical chart and two maps are included, a more extensive, better annotated Angevin family tree would have been nice, along with a few pages to explain how English dominion in France was resolved in the Hundred Years' War.

But these shortcomings aside, Stephen Church has written a thoughtful and suggestive book, instructive for anyone interested in comparative government and essential for students of early medieval England and France. ♦

B&A

Rough First Draft

On the trail of Tobias Wolff's debut novel.

BY GRAHAM HILLARD

In the spring of 2011, I ditched the academic conference that had brought me to Washington and took the Metro to the Library of Congress. With apologies to the Lincoln Memorial, the library's Thomas Jefferson Building is surely the most beautiful structure in that great city: a marvel of Italianate brilliance rising out of the First Street bustle. As part of the tour, visitors may climb to an upper floor and gaze through windows into the Main Reading Room, a space whose gilded extravagance brings to mind some of the less democratic moments in European history. Scholars—or those who can pass themselves off as such to the minor officials charged with keeping the riffraff out—may enter that lovely place, having preselected their reading material from among the library's 36 million volumes. Those whose requests are made in a timely manner arrive to find their choices waiting for them.

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Were the rest of the federal government half so efficient, so aesthetically sound, so user-friendly, it's a safe bet that no conservative would ever again gain office. But I had returned to the Library of Congress after a tourist visit six months earlier for two reasons: First, to look into the Reading Room but not enter it is the functional equivalent of Michael Collins keeping the command module warm while Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked the moon. Second, I had discovered among the library's holdings a book that had eluded me for years: the out-of-print and disavowed first novel of Tobias Wolff, the American memoirist and fiction writer.

By that point, I had been reading Wolff for years. Reading and rereading. Casual fans had made bestsellers of his memoirs *This Boy's Life* (1989) and *In Pharaoh's Army* (1994), narratives of Wolff's troubled childhood and Vietnam service, respectively. I had moved on to lesser-known (though by no means lesser) works: *The Barracks Thief* (1984), a PEN/Faulkner Award-winning novella of military unease; *Old School* (2003), a chronicle of boyhood rivalries that ranks among the best novels produced in the past century; and, of course, Wolff's stories, which had appeared for the better part of three decades in magazines and a quartet of near-perfect collections.

Like any enthusiast, I had my favorites. Chief among these was "Firelight," the penultimate entry in Wolff's third (and best) collection, *The Night in Question* (1996). The story of a downtrodden mother and son's hopeful apartment hunting, "Firelight" is vintage Wolff: ambitious but readable, political yet fair. So, for that matter, is "Smokers," Wolff's first published story and a highlight of another volume, *In the Garden of the North American Martyrs* (1981). A narrative of prep school betrayal, "Smokers" asks its readers to consider the almost Calvinistic irresistibility of material wealth, particularly for those, like Wolff, who have known its absence.

Other stories stand out as well. "Two Boys and a Girl" (*The Night in Question*) takes as its subject the tension between ethics and desire—our tendency to sacrifice the former when the latter beckons. "The Rich Brother" (*Back in the World*, 1985) considers the humanizing effect—unintuitive, perhaps, but no less true as a result—of surrendering to one's obligations.

Although it's hard to say why an author seizes us, I had a fairly good idea in this case. No American has written more honestly, more tenderly, about class. No one has understood better the difficulties of applied morality: how easily principle can give way upon the discovery "of what you had to have," as the protagonist of "Two Boys and a Girl" confesses.

There was another reason, too, for my devotion. Though I had noted with approval Wolff's *moral* imagination—the subtlety with which he goaded his characters toward what critic James Hannah has called their "constant and often contradictory obstacles"—I had nevertheless seen in Wolff's plots close approximations of the author himself, as revealed in his memoirs. The fraud who lies his way from an abusive home to a prestigious prep school; the wastrel who embraces the absurdities of war; the striver determined to gain "the great world," as Wolff writes in *This Boy's Life*, "that was my desire and my right."

As a consequence of this line-blurring, so obviously intentional, I tended to read Wolff's fiction as yet more autobiography, as narratives designed in part to fill the holes left by the true stories. Wolff had discouraged this misreading in an interview with the *Paris Review* ("Those things didn't happen. I made them up"), but I couldn't help myself. Rather than putting me off, his literary gamesmanship thrilled me. Wolff's was a fascinating life. I wanted more of it.

Hence, my trip to the Library of Congress. *Ugly Rumours* (1975), the novel I had come to read, is obscure. The product of a British publisher, it had never seen an American printing. Wolff himself had long ceased to mention it ("Within two or three years of having written it, I couldn't read a word of it without cringing"). Yet to neglect it would have been to miss an epoch of a compelling history. I wanted to know how far short of Wolff's standards *Ugly Rumours* fell, how badly it missed the "values of exactitude, clarity, and velocity" that he had identified as his goals. I wanted to read what few other fans had read. Mostly, I wanted what all plot-literalists want: to know *what happened*.

What happened is this: A man in his 20s wrote a very bad novel. *Ugly Rumours* tells the story of Christopher Woermer, a soldier who spends his tour in Vietnam, as Wolff himself did, as an adviser to a Vietnamese Army division. As loosely autobiographical as I had hoped, the novel explores much of the same material that Wolff would later mine to greater effect in his memoir *In Pharaoh's Army*—from the specific (a helicopter's slipstream flattens a Vietnamese village) to the general (Woermer frets about his relative uselessness). Despite these similarities, however, *Ugly Rumours* feels like a deflated balloon beside *In Pharaoh's Army*, as if its animating element has drained away. Though Wolff's potential is evident enough, the novel itself is a mess. The shifting third-person narration consistently violates the principles of limited omniscience. One African-American soldier speaks in an affected jive that is frankly excruciating. Dialogue throughout the novel is artlessly direct, as if every character has been sentenced to a lifetime of saying (and knowing) precisely what he means.

Perhaps most intriguingly, the physical book appears to have been assembled and edited with utter disregard for professional standards. Page margins vary wildly, and a number of sentences neglect proper capitalization. So distracting were these errors that I often found myself looking up from the page to the Reading Room's ceiling, happy to gaze again at the marble angels above me, the golden florets tucked inside squares of the palest blue. What a great place to read a bad book!

Ugly Rumours turns 40 years old this spring. Who could have anticipated the career that followed it? ♦

B&A

Out of the Shadows

The otherworldly sounds of Schumann's violin concerto.

BY COLIN FLEMING

Robert Schumann
Violin Concerto
Freiburger Barockorchester
Pablo Heras Casado, conductor
Isabelle Faust, violin
harmonia mundi, $21.32

What does it mean to create a work deemed so deleterious to anyone who might encounter it that one's friends, collaborators, and even a trusted spouse attempt to keep it secret from the world at large?

A man as self-contained as Herman Melville had this reaction to some of his own writings, first with *Moby-Dick*, which he worried was an evil book, and then with *Pierre*, which so troubled him that at the eleventh hour he dashed off a note to his publisher advising that maybe they should put it out anonymously and say it was by a random Vermonter. But there were no imaginary New Englanders at hand to bail out German composer Robert Schumann with his Violin Concerto in D Minor. The only violin concerto across the whole of Schumann's output, he composed it in three weeks in the fall of 1853, at a time Schumann was making his way down the abyss.

A suicide attempt would follow in February of the next year, and while no one was exactly shocked by that development, it didn't help the cause of the concerto, which Schumann had penned for the violinist Joseph Joachim. Joachim thought the work could not be beneficial to those who heard it, as it came from a place that was (shall we say) unstable and unnerving, where maybe even madness held sway.

Schumann died in 1856, and Joachim convinced both Schumann's widow, Clara (who ought to have known better given her own musical abilities), and Brahms (who was consulting in these matters and should have known better as well) *not* to include the concerto in an edition of Schumann's life works. And so a work of bedeviled genius, which broke through the black and haze to touch the palms of angels, was tamped out for the better part of a century.

This new recording, with period orchestra and the intriguingly named Isabelle Faust on violin, shows us why we need to come back to what is tantamount to a final Schumann masterpiece. (The Piano Trio No. 3 is also present, with Alexander Melnikov doing the honors; but that is the *digestif* to ease us out after the ride that is the concerto.)

The first movement must have left Schumann's circle nonplussed: It's like a mini-symphony, something Haydn might have drawn up—though it's decidedly less above ground, less in the sunlight, than Haydn tended to be. Its opening blast of sound, with the orchestra swelling in full voice, serves notice that we are not here merely to have a violinist step forward and idle away our time with virtuosity.

In fact, the violinist is subservient to the orchestra, as it is the latter that dictates direction, tempo, and how long each soloistic flourish will be, as if the orchestra were life and the violinist the lone individual trying to make sense of it all.

Faust's vibrato leads to some shimmering, more recognizably *concertante*, lines in the intermezzo second movement, which is all reflected glass, beams of citrine-color, and spindles of light, with passages so delicate as to suggest that musical ghosts have visited upon us, a sound light enough that one all but wonders how it was picked up on the recording.

The notion of the living specter is apt, as Schumann was feeling like one himself—enough so, indeed, that he believed the ghosts of Schubert and Mendelssohn had popped down from their otherworldly sphere to present him with the concerto's central melody. Schumann would be haunted by that melody until his death, no longer recalling he had composed it for his own concerto and wondering how it kept occurring to him as he wrote his final works.

But the ghosts were not done. Joachim, having buried the score in a library in Berlin, had it written into his will that the piece could not be performed until 100 years after Schumann's death. But cut to the spring of 1933: Two of Joachim's grand-nieces, who also happened to be violinists, were staging a séance at which Schumann—presumably having learned a thing or two from the shades of Schubert and Mendelssohn—stopped in to declare, in effect: *Hey, play my neglected masterpiece, which is also the missing link in violin history.* Wrangling to perform it ensued, and various copyright laws and problems were discovered; but by 1937 the concerto had escaped from its hold and was being heard in the world.

The third movement slips into a polonaise, and it's as if Chopin has been transcribed to orchestra and violin, much as Liszt used to adapt Beethoven's symphonic works for piano. Faust here cues the orchestra. And while that feeling of advancing down a *Via Dolorosa* never departs, the blending of her rabid bowing and the swells of strings herald a world beyond what first greeted us, in the opening movement, as an ending. No visitation of ghosts is necessary for the listener to know this to be so. ♦

Colin Fleming is the author of Between Cloud and Horizon: A Relationship Casebook in Stories.

B&A

Comic Opera

When the superheroes join forces, it's time to head for the hills. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Avengers: Age of Ultron
Directed by Joss Whedon

Offering an opinion of *Avengers: Age of Ultron* is like reviewing Chex Mix. According to what standard should one judge this mixture of breakfast cereal and pretzels and croutons and salt? Even if you find it bland or uninteresting you'll probably have a few handfuls anyway. And if you love it, you love it uncritically and unreservedly—until, perhaps, you eat too much of it and then feel a little sick.

The point is that it would never occur to you to come up with a *defense* of Chex Mix, an argument *for* Chex Mix—and the only arguments against it are probably nutritional (empty calories) or something having to do with the exploitation of workers in the Andes (empty socialism). Chex Mix is an industrial product designed to please your taste buds for a few seconds, nothing more. Is Chex Mix good or bad? It's neither. It's both. It's nothing.

Avengers: Age of Ultron is also an industrial product—the latest product off the assembly line since Marvel Entertainment merged with Disney. In other words, if you like this sort of thing, you'll like it; if you don't, you won't, but you're unlikely to be offended by it, and you won't remember a thing about it in a day.

The oddity of *Age of Ultron* is that, even though it is an industrial product, it was written and directed by a man named Joss Whedon, whom science-fiction and fantasy fanboys revere for his creativity and invention. He performed the same duties on the original *Avengers* and has said in interviews that he was disappointed by the compromises he had had to make in that film and that he consequently really went to town with his own vision with this second one. I find it impossible to understand what that could possibly mean, though, as the sequel is even more rote than the first one, and far less energetic.

Assembly lines function when the products that roll off them are either identical or use many of the same elements. *Age of Ultron* has the cast of the original *Avengers*, plus a few new croutons (Quicksilver, Scarlet Witch). It has much the same plot as *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (effort to preempt all war turns into potential global Armageddon). It has the requisite drunken hang-out scene. It also has the requisite "giant alien robots that look like reptiles." And it has lots of offhand cutesy comic dialogue spoken by the superheroes, even as they are battling to save a city in a sequence in which tens of thousands of people are dying around them.

Age of Ultron is a second-tier effort for Marvel, sort of like a second-tier musical from the MGM golden age—which is to say that it has everything the other Marvel movies have, but it's overstuffed, the big numbers just aren't quite good enough, and there's no chemistry between Gene Kelly and Vera-Ellen. When they're not quarreling in a trumped-up manner so they can have a big fight scene, there's a lot of stagy banter between the superheroes (Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, Black Widow, Hulk, I Can't Believe I'm Seriously Typing These Ridiculous Names in a List).

Age of Ultron has the misfortune of being the first Marvel movie since *Guardians of the Galaxy*, the amazingly high-spirited and witty action-adventure comedy that would have been a tough act for anything to follow. *Guardians* suggested Marvel had discovered how to do interesting and unexpected things, even as the production line moved relentlessly ahead. (Another 11 Marvel-Disney superhero movies are due for release over the next four years, a feat of long-range planning without precedent in the history of the entertainment business.)

It was as though a really clever chef had gotten hold of the assembly line, added some spices and flavors to the Chex Mix, and changed things up for good. But *Age of Ultron* suggests that *Guardians of the Galaxy* was a fluke. It's likely going to be plain old Chex Mix from here on out. ♦

MARVEL STUDIOS

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

"Bill Clinton defends foundation and paid speeches: 'I gotta pay our bills' "
—News item, May 4, 2015

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Bill Clinton takes on second job at Quiznos

ASST. MANAGER AT HARLEM SHOP

'We're just regular folks'

BY RANDY PRYOR

NEW YORK — Former President Bill Clinton paused to speak with reporters this morning during his first day as assistant manager of the Quiznos Sandwich Restaurant on 125th Street and Lexington Avenue in Harlem. Clinton had decided to take the job in order to ease his family's financial burden since his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, left the workforce to embark on a presidential campaign last month.

"We got bills to pay," said Clinton, a longtime vegan, before taking a bite of what appeared to be a double-stuffed buffalo chicken wrap. "It's imitation," he remarked.

While Mrs. Clinton is considered the prohibitive favorite to win the White House in next year's election, some have questioned her ability to connect with and understand middle-class voters, a perception the former president was quick to rebut. "Now, why would I come down here and put on my little apron, unless we really were struggling to make ends meet?" he asked. "We're just like anyone else, sitting around the kitchen table, wondering how we're gonna pay that electric bill or that gas bill," he continued. "We ask ourselves the same questions that millions of Americans ask themselves every day: 'How will we manage to pay for that Gulfstream V Charter? Will we have to downgrade to a rental in Bridgehampton this summer? Will we be able to pay our lawyers to keep fighting those Freedom of Information Act requests?' We're just regular folks," concluded an emotional Clinton before taking a final bite of his sandwich.

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Bill Clinton waits for a Quiznos sub to emerge from the oven.

Controversy has continued to dog the Clintons since the publication this month of *Clinton Cash*, an in-depth examination of the couple's financial dealings that included allegations of improprieties in the receipt of foreign donations to the Clinton Foundation while Mrs. Clinton was serving as Secretary of State. But the former president staunchly denied any wrongdoing. "Look, there's some folks out there with an axe to grind," Clinton asserted. "But I can assure you, unequivocally and without qualification, that we never didn't not ever do certain things that weren't unknowingly not entirely inappropri-

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