the weekly Standard

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IMPERIAL IRAN
REUEL MARC GERECHT
LEE SMITH

Religious Liberty in the Dock

BY ADAM WHITE

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

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COVER BY GARY LOCKE

FIFA's New Referee

The Scrapbook is willing to wager that, until last week, the vast majority of Americans had never heard of FIFA, the governing body of association football (soccer), headquartered in Zurich. Among other things, FIFA runs the popular World Cup tournament every four years; perhaps more important, FIFA also decides where the World Cup tournaments are held.

On May 27, in a series of spectacular raids in Switzerland and Florida, the U.S. Department of Justice and Swiss police rounded up nine FIFA officials and five sports marketing executives (only a few of them Americans) and charged them with multiple counts of corruption and racketeering. Attorney General Loretta Lynch accused FIFA, in general, of "rampant, systemic, and deep-rooted" corruption, and the executives, in particular, of corruptly deciding "who would televise games, where the games would be held, and who would run the organization overseeing organized soccer worldwide."

"This is the beginning, not the end," said a U.S. Attorney.

On the following morning, the *Washington Post* (among many others) was ecstatic. "Soccer is a game, a beautiful game," the *Post* declared, "but it isn't only a game. It is a global cultural obsession." Which may well be true, in certain circles and places.

Admiring a mock-up of Qatar's World Cup stadium

But that still doesn't answer The Scrapbook's question: What is the interest of the United States government in the integrity of soccer?

So far as The Scrapbook is aware, FIFA—the acronym (in French) for the International Federation of Association Football—is a private sports consortium, and membership in FIFA is voluntary. It is not an agency of government, nor an American organization, nor a recipient of American taxpayer funds. The goodness or badness of FIFA, in short, is soccer's problem, not Washington's.

Now, The Scrapbook has no doubt that many of the accusations hurled at FIFA—executive greed, rampant cronyism, truckling to dictators—are true; they have certainly been the subject of press stories and public complaint for years. And it may well be unseemly that countries blessed with natural resources and little else (Qatar, for example, site of the 2022 World Cup) seem to throw their money around in Zurich to good effect. But how FIFA spends its oil-sheikh income, or grants favors to highest bidders, is a challenge for FIFA and its member-nations, not the Department of Justice. Cronyism and truckling to dictators are not good things; but are they against the law, or confined to FIFA?

Indeed, one telling detail of this story has been the near-universal joy expressed in Europe. Our friends across the Atlantic are not usually so well disposed to extraordinary expansions of American jurisdiction; but in this case, at least, the cavalry is welcome because the members of FIFA seem unable to govern themselves.

To which The Scrapbook responds: This is not the Second World War. It is a management problem for a private professional sports organization. Even the *Washington Post* admits that the case is largely symbolic, inspired by soccer's "cultural" significance and prompted by FIFA's award of the 2018 World Cup tournament to Vladimir Putin's Russia.

Well, if symbolism in sports is now subject to American law, will the Justice Department issue guidelines on football inflation, or racial quotas for the NBA, or sue to get Pete Rose inducted to the Hall of Fame? ♦

Looking Backwards with Bernie

The Scrapbook is generally pleased that Bernie Sanders has decided to enter the presidential race. Where Democrats laughably insist that they are mere pragmatists free from ideological cant, the senator from Vermont is refreshingly honest about his desire to impose socialism on America. However, this honesty doesn't excuse the fact that Sanders's campaign thus far is mostly a doddering old man spouting half-baked economic ideas.

In defiance of all basic logic and the accumulated wisdom of human civilization, economics remains a zero-sum game for progressives such as Sanders. The problem is that their willingness to pile new trillion-dollar obligations on top of our existing debts requires them to keep defining Other People's Money down. And so basic comforts of civilization are now being viewed as suspiciously decadent bourgeois indulgences by Sanders and his ilk. In a recent interview with the *New York Times*'s John Harwood, Sanders pretty much gives up the game:

> He doesn't flinch over returning to the 90 percent personal income tax rates of the 1950s for top earners. And if reducing income inequality reduces

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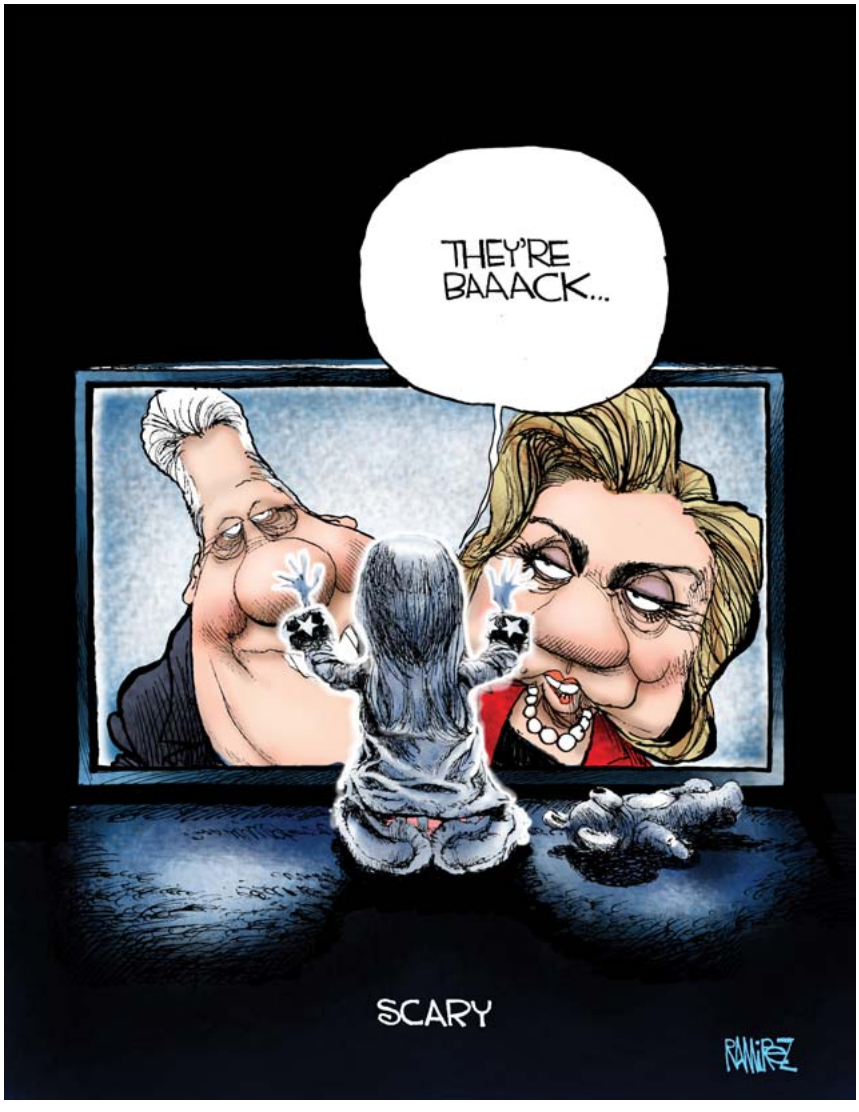
economic growth, he says, that's fine. "You don't necessarily need a choice of 23 underarm spray deodorants," he said, "when children are hungry in this country."

This short passage prompts so many questions it's hard to know where to begin. If reducing income inequality must necessarily mean reducing economic growth, who decides what's to be done and implements the necessary sacrifices? If reducing our options for spray deodorants means we're able to feed hungry kids, think how many more hungry kids we'd be able to feed if we just rationed everything to each person according to their need. Why hasn't anyone tried such a fiendishly clever economic system before?

Of course, there is no more effective anti-poverty program than basic economic growth, and the statistics testifying to this are staggering. The fact that we can choose between dozens of different and affordable deodorants is a consequence of the highly efficient allocation of resources, not proof of inefficiency. But instead of laughing in his face or noting that reams of economic literature from public choice theory to good old supply and demand prove that Sanders's economic logic would actually make more kids starve, the *Times* headlined the interview: "Bernie Sanders: A Revolution With an Eye on the Hungry Children." Nearly a century ago, some left-wing journalist likely observed the October Revolution was all about hungry children as well. The ever credulous *New York Times* seems to have learned nothing of economic reality in the meantime.

As for the remainder of the policy prescriptions being bandied about in the Democratic presidential primary—minimum wage increases, free college tuition and health care, tax hikes, etc.—it's remarkable how backward looking it all is. It seems the Democratic political program is stuck in a funk, and if Sanders and his party have their way, the country will smell like one, too. ♦



Progressive Ireland?

On May 22, Ireland became the first country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage through popular referendum, with 62 percent of the electorate supporting the constitutional change. The reported reactions, as you might expect, were overwhelmingly positive. Prime Minister Enda Kenny proclaimed, during a press conference, "Ireland, thank you." Joe Biden brought the Irish poet William Butler Yeats to bear on the proceedings, enjoining Americans to "not wait to strike till the iron is hot, but make it hot by striking." And Irish drag-queen Panti Bliss—real name Rory O'Neill—in response to a reporter's query into how she/he would celebrate the success of the referendum, quipped, "My plans for tonight are to get really really drunk and then to hit on you."

But if Irish voters think the world's progressives are going to be impressed with them . . . well, as if on cue to prove that living up to the progressive stamp is as impossible as a Yahoo ruling a Houyhnhnm, the European Committee of Social Rights, designed to "judge that States . . . are in conformity in law and in practice with the provisions of the European Social Charter," leveled a rather un-progressive charge against Ireland last week. As it turns

out, Irish common law still allows parents who corporally punish their children recourse to the "reasonable chastisement" defense. This offends the good people at the Council of Europe, of which Ireland is a member, who point to Article 17 of the charter, which states "children and young persons have the right to appropriate social, legal and economic protection." Consider yourself chastised, Ireland. ♦

The King Obama Version

In his Memorial Day speech at Arlington National Cemetery, President Obama seems to have taken it upon himself to update the greatest achievement in the history of the English language—the King James Bible. He was reaching for John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." A beautiful, immortal, and holy phrase. But not gender-neutral. So here's how it came out: "Greater love has no other than this, than to lay down your life for your friends."

The Scrapbook wishes to thank our commander in chief for reminding us that, even at the most solemn moment, it is always more important to be politically correct than it is to be grammatically correct or even biblically correct. But, then again, we are as clay in His hands. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'One of the Obama administration's underrated virtues is its intellectual honesty. Yes, Republicans see deception and sinister ulterior motives everywhere, but they're just projecting. The truth is that . . ." (Paul Krugman, *New York Times*, May 22, 2015). ♦

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After Moses, Solomon

I've had a lot of dogs of many different physical types, but each has come loaded with the same daunting reminder: the countdown clock I can't help but hear ticking away inside of them. I suppose I come with one of those, too, if I care to confront reality. Denial may be easier on the nerves, but the actuaries don't lie. Your average American these days lasts 78.8 years. My average large purebred lasts about 8. Meaning over the course of a lifetime, I'll bid farewell many more times than they will.

Recently, I had to say goodbye to Moses, 145 lbs of beautiful Bernese mountain dog, the closest I've ever come to sharing my house with a black bear. We acquired him as a rescue—the family who'd owned him couldn't handle his ursine qualities. And I doubted my own capabilities at first, when he jumped on the couch, snapping menacingly if we tried to remove him. Or when he treed my son up a magnolia after ripping off his shirt. Forced to lay down the law, I smacked Moses in the face with a magazine—nothing thick that would hurt him, just a harmless Weekly Standard. But he never tried to eat my children again, and we were brothers ever after.

The most affectionate dog I've ever known, he'd swat me with his paw when I hadn't sufficiently reciprocated. He'd greet me by nudging his cinder-block head under my crotch, lifting me off the ground, and tunneling through my legs as though going through a canine car wash. He'd fish by my side, standing in water up to his undercarriage, licking largemouth and bluegill for good luck before I returned them to tell confused tales to their fish kin. The end came without warning. One day we were walking routinely along a bank of the Chesapeake Bay. Four days later, a secret cancer had crippled him. As the doc loaded his needle with the final solution, there were distrustful eyes and growls and miserable yelps. The dog didn't seem to care for it much, either.

I kissed Moses' snout, promising I'd come find him on the other side. Then went home and held some flies that a good friend had tied from his fur—long-forgotten Maine streamers and Royal Wulffs and Grey Ghosts fashioned from his tricolor clippings. Even opening the care package some months earlier, I was gnawed by how quickly our present becomes our past, knowing I'd be holding these flies long after I could hold the dog that they came from.

I did what I always do after losing a dog—I got a new one as quickly as possible. My wife sometimes looks askance at this practice, as I so ruthlessly try to replace the irreplaceable. I assure her that if she goes before I do, there'll be a tasteful mourning period before I hit christianmingle.com. But as the vet's hollow sympathy card read, "It takes a long time to grow an old friend." So I figure I'd better get moving. Or as the writer Sydney Lea framed it when recounting each of his gun dogs, "I also recognize that if one of those adored dogs had in fact lived as long as I have, there'd be only the one to adore. *Death is the mother of beauty*, as poet Wallace Stevens put it."

Now I have Solomon, a regal Great Pyrenees with melancholy elephant-eyes. The rescue service found him abandoned in the rain in a Dollar Store parking lot, burrs caking his polar-bear coat, as he tried to enter the car of whoever would have him. (And we pretend dogs are the animals.) They don't know how old he is, which might be a blessing. If I can't determine when his clock started, maybe I won't worry so much about when it'll stop.

On our second outing, I let Solomon off the leash on a boardwalk at a riverside park. He looked back at me with you-don't-own-me-white-man defiance, then jumped off the boardwalk, taking me on a mile-long chase through sucking mud and dead cattails, until he swam a creek and disappeared. Hours later, after vainly calling him, I slogged back through the marsh to my car, cursing God that I was down two dogs in one month. Until, out of the corner of my eye, I saw Solomon reappear like a stealthy, mud-splattered ghost, nonchalantly sniffing a stalk of chickweed, as if to say, "Relax, I'll be here for a while."

Re-leashing him, I tried to play as cool as he was. But I've never been happier to see a creature. For Solomon wasn't the only one in need of rescue.

Matt Labash

DAVE MALAN

the weekly Standard

Hillary's Libya Emails

A little more than three hours after the State Department released 848 pages of Hillary Clinton's emails, the *Daily Beast* had seen enough to render its judgment: "Sorry GOP. There's No Smoking Gun In Hillary Clinton's Benghazi Emails." The subhead: "Conspiracy-minded conservatives, be warned: The trove of Clinton emails doesn't prove much about her culpability for the infamous 9/11 anniversary attacks."

It's the media version of Frank Drebin: Please disperse, there's nothing to see here. Trey Gowdy, pack your bags and go home.

Of course, no one actually believed that this batch of emails would produce a smoking gun on Benghazi. Hillary Clinton has sought to avoid public scrutiny of her emails since before she was sworn in as secretary of state. When she did turn over some of her emails to the State Department, it was Clinton and her lawyers who decided which ones they would make available and which they would withhold. While it might be useful for Clinton defenders to pretend otherwise, there was no expectation that Clinton would voluntarily share incriminating emails, especially now, in the first weeks of her presidential campaign.

Yet for journalists interested in reporting on Clinton's emails rather than hastily exonerating their author, the hundreds of pages released last week included a number of disclosures, some of them inadvertent, that raise new questions about Hillary Clinton, the State Department, Libya, the Benghazi attacks, and presidential politics. The good news: Some journalists are looking for answers. And so are the investigators who work for the House Select Committee on Benghazi.

Sidney Blumenthal is at the heart of those new questions. A noted conspiracy monger and longtime Clinton confidant, Blumenthal provided Clinton a steady stream of outside intelligence on Libya while she was secretary of state. Some of his information was accurate and some of it was not, but Clinton thought enough of Blumenthal to circulate his reports to top State Department advisers, sometimes with notes ordering them to take some kind of action in response. Clinton downplayed the Blumenthal emails as "unsolicited" thoughts from an old friend. That doesn't quite capture the dynamic.

For Blumenthal, friendship with the Clintons came with considerable benefits. Blumenthal had been banned from State Department employment by the Obama administration, and it appears that if he couldn't collect a government check for advising the Clintons, he would collect one from the Clintons directly. *Politico*'s Ken Vogel reports that Blumenthal was paid $10,000 a month as an employee of the Clinton Foundation from 2009 to 2013 and the same sum as a consultant after he left the payroll in 2013 through March 2015. According to the *New York Times*, Blumenthal had access to private intelligence on Libya because he was advising "business associates . . . as they sought to win contracts from the Libyan transitional government."

The deteriorating security situation in Libya generally, and Benghazi specifically, was a dominant theme in the emails. Clinton defenders have sought to insulate her from criticism of inadequate security before the attacks by suggesting that decisions about security for U.S. diplomatic personnel were made well below her level. There are many reasons to be skeptical of those claims. The emails make clear that Clinton was deeply involved in virtually every aspect of Libya policy; one internal State Department email lays out the many ways she drove administration decision-making on Libya. Was Clinton a deeply engaged, hands-on manager of every aspect of Libya policy *other* than security?

If Clinton wasn't involved in security decisions, the emails make clear that she should have been. Reports that Clinton received and circulated, from both official and unofficial channels, demonstrate the dire security challenges for Americans in Libya.

It's not just Blumenthal's emails that raise additional questions. An email sent at 9:17 A.M. on September 15, 2012—four days after the fatal attack in Benghazi—by an aide advises Clinton that Dan Pfeiffer, the director of communications at the White House, "has some sensitive items that he would like to personally show you when he arrives." Clinton slept in and missed the meeting and wrote back later in the morning to request that Pfeiffer return to brief her. It's possible that these "sensitive items" had nothing to do with Benghazi. But the request for a meeting came after a flurry of emails the previous evening between officials from the White House, the State Department, and various national security agencies. Those emails concerned edits to the administration's much-discussed Benghazi "talking points" and included strong objections from the State Department's "building leadership" to some of the language. White House officials emailed the group to assure everyone that the objections would be addressed the following morning at a meeting of the Deputies Committee.

An email sent to several top administration officials,

including top Clinton aide Jake Sullivan, at 11:08 that same morning is introduced this way: "Per the discussion at Deputies, here are the revised TPs for HPSCI [talking points for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence]. Let me know what you think." The language in the revised talking points is redacted in its entirety.

Given what we know about the various iterations of the talking points, it's unlikely that these redactions conceal anything not already known. But as that example suggests, what's missing from the emails is often as provocative as the content. On April 8, 2011, Clinton forwarded a Blumenthal email to Sullivan. In the version of that email released by the State Department, most of Clinton's note is redacted. It reads: "FYI. [Redacted]." But the same email was obtained and published by the *New York Times* before the State Department release, and in that version, the sentence is unredacted. It reads: "FYI. The idea of using private security experts to arm the opposition should be considered."

Why did the State Department—or Clinton herself—want that sentence redacted? That's unclear. And there may well be an innocent explanation. But the note raises additional questions. Did the idea of supplying arms to the Libyan opposition through private security experts receive the consideration Clinton wanted? Did it happen? Was Blumenthal involved?

Beyond these questions, the Select Committee on Benghazi notes several "inexplicable gaps" in Clinton's email records "during key times of her involvement with Libyan policy." There are no emails between September 14 and October 21, 2011, five weeks surrounding Clinton's trip to Libya. (The committee notes that this was when a "now-famous picture of Clinton on her BlackBerry was taken.") There is another gap between October 21, 2011, and January 5, 2012, "when the State Department was extending the Benghazi mission for another year." And a third major gap occurs between April 27 and July 4, 2012, a period of "increased security" when the U.S. compound and the British ambassador were both attacked.

It's hardly necessary to be a conspiracy-minded conservative to be skeptical of the claim that Clinton—who, by the State Department's own account, drove Libya policy—neither sent nor received any Libya-related emails during these long stretches of heavy Libya-related policy-making.

Perhaps the most important effect of these latest emails is the simplest one. They demolish the claim that we already know the answers to the important questions about the attacks and the administration's response.

There is much more to learn. The Obama administration only recently turned over related emails to the Accountability Review Board, the State Department's internal and highly politicized investigation of Benghazi. And the State Department started to provide the Select Committee on Benghazi with emails from Clinton's top advisers just last week.

This belated, halfhearted cooperation is hardly an indication that the Obama administration is prepared to assist the investigation going forward. The committee continues to press Clinton and the State Department to turn her email server over to a neutral third-party for a thorough examination. Lanny Davis, a most ardent Clinton defender, originally said she would have no problem providing it. But Clinton has since made clear she has no intention of doing so voluntarily.

That doesn't sit well with the Benghazi committee or House speaker John Boehner. And while sources in both offices caution that no final decisions have been made, every day that passes increases the likelihood that the House will subpoena the server.

That day should come sooner rather than later.

—Stephen F. Hayes

Where's Paul Revere?

From the beginning, patriots have understood the need, at times, to sound the alarm:

So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm,—
A cry of defiance, and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forevermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history, to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.

Be assured: In today's hour of darkness and peril and need, we at The Weekly Standard are ready to saddle up and sound the alarm. We're ready to offer our voice in the darkness, our knock at the door. We're ready to do so even if it means braving the barbs of fellow baby boomers.

We're ready to sound the alarm about the world around us—about ISIS and Iran and Syria, about Putin and Xi Jinping. We're ready to sound the alarm about the Obama administration. We're ready to sound the alarm about the fact that Hillary Clinton now leads all the Republican presidential candidates in the polls. We're alarmed for our nation; we're alarmed for our Constitution; we're alarmed for our liberty. We're alarmed for the world.

In the words of the great conservative Edmund Burke, writing to William Windham on August 23, 1793: "We must continue to be vigorous *alarmists*." What does it mean to be a

vigorous alarmist? Among other things, it means standing on principle and refusing to bend to the passing breezes.

But there's an awful lot of bending going on over on the Republican side of the aisle now. The polls seem to show the decision to remove Saddam in 2003 is now unpopular—so Republican presidential candidates capitulate to reporters' demands they renounce the war. The media tell congressional Republicans they have to prove they can "govern"—so the GOP leadership yields all too often to a determined and tough-minded Democratic president.

Republican elites, desperate to place blame elsewhere, tell everyone the problem in 2012 was too many debates and too many candidates—so the Republican National Committee foolishly tries to limit both. Conservative elites, desperate to not have to rethink long-held dogmas, pressure candidates to adopt "pro-growth" tax agendas—so they talk Marco Rubio, perhaps the most promising GOP presidential candidate, into proposing a politically suicidal (and economically questionable) tax plan that would reduce Mitt Romney's tax bill to close to zero.

Political consultants tell politicians that people are tired of hearing about Obamacare, or that it's risky actually to explain what should be put in its place—so congressional Republicans, and even presidential candidates, show little urgency about advancing a serious and bold replacement for Obamacare. And everyone tells everyone else that it's just too risky to defend traditional marriage and religious liberty—so no one speaks up.

Yes, we alarmists understand there are times for prudent silence or low-key reassurance or sensible risk-aversion. But at some point risk-aversion becomes risky. It's not as if Republicans have won the most recent presidential elections, or demographic trends are sweeping everything in the GOP's direction. It's not as if Republicans won't be up against a formidable machine, or the attraction of the first woman president.

So a touch of Paul Revere is in order. We admire many of the Republican presidential contenders. They're mostly inclined to think along the right lines. But we're not certain they share a sense of urgency. If the consultants have their way, it will be business as usual. But it's not as if business as usual has often led to great electoral, or policy, or cultural, victories. In 2016 business as usual probably means losing as usual.

Without a sense of urgency, we'll have the Romney campaign with a more attractive and able candidate. But of course at this point in 2011 GOP elites thought Romney was a more attractive and able candidate than he turned out to be.

Burke was right. We must continue to be vigorous alarmists. After all, alarmism in the defense of liberty is no vice. Complacency in the pursuit of victory is no virtue.

—William Kristol

Hawks of a Feather

The Republican candidates and foreign policy.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

Oklahoma City

The Republican candidates in the crowded and growing presidential field may each be trying to break out of the pack, but there's one policy area where debate is scarce. In recent weeks, and particularly here at the Southern Republican Leadership Conference, the GOP candidates and near-candidates have all sounded remarkably consistent on foreign policy, from the broad themes to the details.

"We've got to reinstate American leadership when it comes to world affairs," said Scott Walker in Oklahoma City. "The rest of the world wants America to lead," said Chris Christie later that day. "We have to lead based on strength." Carly Fiorina calls her vision for foreign policy "influence through strength." Lindsey Graham's super-PAC is actually called Security Through Strength. In a recent speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, Marco Rubio said the first of three pillars of his foreign policy doctrine is "American strength." As he put it, "The world is at its safest when America is at its strongest."

The glaring exception to all this hawkishness, of course, is Rand Paul, the libertarian senator who made his mark in 2013 with a filibuster protesting the American policy of using drones to kill Americans engaging in terrorism overseas. Paul was absent from Oklahoma City last month, busy with another filibuster to stop the National Security Agency's metadata collection program. Days later, in an interview on MSNBC, the Kentucky senator lambasted the "hawks in our party" for policies that he said have allowed the terrorist group ISIS to "exist and grow."

"Everything that they've talked about in foreign policy, they've been wrong about for 20 years," Paul said of the Republican hawks. "And yet they have somehow the gall to keep saying and pointing fingers otherwise."

Whether Rand Paul likes it or not, the GOP is the hawkish party, and its presidential nominee is likely to be hawkish, too. That's clear enough from the rhetorical echoes across the field.

But whether Paul likes it or not, the GOP is the hawkish party, and its presidential nominee is likely to be hawkish, too. That's clear enough from the rhetorical echoes across the field. Here's Christie in a major foreign policy address in New Hampshire last month: "Throughout history, leaders in both parties have based our foreign policy on these principles: strength, leadership, and partnership with the people and nations who share our values." Bobby Jindal, in an interview: "I want a world where our friends trust us and our enemies fear and respect us. That was the bipartisan consensus post-World War II through the Cold War." Rubio, at the Council on Foreign Relations in May: "Only American leadership will bring safety and enduring peace. America led valiantly in the last century—from Truman to Kennedy to Reagan." And Walker, in an interview: "Think back to Harry Truman. This is a bipartisan view that we've historically had that when we win, we don't want to give up the victory."

There's agreement, too, on some of the major foreign policy issues of the day. The field's collective assessment, contra Rand Paul, is that Obama's lack of leadership in Syria and Iraq helped create the conditions for ISIS to flourish. "I see a president who drew a line in the sand and then allowed people to cross it," said Walker. Jindal agreed. "Earlier in this conflict, there were certainly stronger and more robust moderate opposition groups," Jindal said. "And over time, they've certainly gotten weaker while ISIS has gotten stronger because this president refused to equip them, to train them, to work with them."

"He could have stopped them in Syria by funding the Syrian rebels early. I think he also could have gotten rid of Assad at the same time," said Rick Perry. "But he chose not to."

Or consider the field's tough talk on Obama's nuclear deal with Iran. Jeb Bush calls it "horrific," while Rubio says it "almost guarantees war." Walker says undoing the deal would be his first act as president, while Fiorina says hers would be to call Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to reassure him of America's commitment to the Jewish state. Cruz, a hawk-come-lately, has sponsored the "Sanction Iran, Safeguard America Act," and Ben Carson has said unless open inspections are allowed, the United States should impose the "most severe sanctions possible."

"I think it's very important for us to communicate to the Iranian leadership that, certainly if I were in office, that every option would be on the table to stop them from becoming a nuclear power," said Jindal. "It's not acceptable for them to be a nuclear power."

Beyond the Middle East, Republicans still sing a hawkish tune. On Europe, the candidates decry Obama's accommodation of Vladimir Putin's aggression in annexing Crimea and posting troops in eastern Ukraine. America, they agree, ought to be flexing

Michael Warren is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard.

DAVE MALAN

its own muscles toward Moscow, not pursuing a Hillary Clinton-style "reset" with Russia. "Putin's a nationalist, so he loves the old Lenin adage that you probe with bayonets, and if you find mush, you push. If you find steel, you pull back," said Walker. "I think that's not only true with Ukraine and Russia but around the world there's this kind of sense they're finding mush."

And it's not just Cuban-Americans Rubio and Cruz who are outraged at the administration's policy shift toward Havana. "We had Cuba on the ropes, from my perspective," said Perry. "When the great Soviet Union crashed, [Cuba] got picked up by the Venezuelans when Venezuela is already on the ropes, possibly could go under, and therefore Cuba really didn't have a lifeline until Barack Obama gave them one."

"I mean, I am stunned at his lack of understanding how you connect the dots in foreign policy," Perry added.

Sure, events and decisions during the Obama administration have provided common targets for all the Republicans. And the all-but-certain Democratic nominee, Obama's former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, is the perfect foil on foreign affairs for the GOP to unite against.

But some of the credit for this synergy goes to a loose confederation of conservative foreign policy experts calling themselves the John Hay Initiative. Named after the Republican diplomat who rose from Abraham Lincoln's personal aide to become secretary of state under Theodore Roosevelt, the initiative is made up of veterans of the Mitt Romney presidential campaign and includes Brian Hook, Eric Edelman, and Eliot Cohen. Its goals are simple: to keep presidential candidates well informed on foreign policy and encourage them to embrace a, well, hawkish view of America's role in the world.

The group emails candidates a regular briefing as well as policy papers. They've helped staff the campaigns of Walker and Rubio with like-minded aides and drafted Christie's New Hampshire speech. In addition, they've worked, at varying levels of intimacy, with Bush, Fiorina, and Ted Cruz. Perry was the first and most enthusiastic likely candidate to reach out to the initiative, and it shows. He may be the most fluent of the Republican field, except for Rubio, in his knowledge of foreign policy issues.

If there are differences on foreign policy among the non-Paul candidates, they are a matter of degree or emphasis, not kind. Some, like Walker and Fiorina, are more cautious than others about sending more troops to Iraq to combat ISIS. Christie, a former U.S. attorney who prosecuted terrorists under the Patriot Act, stresses "protecting the homeland," while Jindal focuses on the global fight against "radical Islam." Perry is more specific than his rivals about how and where defense spending should be allocated.

But anyone hoping for a divisive or paradigm-shifting debate within the party on foreign policy—Hillary Clinton, say—will be disappointed. ♦

The Presidential Skill Set

What you want in a leader won't show up on the résumé. BY JAY COST

Former Texas governor Rick Perry is gearing up for another presidential run and recently fired a shot across the bow of some of his competitors. In an interview with THE WEEKLY STANDARD, Perry said that while he had "great respect" for senators Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz, and Rand Paul, they were not ready to be president:

> I've had more than one individual say, "You know what, if you want to be the president of the United States, you ought to go back to your home state and be the governor and get that executive experience before you go lead this country."

Prudentia

Perry's record as governor of the Lone Star State is impressive. During his tenure, Texas was an economic dynamo while the rest of the country lagged behind. Republican voters will no doubt give him a careful look this time around.

Regardless, his suggestion is wrong. There is no correlation between presidential greatness and professional background.

Presidents are almost always governors, senators, or generals. We have seen good and bad versions of each. Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter were both governors; the former had an intuitive feel for the demands of the office, while the latter was out of his depth from day one. Similarly, Lyndon Johnson was a former senator who was incredibly effective at getting Congress to do what he wanted, while John F. Kennedy's domestic program mostly stalled. George Washington and Dwight Eisenhower demonstrated a keen understanding of the political process, while Andrew Jackson and Zachary Taylor were capricious and imperial. Ulysses S. Grant was arguably the single greatest military commander this country has ever known, yet he was an inartful president.

Moreover, the country has had several polymath presidents who turned out to be disappointments. John Adams, James Monroe, Herbert Hoover, and George H.W. Bush had done a bit of everything by the time they became president. And yet none is in the top tier. Few men have been as qualified for the job as Richard Nixon, who was forced to resign because of Watergate. On the other hand, nobody has ever been elected president with as slender a résumé as Abraham Lincoln's; nevertheless, he is widely regarded as America's finest leader.

Political scientists have tried to explain such incongruity, but few explanations are satisfying. In the 1970s, James David Barber offered a psychological account of presidential greatness, but his approach was too reductionist and has been abandoned. More recently, Stephen Skowronek has argued that a president's position in the broader political cycle is crucial. Yet like most analyses built on the concept of "political realignments," this analysis falls prey to the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*.

Presidential greatness is such a mystery because, while it depends on some predictable factors like the size of a congressional majority, a necessary ingredient is *prudence*. This ineffable quality enables a leader to make the best determination in light of the practical constraints he faces. Edmund Burke wrote:

> Nothing universal can be rationally affirmed on any moral, or any political subject. Pure metaphysical abstraction does not belong to these matters. The lines of morality are not like the ideal lines of mathematics. They are broad and deep as well as long. They admit of exceptions; they demand modifications. These exceptions and modifications are not made by the process of logic, but by the rules of prudence. Prudence is not only the first in rank of the virtues political and moral, but she is the director, the regulator, the standard of them all. Metaphysics cannot live without definition; but prudence is cautious how she defines.

Prudence is the essential virtue of presidential greatness. It is the bridge that connects the unlimited expectations we have of the president to the slender formal powers we have granted him.

Today, we expect the president to guide Congress, helm a political party, speak for the nation, oversee the bureaucracy, grow the economy, command the military, and manage our international affairs. In short, we want him to be a king in the mold of the Tudor monarchs. Yet our Founding Fathers were greatly influenced by the Glorious Revolution, which saw Englishmen hamstring their sovereign after repeated abuses by Stuart kings. In fact, there was a faction at the Constitutional Convention that did not even want executive authority embodied in a single person, so fearful were they of monarchism. A compromise produced the circumscribed magistrate outlined in Article II, whom presidential historian Richard Neustadt called a glorified clerk.

The modern president is expected to do much more than the Framers ever envisioned, yet his power to

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Jay Cost is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD *and the author of* A Republic No More: Big Government and the Rise of American Political Corruption.

accomplish such impressive tasks is informal and extra-constitutional. In our system, a president is powerful if the other agents of government believe him to be powerful, and weak if they believe him weak.

Oftentimes, a president's power depends heavily on the size of his congressional party, but legislative arithmetic hardly counts for everything. Jimmy Carter was inept even though Democrats had some of their biggest majorities in the postwar era, while Ronald Reagan squeezed a great deal from a Democratic House. Bill Clinton seemed most effective after the "Republican Revolution" of 1994, while George W. Bush coaxed little of substance from Congress during the four years his party controlled both chambers.

What makes the difference is prudence: the ability to perceive opportunities and make the most of them. This requires an intuitive feel for the mechanics of government, the interests of other politicians, the nature of public opinion, and most of all the different ways the president can manipulate the process to his desired end.

Consider Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. It was sweeping in part because he had large majorities in Congress. But that alone cannot explain a program like Social Security, which radically redefined the relationship between citizen and state. FDR understood that to sell the American people on it, he would have to present it just so. Thus was born the social insurance model. When his aides warned him of its fiscal impracticability, FDR waved them off, arguing that the funding mechanism was "politics all the way through. We put those payroll contributions there so as to give the contributors a legal, moral, and political right to collect their pensions. . . . With those taxes in there, no damn politician can ever scrap my social security program."

There is no political science model or bullet point on a résumé that can predict such a masterful instinct as Roosevelt's with Social Security. Similarly, there is no "mathematical" way to account for how Reagan won a Cold War that seemed destined for perpetual stalemate, how Washington kept partisan politics at bay, how Lincoln turned a sectional conflict into a referendum on the immorality of slavery, or how Teddy Roosevelt reoriented the staunchly pro-business Republican party against the trusts.

How and why these presidents developed prudence is a mystery. Some of them no doubt learned it through experience in prior positions, but they didn't have to. One can be a reasonably successful governor, senator, or general without perfecting this virtue. The demands of those subordinate offices, while often taxing, are hardly overwhelming (Grant's situation excepted). Again, Lincoln—our greatest statesman—occupied none of these positions.

So maybe our next great president will have been a governor from Texas, or a senator from Florida, or even a former CEO of a tech company. There really is no way to know. Presidential greatness, inevitably, is a function of *prudence*, and as Burke writes, "Pure metaphysical abstraction does not belong to these matters." ♦

Paying Tehran's Bills

Sanctions relief will only empower Iran.

BY LEE SMITH

Even the Obama administration acknowledges that Iran is up to a lot of mischief in the Middle East. Tehran is engaged in a sectarian conflict from Lebanon to Syria and Iraq that has recently come to include Yemen as another active front. However, the White House continues to insist, against all evidence, that the clerical regime's aggression won't increase when it gets a huge cash infusion from sanctions relief and an immediate $30 to $50 billion bonus, when (or if) it signs the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, aka the nuclear deal.

Supreme leader Khamenei inspects new IRGC troops, March 21, 2014.

According to Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew, Iran will almost surely use that money to improve its domestic economy. And besides, as Obama argued last month, "most of the destabilizing activity that Iran engages in is low-tech, low-cost activity."

The numbers say otherwise. Staffan de Mistura, the U.N.'s Syria envoy, recently estimated that the war to prop up its Syrian ally is costing Iran $35 billion a year. That assessment is likely too high, but certainly of all Iran's regional projects, keeping Bashar al-Assad's regime afloat is the costliest. And that's because it's an occupation, says Fouad Hamdan, campaign director of Naame Shaam, an organization that keeps tabs on Iran's war in Syria.

It's a foreign occupation that affects Iran directly, because without control of territory in Syria, Iran loses its supply lines to Lebanon and Hezbollah, the Iranian regime's most powerful deterrent against an Israeli strike on its nuclear program. Thus, says Hamdan, "the battle for Syria is a battle for

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Lee Smith is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard.

the survival of the Iranian regime."

There was a time when the White House found it convenient to argue that the Syrian conflict was costly to Iran. When the war started there, rather than arm rebels to help topple Assad, the administration told its media surrogates that it was wisest to stand by as the war would bleed Iran. They were right about its potential to be a quagmire for Tehran. Now, sanctions relief, including the signing bonus, will enable Iran to bolster its support for Assad.

"Imagine Syria as a kind of Iranian province or governorate," says Tony Badran, research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "Military defeats are boxing the Assad regime into an increasingly small region, basically now an enclave in western Syria along the Damascus-Homs corridor leading up to the Alawite homeland on the Mediterranean coast. Assad's ability to survive is becoming almost entirely an Iranian responsibility. Facing a continuing war of attrition, the regime in Damascus has lost most of its ability for overland trade, with its only secure border being Lebanon. The Iranian responsibility is only increasing, as the Assad regime's resources, and thereby its ability to maintain its patronage networks, pay salaries, and so on, shrinks or vanishes."

Fouad Hamdan argues that the Assad regime is already well past that point. "Syria is broke," he tells me. The various Syrian state institutions that the Obama White House says it wants to preserve even if Assad does fall are now almost entirely dependent on Iran. "Iran is pumping $500 million a month to the Syrian central bank that takes care of things like salaries and many of the internally displaced as well as Damascus and the coastal areas," says Hamdan. "Iran spends maybe another half-billion a month for things like food and fuel, weapons and armaments, as well as the various militias now fighting in Syria, from the newly recruited Afghan Shiite militias, known as the Fatimeyun division, to Hezbollah."

Naame Shaam (Persian for "Letter from Syria") estimates that Iran's Syria expenditures are $10 to $15 billion annually, roughly $1 to $1.2 billion a month. Hamdan, a 55-year-old Lebanese-German national, explains that his organization, which is made up of four Shiites (himself, a Syrian, and two Iranians) and was founded in 2014, gets most of its information from open source materials, especially the Iranian media. "The Iranian regime will boast about its activities openly," he tells me. "Then maybe someone comes along and tells them it's not a good idea to make that information public, so they remove it from the Internet."

What Tehran is most keen to obscure, says Hamdan, is the fact that its war in Syria is an occupation. Syrian rebel fighters acknowledge that the Syrian army still exists in places, but, according to Hamdan, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is calling the shots. This was made plain in January when a high-level convoy targeted by Israel on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights included IRGC officers and Hezbollah fighters but no Syrian officials.

"In the chain of command," says Hamdan, "Qassem Suleimani is on top, and the IRGC-Quds Force commander takes his orders directly from the supreme leader. Under him is Hossein Hamedani, who oversees IRGC operations in Syria. Then there's the Iranian ambassador, various IRGC commanders, and Hezbollah commanders. Hezbollah does most of the training and takes on the most dangerous missions. Then there are other militias, like Iraqi and Afghan fighters, at the bottom."

The Syrian regime's most significant contributions to the war effort, says Hamdan, are its air force and the so-called National Defense Forces. These Iranian-trained civilian fighters have been combined with the paramilitary gangs known as the *shabiha* to replicate a Syrian version of the Basij, the paramilitary group created by the founder of the Islamic Republic, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Accordingly, almost nothing happens on the ground without the Iranians knowing about it or giving the direct orders, which includes war crimes and chemical weapons attacks. If the White House once boasted that it had rid Assad of his unconventional arsenal, the reality is that Iran has also crossed Obama's red line against the use of chemical weapons.

"Iran doesn't want to show it's in control of Syria," says Hamdan. "It needs Assad as a political cushion, especially now with charges that the Syrians are committing war crimes. Without the Assad regime, Iran would legally be seen as an occupying power, which would thereby have responsibilities to the people under occupation."

It will be very hard for Iran to end its occupation of Syria. The Syrian border with Lebanon is Iran's supply line to Hezbollah. If Iran loses that channel, an asset it has built up over 30 years with billions of dollars is isolated. The Iranians lose their ability to project power on the Israeli border as well as their most effective deterrent to protect their nuclear facilities against Jerusalem. Were Hezbollah to be deprived of its Iranian lifeline, it would be vulnerable not just to Israel—which has made clear over the last few weeks how dearly the party of God and all of Lebanon will pay in the next round of hostilities—but also to Lebanese (and Syrian) Sunnis looking to repay the blood debt Hezbollah has earned with its war in Syria.

Without Iranian assistance, Hezbollah will find itself drowning in a sea of Sunnis—from villagers in the Bekaa Valley to Islamist militants in the Palestinian refugee camps. Add to those numbers the 1.2 to 2 million Syrian refugees, the vast majority Sunni, now in Lebanon thanks to Iran and Hezbollah's occupation of their homeland. There are also the battle-hardened Islamist groups that have been at war with Hezbollah for several years now, like Jabhat al-Nusra. As Nusra commander Abu Mohammed al-Jolani told an Arab news network last week, Hezbollah's fate is tied to Assad's. "The departure of the latter means the end of Hezbollah," said Jolani. "The party has many enemies in Lebanon, and with the departure of Assad, their voice will rise against [Hezbollah]."

Iran's regional position is built on sand. If it loses Syria, it may lose Hezbollah and leave its nuclear

program vulnerable. What's helping sustain Tehran's strategy is the Obama administration. As the Iranians have kept Assad afloat, the White House has covered Iran's flank in all four Arab capitals controlled by Tehran: Baghdad, where U.S. airstrikes supported an IRGC-led offensive on Tikrit; Beirut, where the administration shares intelligence with Hezbollah-controlled units of the Lebanese Armed Forces; Damascus, where the White House promised Iran that Assad was safe from U.S. strikes on Islamic State positions; and Sanaa, where American diplomats urge Saudi Arabia to seek a political solution rather than a military victory over the Iran-backed militias.

Sanctions relief will abet Iran's regional goals. The signing bonus alone will cover the costs of Iran's continued occupation of Syria for at least another year and tens of thousands more dead Syrian civilians. ♦

Slim Pickings

The Democrats' weak bench.

BY FRED BARNES

The Democratic presidential candidates are a sad lot. Hillary Clinton is clumsily positioning herself inside the left wing of her party. She won't take questions. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont is 73, looks 10 years older, and says a 90 percent income-tax rate would be fine with him. Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island didn't run for reelection as governor in 2014 because his approval rating was so low. Jim Webb, the former senator from Virginia, is a better novelist than politician. As a campaigner, he's invisible. Martin O'Malley, ex-governor of Maryland, is chiefly famous for his enthusiasm for taxing anything and everything.

Things may pick up. Clinton's funk will lift if the media start touting her future as the first woman president. This will happen eventually, the sooner the better from her point of view. But for now, things are grim. And it's party-wide. The Democratic presidential candidates, as a group, are a metaphor for the entire Democratic party.

They're old and tired and unimaginative. In the past, Democrats won the White House with bright, energetic, young candidates. In 1960, John F. Kennedy was 43. Bill Clinton was 46 in 1992. Franklin Roosevelt was 50 when he won the presidency in 1932. Today the youngest of the Democratic Five is O'Malley. He's 52.

The Republican presidential race, in sharp contrast, features a whole new generation of candidates in their 40s: Marco Rubio (44), Bobby Jindal (43),

Ted Cruz (44), and Scott Walker (47). Rand Paul and Chris Christie are slightly older at 52.

In Congress, Republicans are simply younger. The average age of House members is 54 for Republicans, 59 for Democrats. In the Senate, it's 60 for Republicans, 62 for Democrats

For good reason, voters have a preference for electing governors to the White House. They've done things and have records. Senators give speeches and vote on legislation. Among Republicans, Jindal, Walker, Christie, Jeb Bush, Rick Perry, and John Kasich have impressive records as governors. Democrats have Chafee, a flop as governor, and O'Malley, the tax man.

The simple truth is Democrats have a weak bench at the presidential level, Republicans a strong one. This is also true at the state level, where Republicans dominate. Democrats hold 18 of 50 governorships and a mere 30 of 98 legislative chambers. Republicans are blessed with the most legislative seats they've controlled since the 1920s. Democrats are barely hanging on.

Democrats have legitimate hopes in 2016 of winning the Senate, now held by Republicans, 54-46. But they are having trouble coming up with fresh candidates—the bench problem again.

In Wisconsin, they're stuck with Russ Feingold to run against the Republican who beat him six years ago, Ron Johnson. In Ohio, they're expected to tap ex-governor Ted Strickland against GOP senator Rob Portman. Strickland was ousted as governor in 2010 by John Kasich. In North Carolina, national Democrats want Kay Hagan to challenge two-term Republican senator Richard Burr. She was defeated in 2014 by Republican Thom Tillis after a single Senate term.

In Indiana, Democrat Baron Hill, who lost his House seat in 2010, is the leading Democrat to run for an open Senate seat. In Pennsylvania, Joe Sestak has a good shot at gaining the Senate nomination against Republican Pat Toomey. He lost to Toomey six years ago.

"All told, more than half of the Democrats' Senate challengers in 2010 are comeback candidates," the *National Journal*'s Josh Kraushaar wrote. "On the one hand, most of these are the best choices Democrats have. . . . But look more closely and the reliance on former failures is a direct result of the party having no one else to turn to."

That's the Hillary model. She lost to Barack Obama for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination. Now Clinton is the prohibitive frontrunner for the nomination in 2016. Why? Because she's the only Democrat in the race with strong name ID, a national following, and a powerful desire to be president. The GOP contest is filled with

Fred Barnes is an executive editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

the cream of the Republican crop.

The lack of a candidate bench has made Democrats reliant on Clinton. She's their only hope for holding the presidency post-Obama. As a result, she gets special treatment from Democratic interest groups. They ignore controversies involving the Clinton Foundation, deleted emails, and Benghazi as if they didn't exist. Since she won't talk about them, they won't mention them either.

Organized labor has threatened congressional Democrats inclined to vote for the Trans-Pacific Partnership with reprisals. TPP is the trade treaty backed by the president. Rep. Scott Peters of California was told unions would spend $1 million to defeat him in the primary and another $1 million in the general election if he voted for the treaty.

But Clinton has, in effect, been given a pass. As secretary of state, she was a vocal supporter of the treaty. But as a candidate, she has refused to take a position. And labor and the party's left wing, who furiously oppose TPP, have been largely silent for fear of damaging her candidacy.

Democrats have also put out the dubious story that the prospect of Clinton at the top of the ticket in 2016 is encouraging candidates to run for Congress. They claim a "Hillary effect" will unleash "an anticipated wave that will lift the party's fortunes up and down the ticket," *Politico* reported. Their point is she's necessary.

That Clinton has hastily moved to the left reflects her party. In fact, Clinton may be a lagging indicator of the Democratic lurch to the left. Her advisers insist her views are consistent with public opinion, which has adopted what were once left-wing views on same-sex marriage, immigration, minimum wage, climate change, free trade, and the cost of college. To the extent there's been a national shift, however, it's been less pronounced than the party's.

Does the tilt to the left represent an ideologically imaginative approach to politics and policy? Not quite. It mirrors the deference Clinton and Democrats pay to the liberal interest groups that make up their party's coalition. Only more so. ♦

They Only Say No

Reforming the Pentagon testing office.

BY THOMAS DONNELLY

Buried deep in the House version of this year's defense authorization is a brief provision that has great potential to improve and accelerate the way the armed services buy weapons—yes, an actual reform of Pentagon procurement. The irony is that this reform would mark a reversal of past "reforms" that helped make the current acquisition system such a mess.

The provision in question is "Section 851. Additional Responsibility for Director of Operational Test and Evaluation." The nub of the matter is that the Pentagon's chief test officer now must "consider the potential for increases in program cost estimates or delays in schedule estimates in the implementation of policies, procedures, and activities related to operational test and evaluation." And not only that, he "shall take appropriate action to ensure that operational test and evaluation activities do not unnecessarily increase program costs or impede program schedules." In other words, the physician should first do no harm.

The LCS USS Independence off Southern California, May 2, 2012

The Pentagon testing office has, alas, been a Mengele-like menace almost since its creation in 1983. "Unnecessarily increasing costs and impeding program schedules" could almost be its mission statement. When he took office as Army chief of staff, Gen. Raymond Odierno explained the nature of the problem: "Sometimes we have tests that are done by the private industry and yet we redo the tests because we have to meet certain regulations and requirements." Not surprisingly, he added, "I think those are areas that we could look at that could reduce those costs significantly."

The testing office was a product of the "military reform" movement in the 1980s, the work of a small band of Pentagon contrarians who were convinced the "gold-plated" platforms of the Reagan buildup—the M1 tank, say, or the F-15 fighter, or the Aegis destroyer—were too sophisticated to function in wartime conditions. This proposition offered the appearance of reasoned opposition to Democrats like Gary Hart, who wished to slow defense spending without appearing too dovish. In 1986, Hart wrote triumphantly in the *New York Times*: "Five years ago, military reform was the province of a small band of iconoclasts in the Senate. Now the need for broad changes in the way we train, equip, and deploy our conventional forces has become conventional wisdom." He was right: The Congressional Military Reform Caucus counted 130 members.

Creating an "operational" test office that would subject new weapons designs to supposedly "realistic" battlefield conditions was the reformers' principal goal. "Strengthening operational testing," promised Hart, "will give us more effective weapons at lower cost." It was a tastes-great-less-filling argument that seemed plausible and, after the 1986 midterm elections returned the Senate to Democratic control, proved unstoppable. Reagan's defense secretary Caspar Weinberger waited more than a year after Congress mandated the creation of the test office to appoint a director, and when he finally did, he chose former

Thomas Donnelly is co-director of the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

McDonnell Douglas F-15 test pilot Jack Krings for the job.

One of the first targets for the test office was the Army's Bradley Fighting Vehicle. What originated as a complex debate about the role of mechanized infantry on a high-technology conventional battlefield quickly degenerated into a morality tale. A retired Air Force colonel, James Burton, was charged with the task, and he argued that unless the tests were rigorous, "soldiers in battle could die unnecessarily." Senator William Roth—a moderate Republican from Delaware and a World War II vet—demanded the "Army must submit the troop carrier to realistic tests in a combat environment." The *New York Times* was filled with righteous fury, charging the Army and Pentagon leadership with negligence:

> The Bradley was a rolling powder keg; the Army knew it, and the brass wanted to avoid the live-fire tests because they knew a single Soviet antitank round could pierce the Bradley's skin, blow up its stores of fuel and ammunition and burn its crew to death. Worse, in the view of some inside the Pentagon, Congress would get wind of all this and cancel the program.

Amid the controversy, Burton eventually was given carte blanche to conduct the tests. But, as a subsequent study of the program revealed, that meant "tests where the Bradley would stand, fully loaded and engine running, against overmatches, attacks with U.S. and Russian munitions that would clearly destroy the vehicle." Tied like a lamb to the altar and smacked with a big weapon designed to kill fully armored main battle tanks, the Bradley—wait for it—blew up.

The M1 Abrams tank was likewise a favorite target of 1980s reformers. In early 1990—that is, about a year before Operation Desert Storm—Dina Rasor, head of the Project on Military Procurement (now the Project on Government Oversight), obtained data from the Army's tests on the Abrams. She concluded that the M1 "will travel an average of only about 44 miles before something breaks." She also argued that it had been a mistake to power the tank with a turbine engine and that, overall, the 1950s-era M60 was a better tank. The M1 was an "expensive loser."

Desert Storm took much of the wind out of the reformers' simpler-is-better sails. Not only did the U.S. forces equipped with M1 and Bradley make it through the famous "Left Hook" maneuver, they rapidly and with almost no loss destroyed the Iraqi Republican Guard units they encountered. An even bigger setback was the happy result of the air war: The F-15 dominated the skies, and its radar-guided missiles—another technology the reformers claimed was too sophisticated to ever work—accounted for the vast majority of the air-to-air kills.

But Hart was correct: Conventional wisdom was not rebuttable. And so the operational test office lived to fight another day and remains dedicated to proving that a big enough weapon can destroy anything. The latest program to fall victim to the testers' logic is the Navy's Littoral Combat Ship. The LCS is—as the name suggests—a smallish, 3,000-ton vessel intended for use in coastal waters. The LCS was originally called the "Streetfighter" and was itself a "reform" effort intended to wean the Navy from its addiction to ever-bigger and more exotic surface combatants. The Navy balked at the idea and eventually redesigned the LCS to be more survivable, but that—among other things—increased the cost and slowed the program.

Given the opportunity, the test office has attacked the LCS by arguing that a recent "shock test" in "near combat conditions," such as a mine detonation, showed "resiliency" problems for the ship. This is, essentially, a repeat of the Bradley tests but with water added. As with the Bradley, the point of the LCS is to avoid a hit, not stand still and slug it out. But, as the blog *Next Navy* bitterly observes, the test office "has gamed the LCS and the Navy quite well. By forging a temporary alliance with the Navy's resident LCS-haters, [the test office] must be absolutely giddy about the prospect of strangling the LCS after the first block buy. Nothing validates a tester more than a program kill." And, in fact, former defense secretary Chuck Hagel, feeling the pressure of budget cuts and sequestration, limited the LCS buy to 32 rather than the 52 ships the Navy had set as the program minimum. Not surprisingly, the per-ship cost of the LCS continues to rise.

In sum, the operational test and evaluation office's only purpose can be to say no. It is the ultimate in unaccountable bureaucracy: It has no responsibility for fielding anything, or for making the inevitable trade-offs in designs, or even for reckoning the costs of time lost in fielding weaponry. It was conceived in error and continues to make mischief and increase the cost of all it touches. By insisting on randomizing its test conditions—supposedly to replicate the uncertainties of combat—it limits their utility to weapons designers, who need to control tests in order to harvest the most useful insights.

Krings, who passed away last year, summarized the paradox of the office from the start. "There are people in the Congress who don't think that any test is really valid until you have a real live operational unit in a real live scenario. Well, that means you have to wait until [a system] is pretty grown-up, and therefore you have invested a lot of money." In other words, the only real battlefield test is the battlefield itself. Randomly blowing things up is not a test of survivability.

But only Congress can undo what Congress has done, and that's particularly hard when Congress feels virtuous. It's hardest when the Senate is pleased with itself, and from the beginning the Senate has been infatuated with the Pentagon's test office—*You do think it's right to test weapons before we send our forces into harm's way, don't you?* The Armed Services Committee has marked up its version of the defense bill, and it does not include any provision like the one passed by the House. The House language, which basically wants the test office to reckon the opportunity costs it creates, is a pretty mild measure. But it would be a sea-change in the meaning of defense "reform," a first unraveling of the regulatory mindset that's made such a mess of Pentagon procurement. ♦

Obama's Reformation

He urged—and then forced—a conversation about religion and democracy

By Adam J. White

Had Jeremiah Wright's antics not forced Barack Obama to expound famously on race in 2008, the most significant speech of his short Senate tenure would have been his 2006 remarks on religion and democracy. Appearing before Call to Renewal's conference on "Building a Covenant for a New America," Obama urged Christian activists and Democratic voters to reconsider the relationship between church and state. Mankind may have grappled with our dueling obligations to Caesar and Creator—the City of Man and the City of God—for millennia, but the time finally had come for a "serious debate."

"I think we make a mistake when we fail to acknowledge the power of faith in people's lives," he said. "And I think it's time that we join a serious debate about how to reconcile faith with our modern, pluralistic democracy."

Well, if a decade ago America lacked "serious debate" on how to reconcile faith with democracy (or, one might add, on how to reconcile democracy with faith), then Obama surely has spent the intervening years doing everything possible to force what he might call a "national conversation." That conversation is not just about faith and democracy, but also about the non-democratic parts of our government, the administrative agencies promulgating new laws and the courts creating new civil rights, which in turn collide with religious freedom, raising questions our country is only beginning to grapple with.

One such conversation occurred in April, between Justice Samuel Alito and Solicitor General Donald Verrilli. As the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Obergefell* v. *Hodges*, on whether the Fourteenth Amendment protects same-sex couples' right to marry, Alito asked Verrilli whether the creation of such a nationwide right might force religious organizations to make an impossible choice: either acquiesce in same-sex marriage or risk the philanthropic death sentence of losing their tax-exempt status. It was an obvious question and, in the aftermath of the IRS's scandalous treatment of conservative groups, one for which the administration would be expected to have a simple, reassuring answer. But, astonishingly, the solicitor general replied with little more than a shrug: "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."

Another recent conversationalist is Martha Minow, dean of the Harvard Law School. Last month, the school convened a conference on "Law, Religion, and Health in America." It was occasioned by the Supreme Court's decision last year, in *Burwell* v. *Hobby Lobby*, that the Obama administration could not use the Affordable Care Act to force certain corporate employers to subsidize their employees' abortifacient contraceptives. In her remarks, Dean Minow warned that when "people of faith" are forced to choose sides in a conflict between their religious beliefs and national policies to the contrary, the faithful will sometimes choose God over country, and leave. "That would be sad," she said, "since this country actually has been a haven for religious freedom really since even before its founding."

Sad, yes, *but*: "On the other hand, there will be some issues where the values of this country will run into conflict with some people's religious views, *and if they can't live with it, they should leave*." Our goal, she concluded, must be to find compromises where we can, so that the choice offered to religious believers won't be "more all-or-nothing than it *needs* to be."

A lot of conversations seem to go like this in the closing years of Obama's presidency, where so much of his agenda returns us, over and over again, to the collision of government power and religious liberty. First and foremost, *Hobby Lobby* and cases that have followed it—*Wheaton College* v. *Burwell*; *Little Sisters of the Poor* v. *Burwell*; *Priests for Life* v. *Department of Health and Human Services*—make plain the constitutional difficulties inherent in a federal regulatory agenda that would force religious organizations and private employers to play a central role in providing contraceptives to third parties.

Elsewhere, concerted efforts by the administration and its allies not just to create and enforce a constitutional right to same-sex marriage, but to go still further and force third parties—such as the proverbial photographers and

Adam J. White is an adjunct fellow at the Manhattan Institute and a lawyer in Washington, D.C.

bakers—to personally and directly facilitate such weddings, raise increasingly stark questions of religious freedom under federal and state law.

And there are other examples. In 2012, the Supreme Court struck down the administration's assertion of control over a church school's choice of ministers. Such an extension of government power, the unanimous Court held, went far beyond the normal boundaries of federal employment regulation—it would have "interfere[d] with the internal governance of the church, depriving the church of control over the selection of those who will personify its beliefs."

If, as Obama observed in 2006, America's "religious tendency" speaks "to a hunger that goes beyond any particular issue or cause," much the same could be said for his administration's tendency to encroach upon the space that our country normally reserves for religion, conscience, and community—reflecting not just the particular circumstances of same-sex marriage or Obamacare, but something more fundamental about his administration's aims and assumptions. After he leaves office, the most challenging question to answer about Barack Obama's presidency may be that of why so much of his administration's work seemed to insist—either intentionally or unintentionally—on reducing and restraining the role that religion and conscience, separate from government, plays in our society.

A pro-Hobby Lobby rally in Chicago, June 30, 2014

SCOTT OLSON / GETTY IMAGES

The Obama-era conflicts between religious liberty and government power are the latest chapter in an age-old story, but they are not merely a simple reiteration of familiar arguments. They result from the assertion of government power through executive and judicial branches, rather than legislative branches. The difference is crucial, both for the present debate and for the future we face.

Traditionally, we think of conflicts between government power and individual liberty as pitting majority against minority. This basic narrative has prevailed from the very beginning: At the Virginia convention ratifying the Constitution, James Madison argued that express protections of religious freedom would be superfluous in our broad and diverse republic, because "where there is such a variety of sects, there cannot be a majority of any one sect to oppress and persecute the rest." Later, when the first Congress proposed what would come to be the First Amendment's religious protections, Madison reiterated that it was motivated by public fear that "one sect might obtain a pre-eminence, or two combine together, and establish a religion to which they would compel others to conform."

Two centuries later, the Supreme Court's canonical cases on religious liberty embody that majority-versus-minority paradigm. In *Sherbert* v. *Verner* (1963), the Supreme Court faced a conflict between South Carolina's statute requiring unemployment beneficiaries to make themselves "available for work" and Seventh-day Adventists' observation of the Sabbath on Saturdays. In *Wisconsin* v. *Yoder* (1972), the Court faced a conflict between Wisconsin's statute requiring parents to enroll their children in school and Amish families' historical refusal to formally school their children beyond eighth grade. And in *Employment Division* v. *Smith* (1990), the Court faced a conflict between Oregon's laws prohibiting drug use and Native Americans' religious use of peyote.

The common thread connecting these cases is not the Court's ultimate resolution of the conflicts. (In *Sherbert* and *Yoder*, the Court held that religious exemptions must be made to the generally applicable laws. In *Smith*, the Court reversed course and held that religious liberty does not justify exemptions to such broad, facially neutral statutes—a doctrinal about-face that spurred Congress to enact the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.) Rather, what connects these cases is the context in which they arose: not religious minorities being specifically targeted by the laws in question but religious minorities touched *incidentally* by statutes written by legislatures in broad terms, statutes that were eminently justifiable in general—unemployment compensation, public education, and public health and safety legislation.

In such contexts, there is good reason to hope that the give-and-take of ordinary politics will result in compromises that ultimately vindicate the public's general legislative purposes while at least somewhat softening their impact on religious minorities. As Justice Scalia wrote for the Court in *Smith*, "a society that believes in the negative protection accorded to religious belief can be expected to be solicitous of that value in its legislation as well." He added, "it is therefore not surprising that a number of States have made an exception to their drug laws for sacramental peyote use."

The legislative tendency toward compromise and accommodation is exemplified by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which requires, as President Clinton remarked at its signing, that "the Government should be held to a very

high level of proof before it interferes with someone's free exercise of religion." To that end, RFRA establishes a balancing test to mitigate laws' burdens on religious freedom. The legislative process is no panacea, of course—as the religious communities in *Sherbert*, *Yoder*, and *Smith* saw firsthand. But its inherent checks and balances reduce the risk that religious groups will be gratuitously burdened, and thus the legislative context gives judges reason to presume, at least initially, that the resulting law is justifiable.

During Obama's presidency, by contrast, the collisions between progressive policy and religious liberty are not the result of legislative compromise or political give-and-take. Rather, they come from administrative agencies pushing a specific agenda as aggressively as possible, or from courts announcing new rights in absolute terms, leaving little apparent room for religious freedom. In this respect, the threat to religion comes not from popular majorities, but from minority factions that succeed in capturing either administrative or judicial power and leveraging it against religious minorities who stand in the way of their policy agenda.

Administrative absolutism was illustrated perfectly in *Hobby Lobby* and subsequent cases. The contraceptive mandate that the Obama administration wants to enforce against religious employers, and now against religious organizations, is found nowhere in the Affordable Care Act itself. However partisan the act itself may be, however rushed and ideological the act's promulgation may have been, it does not seek to impose such controversial requirements on religious believers. (It probably would not have passed either chamber of Congress if it had.) Indeed, at oral argument Justice Anthony Kennedy voiced doubts that an agency could plausibly be trusted to restrain its own policy agenda in order to protect religious liberty: "What kind of constitutional structure do we have," he asked Solicitor General Verrilli, "if the Congress can give an agency the power to grant or not grant a religious exemption based on what the agency determined?"

But regulators are not the only unelected officials prone to writing new laws in absolutist terms. To the extent that same-sex couples' right to marry ultimately results from judicial decisions (at the administration's behest) rather than legislative compromise, judges' expansive vision of such new rights may leave legislators little room to exempt religious institutions, organizations, and persons from direct involvement with same-sex weddings. As Harvard's Dean Minow acknowledged in her remarks, "adversarial litigation leads to black and white, yes and no, win and lose answers." The legislative process, by contrast, often facilitates the inclusion of "accommodations [for religious liberty] that can be worked out on a much more nuanced level than win-or-lose when there are two parties," especially when there are "third parties, fourth parties, and fifth parties affected by the resolution between two parties [in court]." In the present Supreme Court litigation over same-sex marriage, religious persons, organizations, and institutions are among the third, fourth, and fifth parties who may be directly affected by the Court's eventual decision in *Obergefell* v. *Hodges*, either in terms of their tax-exempt status or in terms of their freedom, under state law, to decline to participate directly in same-sex weddings.

Ultimately, that context could prove crucial in a conflict between religious liberty and the judicial creation of same-sex marriage rights. A poll recently published by the Associated Press, for example, reports that Americans are closely split over whether "the Supreme Court should or should not rule that same-sex marriage must be legal nationwide"—50 percent supported it, 48 percent opposed. But the same poll found a majority of Americans believe that "wedding-related businesses with religious objections should be allowed to refuse service to same-sex couples"—52 percent endorsed such religious protections, 45 percent opposed them. Finally, when the respondents were asked bluntly, "in cases where there is a conflict, which do you think is more important for the government," to "protect the rights of gays and lesbians" or "protect religious liberties," they picked religious liberty over gay rights by a margin of 56 to 40.

By attempting to resolve these issues in courts rather than in legislatures and public referenda, same-sex marriage proponents changed dramatically the very character of the debate.

Such public sentiments suggest that legislative processes resulting in the recognition of same-sex marriage would also include protections for religious liberty. When courts and agencies, by contrast, are the government bodies deciding how to create and enforce a right to same-sex marriage, such generosity cannot be assumed.

Indeed, by attempting to resolve these issues in courts rather than in legislatures and public referenda, same-sex marriage proponents changed dramatically the very character of the debate. In legislatures or referenda, arguments for and against same-sex marriage must be calibrated to convince the unconvinced, the undecided voters or outright converts. Proponents of same-sex marriage thus argue extending marriage to same-sex couples will benefit society, not harm it. Its opponents argue the reverse. To prevail in those public forums, same-sex marriage's proponents

must grapple seriously with tradition, religion, and other sources of public values, while its proponents must grapple just as seriously with cultural change and changing notions of equality. In courts, by contrast, proponents of same-sex marriage must argue that their opponents are not merely wrong but irrational, if not altogether hateful—and thus that religion is not merely wrong but irrational, if not altogether hateful.

Even more worrisome is the long-term outlook. As ever more power gravitates toward agencies and courts, rather than elected legislatures and the people generally, we can expect to see more and more conflict between government policy and religious liberty. In short, the future of religious liberty in America is tied inextricably to the future of administrative and judicial power in America.

The trend toward administrative and judicial power carries with it a corollary problem. When minority factions capture either administrative or judicial power and leverage it to achieve their policy agenda, there emerges a risk that religious minorities may fall victim to government officials' outright animus—subjected not just to incidental burdens necessary to achieve a particular policy outcome, but to gratuitous punishment for their moral beliefs.

Here, too, the Obama administration's contraceptive mandate may be an illustrative example. In *Hobby Lobby*, the Supreme Court raised an obvious question: If providing abortifacient contraception to the public at large is a compelling governmental objective, why must private parties be forced to bear the cost of third parties' contraceptives? "The most straightforward way" of providing contraceptives to those who can't afford them, the Court observed, "would be for the Government to assume the cost of providing the four contraceptives at issue to any women who are unable to obtain them under their health-insurance policies due to their employers' religious objections. This would certainly be less restrictive of the plaintiffs' religious liberty, and HHS has not shown . . . that this is not a viable alternative."

Despite losing *Hobby Lobby*, the Obama administration continues to insist upon forcing religious organizations to participate directly in the provision of subsidized contraception, even when utterly unnecessary. In *Priests for Life* v. *Burwell*, a case recently decided by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, the Obama administration argued that religious organizations can be required to file paperwork facilitating the provision of contraceptives to their employees. That reduced role in the process is offered by the administration as a nominal "religious accommodation"—an alternative to the organizations' having to pay for the contraceptives outright or incur significant penalties.

The administration prevailed in the D.C. Circuit last November, and in May the full court decided not to rehear the case. But in dissenting from the court's refusal to rehear the case, Judge Brett Kavanaugh posed a simple question: Why force religious organizations to participate at all? The government can achieve the very same policy aims by simply asking organizations to identify themselves as having religious objections to the contraception mandate, at which point "the Government can independently determine the identity of the organizations' insurers and thereby ensure that the insurers provide contraceptive coverage to the organizations' employees." That process "may create some administrative inconvenience for the Government, because the Government itself will have to identify the religious organizations' insurers." But, Kavanaugh concludes, "administrative inconvenience alone" cannot justify the burdens that the Obama administration would rather place on religious organizations.

We eventually will see whether the Supreme Court elects to hear the case, and if so whether it shares Kavanaugh's view. But as Kavanaugh and others demonstrate, the administration's insistence upon binding religious objectors to the contraception-subsidy process seems completely gratuitous. As a result, one cannot help but wonder how much of that policy is driven by regulators' simple hostility toward religious objections.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act protects against such hostilities by requiring the government to show that significant burdens upon the free exercise of religion are kept to the absolute minimum level needed to achieve the government's compelling interest—that is, that the burdens imposed on religious persons are the "least restrictive means" of achieving the government's ultimate policy objective. When such burdens arise from generally applicable statutes—say, restrictions on drug use, in *Smith*—one might presume that they are merely incidental. But when they arise from specific regulations promulgated precisely to apply to religious believers, outright hostility toward the religious minority becomes a worrisomely plausible explanation of the government's conduct.

In recent years, concerns about government animus against minorities have been a crucial part of the public case in favor of same-sex marriage, largely because of the jurisprudence of Anthony Kennedy. Writing for the Court in *United States* v. *Windsor* (2013), Justice Kennedy held that the federal government's refusal to recognize same-sex marriages, in the Defense of Marriage Act, violated constitutional rights of due process and equal protection because it was "motivated by an improper animus" against homosexuals, accomplishing nothing more than "interference with the equal dignity of same-sex marriages" performed under state law.

Kennedy had voiced similar concerns in earlier cases involving gay rights. In *Romer* v. *Evans* (1996), where the Court struck down a Colorado law that had prohibited cities from extending antidiscrimination protections for sexual orientation, Kennedy's majority opinion bluntly concluded that the law's

> sheer breadth is so discontinuous with the reasons offered for it that the amendment seems inexplicable by anything but animus toward the class that it affects. . . . "[I]f the constitutional conception of 'equal protection of the laws' means anything, it must at the very least mean that a bare . . . desire to harm a politically unpopular group cannot constitute a legitimate governmental interest."

Next, in *Lawrence* v. *Texas* (2003), where the Court struck down Texas's anti-sodomy law, Kennedy's opinion for the Court once again stressed personal dignity. "The petitioners are entitled to respect for their private lives. . . . The State cannot demean their existence or control their destiny by making their private sexual conduct a crime. Their right to liberty under the Due Process Clause gives them the full right to engage in their conduct without intervention of the government."

Recognizing this clear theme in Kennedy's opinions, same-sex marriage advocates took pains to frame their new constitutional case in anti-"animus" terms. In a 2012 opinion striking down California voters' attempt to overturn the state supreme court's creation of same-sex marriage rights, the Ninth Circuit's Judge Stephen Reinhardt quoted Kennedy's *Romer* opinion to say that "we are left with 'the inevitable inference that the disadvantage imposed is born of animosity toward'" same-sex couples.

Elsewhere, Yale's Bruce Ackerman published in 2014 the third volume in his influential series of books on the Supreme Court. In *We the People: The Civil Rights Revolution*, Ackerman argued that the Court's seminal decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* embodied nothing less than a constitutional doctrine of "anti-humiliation," which prohibits governments from gratuitously targeting minority groups. Ackerman was not trying to be subtle: His book tied that analysis directly to Kennedy's opinions in *Romer*, *Lawrence*, and *Windsor* and concluded "there is a heavy burden on Justice Kennedy" to explain how the logic of those opinions did not require the protection of same-sex marriage.

Briefs filed in support of same-sex marriage, in *Obergefell* v. *Hodges*, reiterate these themes. The Obama administration's brief urges that bans on same-sex marriage, if not rooted in animus, then are at least the product of (to quote another Kennedy opinion) "prejudice"—caused "by simple want of careful, rational reflection or from some instinctive mechanism to guard against people who appear to be different in some respects from ourselves."

But ironically, while advocates invoke these themes to persuade Kennedy and other justices to create a constitutional right to same-sex marriage, the very same aspect of Kennedy's jurisprudence could help to lay the groundwork to ensure that religious minorities are not forced to support same-sex marriage, or contraceptive mandates, or other impositions, in violation of their religious beliefs. For Kennedy has stressed that the Constitution's protection of religious liberty protects the very same "dignity" concerns that motivate his gay-rights jurisprudence.

In *Hobby Lobby*, Kennedy joined the Court's defense of religious freedom but also wrote separately to press his concerns about the dignity of religious believers. "In our constitutional tradition," he wrote, "free exercise is essential in preserving their own dignity and in striving for a self-definition shaped by their religious precepts." And in that case, the protections embodied by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act provided "the means to reconcile" both the rights of religious persons and the interests of other parties. *Hobby Lobby* was not the first time that Kennedy railed against anti-religious hostility. In *Allegheny* v. *ACLU* (1989), where Kennedy dissented from the Court's restrictions upon public Nativity displays, he sharply denounced the majority opinion as "reflect[ing] an unjustified hostility toward religion, a hostility inconsistent with our history and our precedents."

Justice Kennedy's concern for the dignity of religious believers, which mirrors his concern for the dignity of same-sex couples and other minorities, presents same-sex marriage advocates with a stark choice. If they succeed in convincing the Court to affirm a constitutional right to same-sex marriage, they will next have to decide whether they are satisfied with this remedy against the government.

This is not a rhetorical question. Some activists will demand not only government recognition of same-sex marriage, but also the forced acquiescence of religious individuals, organizations, and institutions. They may demand the punishment of small businesses that do not want to provide services to same-sex weddings—a specter that already has spurred states lacking their own religious freedom acts to consider enacting them. Or they may call upon the IRS and state regulators to strip religious organizations of their tax-exempt status and other benefits—as Justice Alito noted to Solicitor General Verrilli.

Such additional strikes against religious believers, unnecessary to secure governmental recognition of "marriage equality," go to the heart of Justice Kennedy's concerns for personal dignity. If the Supreme Court does decide this summer to create a constitutional right to same-sex marriage, perhaps Kennedy will take care to help guard against anti-religious hostility or prejudice. Perhaps he will do so even if the Court's opinion affirming the right to same-sex marriage is written by none other than Kennedy himself. ♦

Transformational Diplomacy

Can a nuclear deal change Iran?

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

Many supporters of an Iranian nuclear agreement believe that a deal could help to moderate, even democratize, Iranian society. Barack Obama's constant allusions to the transformative potential of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for U.S.-Iranian relations suggest that he believes an agreement, which would quickly release tens of billions of dollars to the Islamic Republic and reintegrate it into the global financial system, would improve the clerical regime's behavior. Democrats and Republicans have often touted the transformative power of global markets; our bipartisan China policy is built upon this pedestal. As much as free-trading corporate Republicans, the Clinton administration loved advancing the idea that business spreads amity. A former State Department adviser to Richard Holbrooke and now the dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Vali Nasr, wrote a well-received book, *Forces of Fortune*, which argues that commerce and capitalism are the best ways to vanquish the Middle East's demons, authoritarianism and Islamic militancy. Although Obama likely doesn't care too much for Nasr, who also wrote a scathing critique of the president's foreign policy, he's advocating the scholar's medicine for the Islamic Republic.

Dissident Akbar Ganji in Tehran, May 30, 2005

A cynic might suggest that such apostles of economic determinism are reverse-engineering their ultimate goal: a smaller U.S. military role overseas. Economic "engagement" tends to gain ground in Washington when the alternatives, war and containment, are too unpleasant and expensive to contemplate. Like war-averse enthusiasts of sanctions, trade diplomatists are essentially saying you can have it all: greater global security and prosperity without the blood and guilt of Pax Americana. There is certainly a wide overlap between those in Washington who have already conceded the Islamic Republic atomic weapons and those who find the president's developing nuclear deal to be an imperfect, but still pretty splendid, arrangement.

But it's best not to be too cynical. Although most fans of realpolitik do have a soft spot for the gospel that American commerce can soothe the foreign savage beast, Obama has never been a convincing practitioner of this morality-lite school. He's too uncomfortable with power politics and American hegemony. He cares too deeply about transforming the United States and mirror-imaging his national aspirations overseas. Quintessentially an American liberal, the president really does seem to believe that familiarity, even with Islamist regimes, ought not to breed contempt.

Many Iranians, too, cling to the idea that domestic liberalization cannot happen unless foreigners—principally Americans—do the right thing. Prominent dissidents have advocated trade and diplomacy with the West as a means of opening up their own society. A huge fan of the president's foreign policy, the *Atlantic*'s Peter Beinart, recently highlighted Akbar Ganji, a famous journalist and dissident who was once a hard-core member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, as an example of an Iranian democrat who believes that the West's nuclear diplomacy with the clerical regime could lead, eventually, to a more open, democratic society. Military threats and sanctions against the mullahs are, Ganji emphasizes, always counterproductive.

As a tool of regime change or nuclear diplomacy, sanctions have been predicated on the assumption that economic coercion can deliver unsustainable political pain. Many

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Reuel Marc Gerecht, a contributing editor, is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Iranian dissidents still hold fast to the belief that the Islamic Republic can have a smooth transition from autocracy to representative government, that the ugliness of the revolution, the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), the continuing brutal repression of dissent and democracy (especially the Green Movement in 2009), and the blood-soaked denouement of the Arab Spring have created a nation of fallen and depressed revolutionaries who don't have the stomach for confronting head-on the mullahs and their Revolutionary Guards. They envision a peaceful, more prosperous, sanctions-free future in which the ruling elite will evolve. Islamist ideology may not disappear from Iran's discourse, but the appetite for violence will evanesce. Although many Iranian dissidents are socialists (Marxism is far from dead in Persia), they still see global commerce and greater foreign contact as a softening force, at least vis-à-vis the clerical state. An Iranian Thermidor will arrive in part courtesy of Exxon-Mobil, Chevron, Boeing, and Western tourists.

For Ganji and many other dissidents, Iranians can't "build democracy under impossible circumstances. They cannot foster liberty and human rights for their people in the fires of hell, created by war, bloodshed, and destruction"—which is, in Ganji's mind, what inevitably happens with American military actions against authoritarian Middle Eastern states. Unlike President Obama, who has a nuclear clock ticking against his political aspirations, Ganji appears to be happy to wait out the mullahs and the Revolutionary Guards, confident that history is behind the triumph of democracy. Since Ganji was once close to Saeed Hajjarian, a founding father of the Islamic Republic's intelligence ministry, he might know something about the early days of the nuclear-weapons program. Like so many Iranian dissidents, however, Ganji gives the impression that he really doesn't care much about the bomb. He's consumed by the frustrating, so far intractable question: How does a (Shiite) Muslim country escape from a religious revolution?

Many Iranian dissidents still see global commerce and greater foreign contact as a softening force, at least vis-à-vis the clerical state. An Iranian Thermidor will arrive in part courtesy of Exxon-Mobil, Chevron, Boeing, and Western tourists.

THE ARCHITECTS OF THEOCRACY

Pro-democracy Iranian dissidents—and President Obama—are in a predicament: They keep hoping that the "pragmatic" men who've done so much damage to Persian civil society will somehow change their spots. As Ganji should know, and the president probably does not, economic dynamism has never been the driving priority for the regime, even for Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the former majordomo of the political clergy and the father of the Islamic Republic's pragmatic "technocrats," and Hassan Rouhani, Rafsanjani's most famous disciple, who's grown rich through the revolution's redistribution of wealth to the ruling clerical class. The bonanza that awaits the ruling elite after a nuclear agreement is signed and sanctions are lifted will probably produce an economy proportionally no larger than it was in the 1990s, when American sanctions were weak and European ones were nonexistent. A hopeful Exxon-Mobil may have hired a Washington lobbying outfit to monitor American sanctions, but U.S. corporations are unlikely to return to the Islamic Republic anytime soon. And major European businesses may not gallop back either: The clerical regime has always been a difficult business partner, and the legal and political environment—because of the inherent uncertainty of Iranian politics, the nuclear program, and the reach of continuing American sanctions—may well make the Iranian marketplace less compelling than it was in the 1990s. Ali Khamenei and Rafsanjani then welcomed billions in foreign investments—while they were also green-lighting nuclear-weapons research, terrorism overseas, and repression at home. The unexpected landslide victory of the mild-mannered and bookish cleric Mohammad Khatami in the 1997 presidential election was a nationwide scream against Rafsanjani's and Khamenei's despotism (Rafsanjani was president from 1989 through 1997; Khamenei became supreme leader through Rafsanjani's intercession upon the death of Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989). The Islamic Republic's only reform period lasted two years, from 1997 to 1999. It wasn't that long ago that democratic dissidents openly loathed Rouhani for his complicity in immiserating them.

But their public forgetfulness is understandable. They have nowhere else to turn, since within the Iranian system there are essentially two choices: It's either the clerical and lay technocrats who have been nurtured by Rafsanjani and Rouhani or the progeny of the Revolutionary Guards and the even lower-class Basij, the volunteer mobilization force who during the Iran-Iraq war drove motorcycles across minefields and now provide the manpower for the morals police and the riot-control forces. The much-despised, Holocaust-denying former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whom the supreme leader liked until he started questioning the necessity of the clergy as intermediaries between God and man, is the prototypical

bright urban peasant raised high by the revolution. In the 2013 campaign, Rouhani's opponents were typical of candidates in Iran's stage-managed elections.

Let us recall the "serious" alternatives to Rouhani: The longtime mayor of Tehran, Mohammad Baqir Qalibaf, was a famous commander in the Revolutionary Guards and a former commander of the national police forces, who proudly bragged about how he had beaten student demonstrators from a motorcycle in 1999. Saeed Jalili, the favorite of Khamenei, is a one-legged Iran-Iraq war survivor, a former "diplomat," and a nuclear negotiator with the European Union who intensely disliked spending time with Europeans. He could, however, opine on the iniquity of the West's irreligious culture and the intense joy of visiting every Shiite shrine in Iraq, no matter how small. Then there's Mohsen Rezai, boss of the Revolutionary Guards from 1981 to 1997, whose campaign motto was "Say Hello to Life!"

By comparison with these men, Rouhani might be a moderate. From 1989 to 1997, he and Rafsanjani oversaw the largest foreign assassination campaign and the most intense period of anti-Western terrorism in the history of the Islamic Republic, but so far as we know, he never personally participated in any killing or act of terrorism. Rouhani, who studied at the secular Tehran University before the revolution and undertook a long-distance Ph.D. in the 1990s at Glasgow Caledonian University (whether he actually wrote his dissertation is open to question), appears to have sincerely wanted a Western, secular seal of approval. That at least makes him more cosmopolitan than many in the Islamic Republic's ruling elite.

Akbar Ganji is an extreme example of how convoluted the reasoning can get with dissidents searching for a way out. As an investigative journalist, he claimed in 2000 that Ali Fallahian, Rafsanjani's former minister of intelligence, was the mastermind of the so-called Chain Murders, a series of assassinations of Iranian intellectuals from 1988 to 1998. There is little doubt in Ganji's own reporting that Rafsanjani, and therefore Rouhani, were complicit in these murders. In 2000 Hajjarian, who was probably Ganji's primary source for his exposé, was shot in the head and paralyzed. And yet Ganji's sympathies, at least publicly, still lean towards Rouhani and, as always, away from the United States. Like a sentimental old European Communist whose dreams survived the trauma of Stalinist purges and "fraternal" Soviet invasions, Ganji still can't let go of his *tiers-mondisme*. As much as anyone from the revolution's first generation, Rafsanjani and Rouhani can lay claim to forming the institutions and ethics that have allowed the Islamic Republic to survive as a functioning theocracy. It is a perverse irony that so many Iranians who've grown hostile to the nature of that republic default in elections to the technocratic class who built the theocracy.

EDGE OF TOMORROW: LIVE. DIE. REPEAT.

Iranians aren't the only ones captured by their own illusions and fear of violence. Leaving aside his fascination with transformative capitalism, President Obama's entire approach in the nuclear negotiations can be boiled down to one factor: fear of American military action against the Islamic Republic. The clerical regime will retain a substantial nuclear-weapons infrastructure under any deal Obama concludes because the president fears that Khamenei will walk if he insists on greater curbs. As Johns Hopkins University's Michael Mandelbaum put it in an unflattering comparison between Soviet-American arms-control talks and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, "Surely the main reason [Obama has conceded so much] is that, while there is a vast disparity in power between the two parties, the United States is not willing to use the ultimate form of power, and the Iranian leaders know this."

And even the big bet that Obama is making on a rapid Iranian evolution is surely in part also based on his fear that the Iranian side will not long allow constraints on its atomic aspirations. To appreciate the audacious optimism of this wager, it's helpful to look at the Islamic Republic's history in 10-year increments. The nuclear agreement envisioned by Obama—assuming it doesn't collapse of its own complexity, contradictions, and the certainty of Iranian cheating—gives Tehran an industrial-sized uranium-enrichment and plutonium-production capacity after a decade. Ten years is a lifetime in foreign policy; it is, however, usually a small evolutionary span for a nation. Here, for instance, are snapshots of the "progress" made by the Islamic Republic over six different periods of 10 years:

■ In 1983 the Iranians, using their allies in Beirut, blow up the U.S. Marine and French military barracks there (in his published diary, Rafsanjani, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's right-hand man, slyly alludes to the bombing *before* it happens); in 1993, while Germany and France are kicking into high-gear their economic engagement with post-Khomeini Iran, the Iranian intelligence ministry, under Rafsanjani's direction, is still killing Iranian expatriates in Europe. As late as 1996, an Iranian agent shoots Reza Mazlouman, an education minister under the shah and Rouhani's detested teacher at Tehran University, in Paris. With Khatami's election in 1997, the assassinations in Europe stop.

■ In 1984 Rafsanjani, Rouhani, and their close ally Mohammad Reyshahri establish the Islamic Republic's intelligence ministry; 10 years later, the intelligence ministry, now under the operational direction of Ali Fallahian, orchestrates the bombing of the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires. Iranian agents kill 85 and wound hundreds. Fallahian, today one of President Rouhani's closest advisers, remains under international arrest warrants

issued by Argentina and by Germany for the assassination of Kurdish Iranian dissidents at the Mikonos restaurant in Berlin in 1992.

■ In 1989 Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini dies; in 1999 Ayatollah Khamenei crushes nationwide student demonstrations against press censorship and the police state.

■ In 1996 Khamenei and Rafsanjani approve the Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, which kills 19 U.S. servicemen and wounds 498 others; 10 years later Khamenei reenergizes Iran's nuclear program, which is by this time successfully running uranium through the entire nuclear-fuel cycle. The atomic program, revealed by an Iranian opposition group in 2002, hadn't significantly advanced after the American invasion of Iraq for fear, as Rouhani colorfully put it in 2005, that "we would have given the knife into the hands of a drunk Abyssinian," meaning George W. Bush. In 2006, with America overwhelmed by a burgeoning insurgency in Iraq in part fueled by Iran, that fear dissipated.

■ In 1999 Rouhani, then the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, which decides great matters of internal security and foreign affairs, including terrorism, attacks the nationwide student demonstrations as a threat to the integrity of the revolution. He lauds the security forces, especially the intelligence ministry, for their "severity" against those who insult the supreme leader and threaten religion and the state; in 2009 Rouhani stands by the supreme leader when he crushes the pro-democracy Green Movement, which has brought nearly three million Iranians into the streets of Tehran to protest a fraudulent presidential election.

■ In 2005 Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is elected president, and a major crackdown on dissidents and other "deviants"—especially Baha'is—envelops the country; 10 years later, after nearly 2 years of the "moderate" Rouhani presidency, the persecution of Baha'is and political dissidents, including the routine application of imprisonment, torture, and the death penalty, may have gotten worse.

THE GREAT HEALER?

So if we are unlikely to see a nuclear agreement produce moderation in Iranian politics within a decade, what *are* we likely to see if Khamenei decides to vouchsafe to Obama the diplomatic capstone of his presidency?

Probably the exact opposite of what the president intends. It is entirely conceivable that Obama will engineer what has been unthinkable in Iranian politics: a sustainable alignment between the technocrats and the Revolutionary Guards. In foreign policy, this will likely translate into more, and more skillful, Iranian adventurism. This will be no mean achievement by Obama, since beyond Westernized, pro-democracy university students, there is probably no one in Iran for whom the guards have had greater contempt than Rafsanjani and Rouhani. These two mullahs have severely criticized the Guard Corps since the Iran-Iraq war. They even once tried to abolish it for fear the corps would become what indeed it has: the supreme leader's praetorians, a state within a state, highly resistant to Rafsanjani's and Rouhani's suasion.

Aside from the appeal of democracy to educated Iranians, the core political problem of the Islamic Republic has been the growing disunity of the ruling elite. This fracturing was on display in 2009 when founding fathers of the Islamic Republic Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi (both presidential candidates) and Rafsanjani split from Khamenei, who'd made it clear before the election that he wanted Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reelected and after the vote that he wanted the president's critics within the regime to cease their protests against the official election returns. Although no friend of democracy, Rafsanjani loathed Ahmadinejad, the Islamic Republic's first populist lay president, who took great joy in going after the fabulously wealthy mullah and his allies.

Before Rouhani's election in 2013, the regime had four big fissures: Mousavi/Karroubi vs. Khamenei, Rafsanjani vs. Khamenei, the college-educated vs. the revolutionary urban peasantry, and the lay/clerical technocratic class vs. the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij. All of these antagonisms overlap, and foes in one struggle may be allies in another, sometimes producing, at least for many Westerners and Westernized Iranians, contradictions difficult to understand. For example, the technocratic class, which Rafsanjani and Rouhani have led for four decades, has leaned towards Rafsanjani in his struggles with Khamenei. Sometimes, though, it hasn't. Many technocrats don't like Rafsanjani, aka "the Shark." After watching him double-cross and abandon his friends over the years, few in the elite, perhaps even including Rouhani, trust him.

Mousavi, for example, is a lay, seriously left-wing technocrat, who along with Rafsanjani made herculean efforts as prime minister to keep Iran functioning during the Iran-Iraq war. He has long shown considerable contempt for Khamenei. They were often at odds during Mousavi's premiership (1981-1989), and even before the titanic clash in 2009, Mousavi clearly didn't consider Khamenei his political and intellectual equal. Yet Mousavi has never been comfortable with Rafsanjani and Rouhani: He may have—it's not clear—jettisoned completely the idea that Shiite clerics should have privileged political positions. After years of house arrest and intrusive surveillance, Mousavi may believe that only elected leaders ought to govern. Khamenei needlessly traumatized himself

and the country in 2009: If Mousavi had become president, the odds are good that he would have done what Rouhani did four years later, except better. An intellectually hip, anti-American *tiers-mondiste*, Mousavi likely could have aborted European sanctions against Iran's nuclear program.

Some members of the technocratic class are also religiously hard-core: They loathe and fear the less-religious, pro-democracy, university-educated crowd that gathered behind Khatami in 1997 and propelled the massive street demonstrations of the Green Movement. The current speaker of parliament, Ali Larijani, has many things in common with the technocrats. He's very bright, well-educated (he appears to have actually earned his Ph.D.), rich, and passably comfortable associating with Europeans—the former EU diplomatic chief Javier Solana liked him as Iran's nuclear negotiator. He comes from a prestigious five-star revolutionary clerical family who can't stand the sight of Ahmadinejad. However, Larijani, a former commander in the Revolutionary Guards, is vigilantly opposed to expanding the bandwidth of acceptable Western cultural expression, especially concerning women's social rights (something not true of Ahmadinejad) and has consistently sided with Khamenei against Rafsanjani in their great tug of war.

Khamenei, left, and Rouhani, July 14, 2014

Although those who favor American and European engagement remain willfully blind to this fact, it is the more cosmopolitan technocrats and their allies in the ministry of intelligence, not the more parochial and less-well-traveled leaders of the Guard Corps, who have engaged more enthusiastically and with greater success in terrorism overseas—often at the same time they were reaching out to Europeans and Americans for investment in Iran. One of the enduring political achievements of Rafsanjani and Rouhani was to centralize national-security decisions at the Supreme National Security Council, which Rouhani managed as secretary from 1989 to 2005. (When Rouhani resigned in disgust because of Ahmadinejad's crude handling of the United Nations's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, Khamenei immediately reappointed him his personal representative to the Supreme National Security Council). Unintentionally, engagement enthusiasts caricature the Islamic Republic as a banana republic when they ascribe the clerical regime's nefarious foreign actions, especially terrorism against the West and Jews, to "rogue" forces unaffiliated with the technocrats, especially Rafsanjani and Rouhani. Many autobiographies of revolutionary VIPs, including members of the supreme council and senior intelligence officials, have been published: All point to the preeminence of the council in foreign affairs and national security. There is no evidence to suggest that when it comes to terrorism abroad or the nuclear program the Supreme National Security Council hasn't been the decisive forum for determining policy since 1989.

The president's recent interview with the *Atlantic*'s Jeffrey Goldberg reveals, among other things, how poorly Obama understands Iran's technocratic class. Obama doesn't appear to realize that Rouhani and Rafsanjani have been proponents of neither greater democracy nor greater government accountability to the Iranian people. They do want a more efficient, powerful state. They certainly believe that they can coopt a bigger slice of modernity without running a severe risk to the integrity of their theocracy, which they again would like to dominate.

Since Khamenei has extended a friendly and trusting hand to Rouhani for 35 years, the odds are high that the Iranian president hasn't become, as Obama wants to believe, a robed, white-turbaned, nonrevolutionary, economic pragmatist who must deliver the goods to his constituents. When Obama looks at the relationship between the clerical regime and Hezbollah and sees that the regime will send missiles to its proxy even "when their economy is in the tank," he unwittingly alights upon the truth: Money doesn't make the Iranian world go round. It's striking that such an intellectual politician, who can quickly list the great minds who've shaped him, downplays or ignores the formative intellectual forces that have guided the Islamic Republic's ruling clergy for four decades.

Obama is, like so many others, undoubtedly and understandably swayed by the superior aesthetics of Iran's technocrats. Rafsanjani, Rouhani, and especially the American-educated foreign minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif know how to interact with foreigners, especially Westerners, without making them nervous. If not pressed on sensitive subjects, they know how to talk to journalists and the Davos business elite. These class-conscious technocrats haven't abandoned Persian politesse. Amidst so many dour mullahs and Revolutionary Guards, they smile. And they are not so puffed up with revolutionary pride that they mind lying to Westerners. As Secretary of State John Kerry might even say of foreign minister Zarif and his minions, they are, sometimes, fun to hang out with.

If the supreme leader can bring himself to accept the deal offered by the European Union and the United States,

NEWSCOM

Rouhani may be able to heal, or at least better manage, the Islamic Republic's fractured, mean-spirited elite. He may have convinced Khamenei, who clearly enjoyed the in-your-face nuclear diplomacy of Ahmadinejad and Jalili, that slower is better when it comes to nuclear arms. He may even have the Revolutionary Guards on his side. Both the Guard Corps's chief, Mohammad Ali Jafari, and the Quds Force commander, Qassem Soleimani, who reports directly to the supreme leader and is responsible for the corps's operations in Iraq and terrorist activities overseas, have been supportive of the nuclear negotiations. Soleimani has gone out of his way to be nice to Zarif, who, rumor has it, has spent time trying to build personal rapport with Khamenei's favorite guardsman. When it came to the framework agreement, Jafari even jumped ahead of the supreme leader in endorsing the Iranian nuclear negotiating team's efforts. These two men are the dominant players within the corps and are sometimes, it appears, unfriendly competitors. If the clerical regime develops atomic arms in the not-too-distant future, one of these men will likely have operational control over them.

And they have good reasons to be supportive of Rouhani's and Zarif's handiwork. The framework, assuming it holds, will leave Iran a threshold nuclear-weapons state. All of the atomic sites under the guards' direct control will remain open. Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman has made it clear that the regime's intercontinental ballistic-missile programs, which the Revolutionary Guards also oversee, are beyond the nuclear negotiations' purview. Sherman has said that Washington will focus on the development of atomic warheads, which is an incomparably harder intelligence task than finding and stopping ICBM development. Khamenei has already made it crystal clear that in an acceptable agreement IAEA inspectors will not have "go anywhere, go anytime" access to Iranian facilities. This means that foreigners will not be inspecting Revolutionary Guard bases, precisely where the regime in the past has put suspected nuclear-weapons research programs and where it is likely to have them now and in the future.

If President Obama wants an agreement, he (and the more Iran-suspicious French) will have to accept the supreme leader's terms, which means that Kerry and his team will have to devise language and inspections methodology whereby we pretend to have "go anywhere, go anytime" access, while the Iranians ignore us without consequence. This may yet prove an insurmountable hurdle: Khamenei dislikes pretense. But if the supreme leader can swallow the language, the guards will certainly follow his lead.

Once the Islamic Republic's nuclear-weapons research developed in earnest in the 1990s, Rafsanjani and Rouhani never once, so far as we know, challenged the Revolutionary Guards' oversight of the atomic and long-range ballistic-missile programs, which have developed, as they always do, side by side. Rafsanjani, Rouhani, and Khamenei have worked closely over the years on many issues, but probably on none more closely than the nuclear quest. Rouhani is asking, at most, that Khamenei and his praetorians slow down. It will be a miracle if the Obama administration and the European Union are able to maintain any Iranian fear of "snapback" sanctions once the EU oil embargo ends and European companies and investment return. Best-case scenario: We will have 24 months before whatever scant diplomatic utility we currently derive from any lingering fear of economic coercion runs out. Rouhani regularly claims that sanctions are already dead. That's Persian braggadocio. He is reifying the future too quickly into fact.

Like Khamenei, the Guard Corps has always seen economics as a subset of political power. Khamenei has given the corps so much economic independence and muscle—and largely sided with it in its efforts to develop a state within a state—to ensure its institutional loyalty to him and theocracy in general. If Rouhani can destroy the sanctions regime, then he can claim to have enriched both the guards and the technocrats, whose primary business allies are civilians. Like the guards, this crowd feeds overwhelmingly off government and semi-official contracts. In a sanctions-free world, the guards, who are primary players in many critical areas of the Iranian economy, will probably do better than the private and semi-private firms unaffiliated with the corps. They may do a lot better.

The guards have grown rich off Western sanctions: They have regularly had privileged, no-bid rights to major government projects and subsidized financing where others have not. Some in the corps may fear a more competitive economic environment. But the economic tentacles of the corps—the political power and influence that it wields through its innumerable former officers and the intimate ties the guards enjoy with the economic network around the supreme leader—put it in an exceptionally strong position to exploit the new market that a deal will bring.

AUDACITY, AND STILL MORE AUDACITY

This good fortune won't make the guards forgive Rouhani his past sins, but it will help the ruling elite operate more cohesively and be less likely to fracture in the face of future internal dissent. It will also help the political elite circle the wagons around a common, even more aggressive, foreign policy.

Tehran remains an underdog in Syria, its most important regional challenge, since the Shiite Alawite population sustaining the Assad regime isn't large enough (around 10 percent) to withstand the continuing insurgency, even

with the use of barrel bombs and chlorine gas. Tehran and its Lebanese expeditionary force, Hezbollah, will have to do more to keep the regime afloat. More-lethal weaponry, from Iran and Russia, is needed. But the most pressing demand is manpower. Hezbollah must do more, since if the Alawites lose in Syria, its preeminent position in Lebanon will quickly come into question. But when Lebanese Shiite fighters in Syria are as young as 15, it's pretty clear that Hezbollah, too, is having trouble recruiting. This will inevitably oblige the Revolutionary Guards to do more, including increase and lengthen combat tours for mainline Revolutionary Guards (obituaries and funeral announcements already show that guards serving outside the expeditionary Quds Force are now dying in Syria).

There has been little dissent among the ruling Iranian elite about Syria (Rafsanjani obliquely criticized Assad for using poison gas, suggesting this was no way to rule a country). Rouhani and senior guard commanders, however, have been fire-breathers in their support for the Syrian dictatorship. To save the Alawites, just to maintain the status quo, the clerical regime will have to do more to break the Sunni resistance, which means an even bigger bloodbath. In Syria at least 250,000 have died, several times that number have been wounded and maimed, around 4 million have fled the country, and millions more are internally displaced.

Iran's challenges in Iraq and Yemen will also demand more. In Yemen, Tehran can continue to get away with doing relatively little and accomplishing a lot, since the Shiite Houthi rebellion (the Houthis are now, de facto, the Yemeni government) has real historical traction among Yemen's Shiites, who are at least 40 percent of the country's population. And annoying the Saudis in Yemen, always a popular cause in Tehran across the political spectrum, will cost the mullahs a lot less than the Saudis will have to spend to oppose them. But costs will rise if Riyadh continues to up its military aid to Yemen's Sunnis.

In Iraq the Iranians also have the upper hand, since their primary objective is to maintain the status quo: keep the country unsettled and the Iraqi Shia beholden. The American withdrawal in 2011 blew the center out of Iraqi politics. It encouraged, and allowed the Iranians to encourage, the worst impulses among the Iraqi Shia. The recent collapse of the Iraqi army in Ramadi before the forces of the Islamic State shows that the army, despite the investments of the Obama administration to resurrect it after its ignominious rout in Mosul last summer, is probably finished as a fighting force. This is mostly good news for Iran, since its primary influence in Iraq arrives via the Shiite militias that it maintains.

The White House has stubbornly refused to admit that the clerical regime replicates itself by establishing variations of the Lebanese Hezbollah wherever it can find fertile ground. This is an issue that unites Iranian technocrats and hard-liners. And since the American military and the Bush administration lost control of the Sunni insurgency in 2005, Tehran has been sowing its seeds in Mesopotamia. The clerical regime may not want Shiite militias to attempt a conquest of all the Sunni regions of Iraq, but it will have to support operations against Mosul and Ramadi, which are too important to leave in the Islamic State's hands. These battles will consume a lot of Iraqi manpower. Given the Sunni civilian bloodshed that occurred in the much smaller battle for Tikrit, which fell to Shiite militias in April only when American airpower forcefully interceded, the battles of Mosul and Ramadi could well shift Sunni Gulf Arab money towards all of the Sunni Arab forces opposing Iran, including the Islamic State. This is already happening in Yemen and Syria, where the Gulf states (and in Syria, the Turks, too) are supporting Sunni jihadists fairly indiscriminately.

It may not dawn on the Obama administration that Iranian and American interests don't overlap at all in the Middle East (the clerical regime has willfully created the conditions that allow Sunni jihadists to thrive). Iranian Shiite revolutionaries, even when they're crude, are vastly more appealing than their Sunni counterparts. Culture matters. Rafsanjani and Rouhani have killed far more Americans, with much greater strategic impact, than has the Islamic State, yet they successfully opposed Iranian fundamentalists who wanted to demolish Iran's pre-Islamic architectural treasures. Khamenei really is, as President Obama has described him, "complicated," whereas the Sunni hard core are mostly rapaciously prosaic. And in Persian complexity, the president takes hope.

Yet as the Sunni body count mounts, as Iranian actions become more direct, undeniable, and bloody, the nuclear agreement will be difficult to defend as an instrument reinforcing "moderate" elements in Tehran—except in comparison with the jihadists of the Islamic State. As Professor Mandelbaum noted, Obama has turned Soviet-American arms-control history upside down, freeing the Iranians in the negotiations from any obligation to behave themselves in the Middle East. It is hard not to conclude, as Mandelbaum did, that the only party likely to be transformed by a nuclear agreement is the United States.

It is possible that a new bipartisan consensus has formed: Neither Democrats nor war-weary Republicans want to continue to bear the burden of being, as the American realist Richard Haass nicely put it, the world's "reluctant sheriff." Stopping the Islamic Republic from becoming a nuclear hegemon in the Middle East may just be asking too much. If this is so, Iran's pragmatic technocrats will cheer every bit as loudly as their compatriots in the Revolutionary Guards. ♦

Emma Sky (second from left), Gen. Ray Odierno (center) in Khalis, Iraq (2009)

Lost Victory

Building up, tearing down in Iraq. BY GARY SCHMITT

The Unraveling is a love story. Like many love stories, it starts with two seemingly irreconcilable personalities forming a bond they never anticipated. But, true to form, the ending is tragic. In this instance, the main character is author Emma Sky, the British, Oxford-educated, lefty international do-gooder who falls for the U.S. Army and its religious, flag-waving, America-the-Beautiful officer corps, and one officer in particular: General Ray Odierno, former commander of the Multi-National Force in Iraq and the current Army chief of staff. The tragedy, of course, is Iraq.

The Unraveling
High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq
by Emma Sky
PublicAffairs, 400 pp., $28.99

Sky's story begins with her volunteering to join the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2003 as it set out to put post-Saddam Iraq back on its feet. Reflecting Washington's lack of planning about what would follow Saddam's demise, Sky finds herself within days named the "Governorate Coordinator of Kirkuk," with no instructions and (as she admits) neither "the qualifications nor the experience for the job."

While there, Sky comes to terms with her role in the occupation of Iraq as part of a war that she had opposed. After an initial false step or two, she also realizes that, to stave off

Gary Schmitt is director of the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

the explosion of ethnic tensions in Kirkuk and the surrounding area into a civil war, she and the U.S. Army would have to become "one team." But that grudging concession soon turns into a more fulsome appreciation of the American military's "leadership and its resources," as well as its capacity to be "flexible, adaptable and a quick learner." Most important, she discovers that "the soldiers generally wanted to do the right thing."

It's also in Kirkuk that she first meets Odierno, then commander of the 4th Infantry Division, the occupying force for northern Iraq. Upon becoming deputy commander in Iraq in 2006, "Gen. O," as Sky dubs him, asked her to become his political adviser. She remained in that position through the surge, until 2010, when Odierno departed Iraq after being promoted (in 2008) to succeed Gen. David Petraeus as the Multi-National Force commander.

A more odd-looking pair would be difficult to find: a relatively tiny, waifish English woman in her 30s and the bald, six-foot-six, massive former football player who (to her mind) was weirdly fond of Texas and its gun-toting, electric-chair-wielding yahoos. Although they appear to have routinely crossed swords on the wisdom of the decision to oust Saddam—with her dismissing it as part of some crazy neocon conspiracy—she admits she stood "in awe of him" and his capacity to lead such a complex effort effectively and charismatically.

As an insider's account, *The Unraveling* is full of descriptions of meetings, events, and key personalities—both Iraqi and American. Of the latter, Sky is especially gifted in capturing, in just a few sentences, the quirks, flaws, and virtues of the individuals who worked in Iraq or who came through as visiting dignitaries. To her credit, she's bipartisan in her skewering. Chris Hill, the American ambassador put in place by the Obama White House in early 2009, is described as having not wanted the job and uninterested in engaging with the Iraqis at a key transition point in the country's post-Saddam era. "It was," Sky writes, "frightening how a person could so poison a place. Hill brought with him a small cabal who were new to Iraq and marginalized all those with experience in the country." Likewise, Sky aptly captures Donald Rumsfeld and his irritating let's-be-clear-about-who's-the-honcho-in-the-room routine in recalling his visit to Kirkuk. As Odierno tried to brief the defense secretary on the situation in northern Iraq, "Rumsfeld kept interrupting, shooting questions at him. How many soldiers in theater? How many killed? How many wounded?"—not for a moment wanting to hear what the commanding general for the area actually assessed the situation to be.

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Given Sky's role in Kirkuk, and later under Odierno, *The Unraveling* is especially useful in detailing just how complex the reconciliation process was within Iraq's splintered society. As she notes, Iraq lost civility and a generation of potential leaders during Saddam's two decades of brutal rule; and so, when his regime was removed, what remained was a Hobbesian free-for-all. As the subtitle makes clear, however, the United States and coalition forces were on the cusp of meeting the challenge of state- and nation-building in Iraq—or at least, with the success of the surge and the Anbar Awakening, they had begun to set the conditions for moving forward. Yet that potential could only be turned into reality if Washington stayed the course.

Sky saw from Baghdad that such a plan was the last thing the Obama administration had in mind when it came to office in 2009. Putting "Bush's War" behind them meant ignoring the military's suggestions on the number of American troops needed to train Iraqi forces and help maintain stability. It meant overlooking Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's growing autocratic and sectarian behavior. It meant turning a blind eye to Iran's increasing machinations in Iraq. And most crucially, according to Sky, it meant ignoring the opportunity provided by the surprise showing of the Iraqi National Movement (INM) in the elections of March 2010.

Campaigning on a nonsectarian platform, with Sunni and secular Shia candidates, the coalition won two more seats than did Maliki's State of Law coalition. Maliki refused to stand down, however, or to concede to the INM the right to attempt to put together a governing coalition. Choosing not to weigh in, the Obama team eventually tired of the stalemate, conveniently concluding that Iraq needed a "Shia strongman," convinced by elements within the government (presumably the CIA) that Maliki was "our man." They sent Joseph Biden to deliver, in his ham-handed way, the message to the INM leadership. And with that, according to Sky, the chance for Iraqis "to break the Lebanon model of cementing sectarianism within institutions" went out the window.

What has happened since in Iraq, with the rise of ISIS and even more dangerous sectarianism, comes as no surprise to the author. But she writes in her preface that as difficult as the task was in Iraq, nothing was "preordained." Coming from someone on the left—someone who is not even an American to boot—makes this an essential point not to be lost as we continue to play gotcha on the question of whether toppling Saddam Hussein was the right thing to do. ♦

B&A

The Middle Range

Sometimes contemporary scholarship is a disservice to the past. BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN

Central portal, Chartres Cathedral

Medieval Christianity
A New History
by Kevin Madigan
Yale, 512 pp., $40

We live in the world that the Middle Ages made. It is hard to think of any modern institution—bank, business corporation, university, the legal system, parliamentary government—that doesn't have medieval roots. Even the typeface of this review had its origins in monks' scriptoria not long after the fall of Rome. Christianity, the nominal religion of the vast majority of modern Westerners, was profoundly shaped by the Middle Ages as well—and not just the Roman Catholic church, but Protestantism and evangelicalism, whose dissident roots can be traced back to at least the 12th century.

Kevin Madigan is a professor of ecclesiastical history at the Harvard Divinity School, specializing in medieval Christian thought. *Medieval Christianity* is, as he says in his preface, a "textbook," presumably aimed at undergraduates, although with a possible target readership of educated adults—"beginners," he calls them—who are curious about medieval religiosity.

The Middle Ages stretched for 1,000 years at least, from the disintegration of the western Roman Empire to the Reformation, and included religious developments and figures that seem perennially interesting to moderns: the Crusades, the Inquisition, monasticism, mysticism, St. Francis of Assisi, Abelard and Heloise, Joan of Arc. In his efforts to appeal to a broad, not necessarily academic, audience, Madigan generally doesn't disappoint: He writes clearly and gracefully (no irritating postmodernist jargon); he is obviously knowledgeable about his subject matter; and he never talks down to his readers, whose intelligence he respects.

In his preface, Madigan tells us that he has "written at length on women in virtually every chapter of this book." This reads like obsequious feminist correctness, except for the fact that the Western Middle Ages marked the first time in human history that women exerted significant cultural influence—as queens, abbesses, mystics, writers, patronesses of the arts, and, of course, saints.

Yet Madigan's book, although admittedly informative, tells as least as much about the preoccupations, ideological and otherwise, of today's academic historians of the Middle Ages as it does about the Middle Ages themselves. For example, while *Medieval Christianity* follows the general chronological order of the Middle Ages, starting with Rome's fall and ending with the dawn of modernity in the early 16th century, the book is organized primarily in terms of topics. This seems to reflect the disdain of many contemporary historians for "diachronic"—that is, strictly sequential—accounts of human history in favor of "synchronic" approaches that examine events as related clusters. (The terms come from the early-20th-century linguistics scholar Ferdinand de Saussure, a seminal influence on academic postmodernism.)

Madigan's topical approach works fairly well for the later Middle Ages, when there are clearly discrete topics to discuss: the rise of the university, the expanding claims of the papacy, the founding of specific religious orders. But it creates confusion in his earlier chapters dealing with centuries in which historical developments were more interdependent. A chapter on the conversion of northern Europe, spanning the fifth through the seventh centuries, describes the role of Irish monks and their Celtic form of monasticism. But it is only in the following chapter that Madigan discusses the institution

GUILLAUME PIOLLE

Charlotte Allen, a frequent contributor to The Weekly Standard, *is the author of* The Human Christ: The Search for the Historical Jesus.

of monasticism itself, touching all too briefly on the Christian ascetic tradition's origins in Egypt, Asia Minor, and the Middle East before migrating to the West.

The German abbess Hildegard of Bingen (ca. 1098-1179) was a monumental figure of the 12th century, not only as a musician, playwright, poet, pharmacist, and mystical theologian, but also as a monastic reformer typical of her century in her desire to return to more primitive and less worldly forms of the cenobitic life. But instead of placing Hildegard alongside other 12th-century monastic luminaries—such as the Cistercian giant Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), with whom she corresponded and who acted as her theological defender and de facto publicist—Madigan stuffs her into the very last chapter, which deals with late-medieval mystical writers such as Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260-ca. 1328).

Conversely, Julian of Norwich (ca. 1342-ca. 1416), a genuine late-medieval mystical writer of the first order, gets shuffled up to an earlier chapter that deals mostly with the 12th century. Presumably, this is because Julian was an anchoress, living a solitary religious life in a cell attached to a church, and anchoritism got its start as a widespread medieval phenomenon during the 12th century. An organizational approach with a clearer focus on chronology and the ways in which the passage of time shaped and changed medieval religious culture would help readers better understand the historical context and importance of Hildegard, Julian, and other medieval figures who attract Madigan's attention. It is jarring, for example, to read a long discussion of the New Testament writers' varying portrayals of Jesus plunked into the middle of a chapter whose stated topic is St. Francis and the Franciscans.

A second, and more serious, problem is Madigan's tendency to rely heavily on the conclusions that other historians have drawn about medieval ecclesiastical developments instead of formulating his own. This, too, seems to reflect a fashionable academic trend: viewing the study of history as essentially the study of historiography, or how other historians have written history. Historiographic approaches—examining critically how the methodology, interests, and biases of historians past and present have shaped their interpretations of their source materials—are wonderful training best done in graduate school or in upper-division seminars for those aiming to write history themselves. But Madigan tends to summarize other historians' interpretations *uncritically* and without presenting objections and counterarguments, which can give the impression that he regards those interpretations as authoritative.

Hildegard of Bingen

This approach can be effective when Madigan is summarizing the ideas of universally recognized giants in their academic specialties: Bernard McGinn at the University of Chicago on medieval mysticism (McGinn was Madigan's mentor as a graduate student), for example, or Caroline Walker Bynum at Columbia and the Institute for Advanced Study on themes in medieval spirituality.

It is less effective, and can look like logrolling nods to friendly scholars, when Madigan cites an eccentric monograph on a niche topic, such as Patrick Geary's *Furta Sacra* (1978), an anthropology-laced study of thefts of saints' relics. Worse is when the book that Madigan summarizes is highly tendentious, such as *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (1987), in which R.I. Moore argues that the clerical class hounded Jews, heretics, and even lepers during the High Middle Ages primarily as a tactic for consolidating its own political power. You would never guess from reading *Medieval Christianity* that Moore's theories have been severely criticized by other scholars as failing to (among other things) account for the specifically religious motivations of the persecutors, however wrongheaded by present-day standards.

Madigan's book is at its weakest—and clearly its most dependent on other scholars' faddish points of view—in its opening chapter, which tries to inform the reader about the very early Christianity of the Roman Empire during its first four centuries. This period is technically outside of Madigan's medieval purview, but it is understandable that he would include it. The fourth-century church fathers Augustine of Hippo and Jerome (who translated the Bible into the Vulgate Latin version that was authoritative during the Middle Ages) were towering figures to learned medievals. Furthermore, if you are going to examine medieval Christianity, it helps to know some of the basic tenets of Christianity itself.

But Madigan has chosen as his scholarly guru for this opening chapter the avant-garde German New Testament scholar Walter Bauer, whose *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (1934) argued that there was no such thing as the basic tenets of early Christianity. Bauer maintained that early Christianity was a hodgepodge of divergent and competing beliefs about Jesus from the very beginning, and that what we today call Christian "orthodoxy" represents merely the theology of the victors in a protracted intra-ecclesiastical political struggle.

As might be expected, Bauer's views remain immensely popular among the avant-garde New Testament scholars of today, who like to think that the evil church fathers relentlessly stamped out equally valid alternative "Christianities" that might have been more

compatible with modern expectations of what a religion ought to be like. Yet there has also been quite a bit of pushback over the past 80 years from other scholars who argue that there is actually very little documentary evidence to support Bauer's thesis. So, instead of starting off by informing readers that even the most outré of early Christians believed that a Jewish carpenter named Jesus had risen from the dead in some fashion and had given his followers a mandate to spread his teachings—which accounted for the rapid proliferation of Christian communities throughout the Roman Empire, whose western bounds were more or less coterminous with medieval Europe—Madigan devotes the opening pages of the chapter to a lengthy exposition of Gnosticism and other arcane heresies. This is not only confusing, it is irrelevant to any understanding of Christianity in the Middle Ages, when basic Christian doctrines were largely settled. Most medieval "heretics" dissented about the structure of the church, not the nature of Jesus.

Madigan's chapters on medieval Christians' encounters and conflicts with Muslims and Jews are—perhaps predictably, perhaps unavoidably—colored by 21st-century hindsight. To his credit, Madigan is not a starry-eyed romantic when it comes to the supposed paradise of religious tolerance and multicultural *convivencia* that the Islamic rulers of what had once been eastern and western Christendom were said to have fostered. He is forthright about the second-class *dhimmi* status of both Jews and Christians in medieval Islamic territories, and about the tensions and outbursts of violence that marked ordinary life in a world whose conquering rulers classified Christians and Jews as infidels. Still, Madigan can't resist chiding medieval Christians for daring to feel the same way about medieval Muslims as medieval Muslims felt about them. "It was the beginning of a long, mutual misunderstanding," he writes. Talk about an understatement!

As for medieval Christians' attitude toward Jews, Madigan, like many others, draws a straight line from medieval anti-Judaism to the Holocaust. While it is undeniably true that Christian treatment of the surprisingly substantial Jewish communities in Western Europe during the Middle Ages often ranged from condescendingly hostile to downright nasty and homicidal—except when Christians needed, as they often did, Jewish financing and Jewish medical expertise—Madigan fails to delve into the specifically *medieval* aspects of this antipathy. Unlike the antisemites of Western modernity, the Christians of the Middle Ages had little interest in racial and ideological pollution. Their reaction to Jews was primarily one of religious incomprehension: that they had failed to recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah and instead, as recounted in the Gospels, had sought his death as an impostor. Medieval Christian fiction contained tales of Jewish blood libel, but an equally popular theme was Jewish conversion to Christianity, whether by the intervention of the Virgin Mary or by some Eucharistic miracle. And in truth, judging from the subject matter of the vast proliferation of medieval literature preserved in manuscripts, most medieval Christians paid scarcely any attention to Jews at all.

This is not to say that Madigan has written a bad book. He has obviously spent a large amount of time surveying and conscientiously abridging library shelves' worth of scholarship in fields that are clearly not his specialty. Furthermore, any attempt to arrive at an understanding of a period of history that spanned more than 10 centuries and encompassed a huge range of local cultures deserves commendation. Madigan's suggestions for further reading are generally sound and informed—although I would have omitted some books and included others. Still, for all his efforts, *Medieval Christianity* is ultimately disappointing. If only the author had not striven so painfully to produce an introduction to medieval Christianity reflecting the very latest in current academic thinking, but, rather, had simply introduced his readers to medieval Christianity on its own terms. ♦

B&A

Booth on Stage

Echoes and memories of the actor-assassin.

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

Fortune's Fool
The Life of John Wilkes Booth
by Terry Alford
Oxford, 464 pp., $29.95

At intervals in his abbreviated life, John Wilkes Booth (1838-1865) apparently pictured himself as a man of destiny—although when, on one occasion, he exclaimed, "I must have fame," he was presumably thinking of the family craft (acting) and not murder. But like so many of the memories that crowd this "comprehensive" biography, Booth's sense of fate is unverifiable. He had once been told by a fortune-teller that he had a "bad hand" and would die early; but such predictions are routine stock-in-trade for charlatans.

Booth grew up in rural Maryland, near Baltimore, the son and brother of distinguished Shakespearean actors. During the Civil War, he pursued acting jobs in the north and west, eluding service in the cause about which he

Edwin M. Yoder Jr. is a former editor and columnist in Washington.

claimed to be passionate. He had earlier attached himself to a Virginia militia, the Richmond Grays, for the chase, arrest, and execution of John Brown. In 1864, after quitting his brief professional career on the stage, he assembled his first band of conspirators. Their aim was to kidnap Abraham Lincoln as he rode, sometimes alone, between the White House and the Soldiers' Home, and spirit him to Richmond as a hostage for the release of thousands of Confederate prisoners of war whose exchange had fallen afoul of North-South differences over the classification of Union troopers. Booth was then in his mid-20s.

Just when he abandoned the kidnapping plot and yielded to darker personal impulses, it is difficult to say—although he had begun stalking Lincoln around the time of his Second Inaugural, increasingly obsessed with the president's racial policies and his "tyrannical" direction of the war. For his final act, Booth recruited two co-conspirators, who were simultaneously to attack Secretary of State William Seward and Vice President Andrew Johnson. The latter assailant got cold feet and ran away, while the first succeeded in wounding (but not killing) the bedridden Seward, who was recovering from a carriage accident.

In many personal aspects, this dark story is necessarily speculative, recollections jarred from fading or fallacious memories by Booth's stunning crime. That, in fact, is the major historiographical handicap of this otherwise interesting and well-documented book, a substantial portion of which would have to be classed as hearsay. And of course, when Sergeant "Boston" Corbett's impulsive shot into a burning barn on the Garrett farm in Virginia killed Booth, it removed the prime witness from interrogation.

Nonetheless, Booth's stage career, in particular, offers tempting matter for speculation. He enjoyed the advantages of a family tradition, along with celebrated good looks and voice, although some dyslexia (as it would now be called) handicapped his handwriting and powers of memorization. His most suggestive theatrical experiences were in Shakespearean roles, as Richard III (a specialty), Hamlet (he stole the show as the prince of Denmark in St. Louis), and, most crucially, as Marc Antony in *Julius Caesar*. These roles raise intriguing questions: Both *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* hinge on assassination, and Shakespeare's Richard III is a byword for cynical viciousness.

Terry Alford is aware of these collateral but, finally, unanswerable questions.

Dr. Samuel Mudd House, Charles County, Maryland

TOM WILLIAMS / ROLL CALL PHOTOS / NEWSCOM

Who, indeed, has ever persuasively explored the mind of an assassin? Perhaps the issue boils down to this: Might an impressionable young actor of turbulent temperament, with madness and alcoholism in the family background, set stage identities aside for a "real" identity when the footlights fade? There is, notes Alford, a phenomenon in stagecraft known as the "empty vessel" syndrome; maybe Booth had more than his share of filling.

Unquestionably, the manner and staging of Lincoln's murder were, in notable particulars, theatrical. It took place on Good Friday, the mythic day of crucifixion. After firing the fatal shot, Booth leapt from the presidential box to the stage of Ford's Theatre—where, at least once, he had played before Lincoln—brandishing a knife and shouting "*Sic semper tyrannis*!" ("Thus ever to tyrants!") to color his act with imagined patriotic purpose. One also wonders, though the author overlooks, what subliminal suggestion the fiery lyrics of the Maryland state anthem (*Avenge the patriotic gore / that flecked the streets of Baltimore. . . . The tyrant's heel is on thy shore*) might have had on the assassin's state of mind. As usual in the face of an atrocious act, associates, family, and friends professed themselves stunned that such a nice young man would do such a cruel thing—a cliché that lives on whenever television reporters speculate on motive after some mad act of mass murder.

Alford's perceptive book reaches more solid ground in its account of the sequel to the murder. Booth bluffed his way through military checkpoints across the Potomac into southern Maryland, where Dr. Samuel Mudd set his broken leg. He hid in swampy woodlands for some 10 days with a single companion while sounds of the intense manhunt were often heard in the distance. Finally, he managed to cross the Potomac River to the Garrett farm in nearby Virginia, where a cavalry unit found him. Corbett's gunshot—God, he explained, told him to fire—severed Booth's spine at the neck and condemned him to painful suffocation. His corpse was taken to Washington and buried unceremoniously beneath the storeroom floor of the Old Penitentiary building, where his co-conspirators were tried and hanged. Four years later his family was allowed to rebury him in Baltimore.

The elaborate mourning ritual for the martyred president is a matter of familiar legend a century-and-a-half later. The larger historical echoes of Booth's act were, from his perspective, entirely perverse, earning him not fame but infamy, even in parts of the South. He saw a few out-of-date newspapers before his death, and all

echoed that verdict. He had, moreover, done the dying Confederacy no favor; to the contrary, the most drastic effects were on the pending work of peacemaking and reunion.

Lincoln's inept successor initially exacerbated the national rage by giving credence to the canard that Confederate officials had connived in, if not indeed plotted, the president's murder. Johnson, who loathed the Southern planter and professional classes, also harped on charges of "treason." Those allegations enjoyed the usual vogue among the parlor soldiers in Congress but were denied any judicial test.

Johnson soon receded from his accusations and tried to ensure some due process. But he lacked the force or finesse to follow Lincoln's generous mandate to "let 'em up easy." His clumsy try at rapid reconstruction brought leading Confederates temporarily back to prominence, infuriating the congressional radicals and inspiring them to try to purge Johnson from office by a political impeachment. Meanwhile, in 1868, the same congressional faction commenced the punishment of the seceded states as "conquered provinces," and this vindictive treatment inflicted more lasting resentment than defeat itself. The horrors of "Radical Reconstruction," substantially exaggerated notwithstanding some solid revisionist history, remain lodged in popular myth—a dark memory yet to be expunged.

Constitutionally speaking, John Wilkes Booth's act had the effect of largely confining the postwar examination of Lincoln's official stewardship of the Constitution to scholarly literature. Only there, and only in scattered instances, was there any searching evaluation of Lincoln's huge expansion of presidential powers. Lincoln the agile lawyer adroitly rationalized quite extraordinary executive measures as essential exercises of war powers, identifying what Booth viewed as "tyrannical" as mere normal precedent. Succeeding wartime presidents have not been slow to follow. This was, perhaps, the crowning irony of Booth's heinous and destructive crime. ♦

B&A

Hello, Kitties

An exhibition of cat art as metaphor.

BY TARA BARNETT

New York

At the Japan Society, an exhibition of *ukiyo-e* has clawed its way into the spotlight. *Ukiyo-e* is a genre of woodblock prints, a familiar medium in Japanese art exhibitions. While these prints are always beautiful and historically intriguing, rarely do journalists pounce with such enthusiasm to laud woodblock prints. But who could resist a title like "Life of Cats"?

The exhibition, focusing exclusively on cats in *ukiyo-e*, was created by gallery director Miwako Tezuka. Cat-obsession has already bled into museums, but the Japan Society is not merely chasing the success of the Walker Art Center's Internet Cat Video Festival: "Life of Cats" has been in the works for almost two years—granted, a brief period in museum time—and was inspired not by domestic trends but by the popularity of such exhibitions in Japan. In an interview with *Artslant*, Tezuka stated that she was initially skeptical of finding "meaningful elements I could bring out through this exhibition." But once she started looking, she saw significant cultural and historical meaning loaded in each image of a cat. From scenes in the *Tale of Genji* to legends about monstrous cat demons, cats mean something specific in Japan, and that meaning is most visible not in a single picture, but in the collection of images together.

Setting also helps to construct meaning in museums. The ancillary art of exhibition design seeks to highlight the selected art and engage the viewer without taking away from the works themselves. In this case, graphics and design were provided by Clayton Vogel, who worked closely with Tezuka. Vogel's mark is evident, if sometimes subliminal. For example, he drew inspiration from the red collars found on the cats in the prints, re-creating them on a giant scale to "draw people's attention to details they might otherwise miss in the work," he says. Every color, every piece of reclaimed fir wood, was included for a reason. Vogel enjoyed working on this exhibition because he was given the opportunity to "go bananas, go artsy."

Miwako Tezuka was delighted as well, saying that it is "refreshing to see all these traditional prints and realize how cutting edge and contemporary

Tara Barnett is a writer in Washington.

Life of Cats
Selections from the Hiraki Ukiyo-e Collection
Japan Society

'Newly Published Cat's Games' (1884) by Utagawa Kunitoshi

IMAGES COURTESY HIRAKI UKIYO-E FOUNDATION

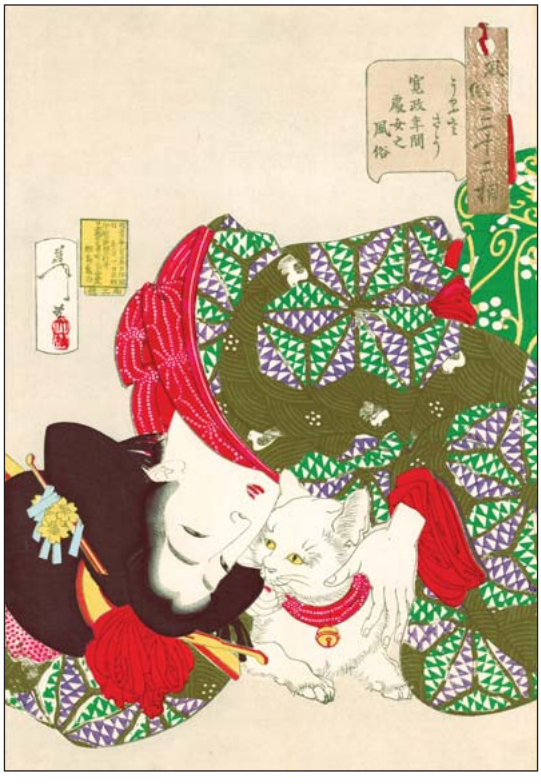
those graphic elements were." The whole production looks playful and contemporary. It's charming.

But when you add the setting, which is so current, do you encourage modern connections at the expense of historical ones? Is there still coherent meaning in this exhibition? Across the East River, the Brooklyn Museum has a similarly amusing, long-term exhibition on cats: "Divine Felines: Cats of Ancient Egypt." Curator Yekaterina Barbash has said that it "attempts to use peoples' fondness for cats as a doorway into learning more about ancient Egyptian culture as a whole." A familiar strategy. But it's no guarantee that the exhibition accomplishes this task. When visiting the exhibition, a passing stranger quipped, "I can't go in there, I'm allergic!" Which cat was he seeing? An Egyptian pharaoh's or his girlfriend's?

As you enter the exhibition, you see cats. Just cats. In this case, you see lions and housecats, male and female cats, god and guardian cats. Are these all united just by being cats? As it turns out, the Brooklyn Museum has something to say on exactly this topic. In 2012, the museum opened another ongoing exhibition called "Connecting Cultures: A World in Brooklyn," and in its stunning bricolage of art from across human time, William Merritt Chase's *Girl in a Japanese Costume* (ca. 1890) sits between *Female Figure Standing with Arms Raised* (by an unidentified Dogon artist) and a Japanese *Jizo Bosatsu*. Celestial models beg to be contrasted. A wall of beautiful American and English frames spanning centuries hang clustered together, containing mirrors or nothing.

"Connecting Cultures" is trying to make a point, very loudly. Museums typically use categories useful to visitors: time period, material, artist, or geography. But curator Kevin Stayton argues that "such a standard organization can also be limiting. It can prevent us from making new and exciting connections between geographical locations, time period and types of objects." This may be why organization in museums isn't traditionally focused on a single subject.

When museums collect items that share a subject such as "figures" or "frames," they make those connections for the visitor. Museums create meaning by collecting things and displaying them in a certain way. They become authors. But curatorial authorship is not just the museum's problem: Visitors make connections all the time, and when they make connections, they make meaning. Sometimes exhibitions that focus on a single subject can appear to be exploring this "connecting-cultures" strategy with abandon, surrendering the myth of the invisible and neutral curator. Works of wildly different origin, medium, and intention sit next to each other without explanation, sharing only a topic.



'Looking Tiresome: The Appearance of a Virgin of the Kansei Era' (1888) by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi

Consider the Smithsonian American Art Museum's recent "Singing and the Silence: Birds in Contemporary Art," which included a beautiful tree of orange resin birds, somber altars to dodo birds, and photographs of birds about to be released with trackers. By collecting these items, curator Joanna Marsh made herself artist and author: The meaning isn't necessarily there to begin with, but if we make it—well, there it is.

Back at the Japan Society, we're left with a question: What about those occasions when an existing meaning is what the curator seeks to highlight? The meaning of cats is what this exhibit is really about; and not "just cats," but cats as the Japanese have seen them. Obviously, "just cats" is what gets many visitors through the door; but even if less-than-scholarly motives bring in visitors, the exhibition itself is meticulously curated. Is that enough to overcome connections to the present?

Miwako Tezuka has been fairly happy with the media portrayals of her exhibition, even with all the cat quips. She believes that "they understand that there's substance in the exhibition even if the initial invitation is through the motif." And although the Japan Society has paired the exhibition with a showing of viral cat videos and a cat adoption event, she doesn't worry about viewers' mixing their own notions of cats with the meaning in these works.

"People did have their own understanding of what cats are, so what we feel about cats might be different, but that's the nature of image," she says. She views the exhibition as a gateway into a more nuanced understanding of Japanese culture and art.

In conversation, Clayton Vogel lamented that visitors go through museums quickly. A visitor who pauses, a visitor who thinks and connects—that is the ideal audience for this type of exhibition, he believes. But we are all that visitor: Museums are meaning-making machines, and so are humans. As the Brooklyn Museum declares, "It is these connections that often help us understand what it is to be human and how the arts express that." ♦

B&A

Flying Machinists

The air wasn't conquered with the greatest of ease.

BY DAVID BAHR

Alexis de Tocqueville, perhaps the greatest French export to the United States, took special notice, during his travels, of what he called the "philosophic method" of Americans:

> [I]n most of the operations of the mind each American calls only on the individual effort of his reason . . . as they see that they manage to resolve unaided all the little difficulties that practical life presents, they easily conclude that everything in the world is explicable and that nothing exceeds the bounds of intelligence.

This "philosophic method"—or what we might call the "American way"—is an apt description of the manner in which a tradition starting with Benjamin Franklin, carried along nicely by Thomas Edison, and residing somewhere today in central California has been conveyed throughout the course of our history. Two links in this chain of American inventors deserve special attention for their love of knowledge unalloyed by any desire for fame or monetary gain. They are the Wright brothers.

David McCullough's dual biography focuses primarily on the scientific *process* behind their success. Little or no ink is wasted on unnecessary biographical details—why neither brother married, for example, or the precise nature of Orville's "peculiar spells"—and McCullough's presentation is a wonderful reflection of the matter-of-fact sensibilities that never deserted the Wright clan. The narrative rarely slips into moral valuations or sentimentality. Instead, McCullough allows the brothers and their inner circle to speak for themselves.

The Wright Brothers
by David McCullough
Simon & Schuster, 336 pp., $30

Wilbur (left) and Orville Wright (1910)

Orville (1871-1948) and Wilbur (1867-1912) Wright, sons of an itinerant preacher who valued intellectual curiosity and hard work, were tinkerers from the start: fashioning toys for their siblings, designing a printing press, founding their own newspaper, and (what would initially finance their aviation exploits) running a successful bicycle company. The brothers were autodidacts, American-style.

In 1896, Orville fell ill with typhoid. Bedridden, he was cared for by his sister, Katharine—a constant companion and confidante to both brothers—and by Wilbur, who had recently been interested in the German aeronautical inventor Otto Lilienthal and began reading aloud about Lilienthal to his convalescing brother. That was the turning point. Soon, both Wrights were "read[ing] up on aeronautics as a physician would read his books," according to their father. Much time was also spent watching birds—which, in a few years, would find themselves side-by-side a curious new airborne species.

Success, once arrived, did not abate. It became increasingly difficult for the Wrights to find peace with the near-constant swarm of press, government functionaries, hangers-on, and just plain curious people hounding them on both sides of the Atlantic for face time or a glimpse of the new marvel. That the brothers were able to remain psychologically grounded would make fine fodder for further inquiry, except that the answer is obvious. This passage from McCullough is particularly revealing:

> One day the reporters who hung about as close as permitted hoping for a chance to talk to Wilbur saw some small boys . . . approaching the guards and expected to see the children rebuffed as they had been. Instead they saw Wilbur, "a kindly smile" on his face, welcome them, then through the open doors watched as he "explained every detail of the machine."

The spiritual core of the Wright brothers, what both drove and sustained them throughout their lives, was a pure and simple devotion to scientific exploration or, more generously, a love of knowledge—and as wealthy as they became, they might gladly have cashed out to return to their earlier inquiries. Sadly, neither brother was able to recapture those halcyon days on the streets of Dayton, Ohio, or on the sands of Kitty Hawk. In a letter to a friend in 1912, Wilbur lamented, "We wished to be free from business cares so that we could give all our own time to advancing the science and art of aviation. . . . [W]hen we think what might have been accomplished if we had been able to devote this time to experiments, we feel very sad."

A few months later, he would be dead of typhoid. ♦

SSPL / GETTY IMAGES

David Bahr is an editorial assistant at The Weekly Standard.

B&A

Miller's Lament

When misattributions reach critical mass.

BY STEPHEN MILLER

When I sit down with old friends who, like me, are in their 70s, I sometimes ask: "If you could live your life again, would you do anything differently?" Most just scratch their heads and say, "I dunno." Recently, I told three old friends that I would do one thing differently: I would get a middle initial—either Q or X—to distinguish myself from the many Stephen Millers who write books. Or I would give myself a full middle name—say, Xavier or Quentin.

In my youth and middle age, my very common name—the White Pages lists 98 Stephen Millers in Virginia, but I bet there are more—was only a minor problem at airports and department stores. At least four times, I heard a request for Stephen Miller to please come to the reservation desk or information counter. It always turned out to be another Stephen Miller; but I would get a shot of adrenaline every time I heard my name, thinking that something terrible had happened to someone in my family.

I also endured the weak jokes of innumerable sales clerks, who would say to me, "So, are you the Steve Miller of the Steve Miller band?" To which I responded sarcastically, "Yeah, right." And once I got a 1099 Tax Statement for Miscellaneous Income from a newspaper, although that year I hadn't written anything for it. I contacted them about the mistake, but they never replied. I didn't feel like trying to straighten this out (it was a small amount), so on that year's tax return I listed income that I had never received for an article that I had never written.

Stephen Miller is the author, most recently, of The Peculiar Life of Sundays.

The misattribution problem did not become serious until 2006, when I published *Conversation: A History of a Declining Art*. First, several letters addressed to me care of Yale University Press were sent to another Stephen Miller published by Yale: a distinguished classicist who writes on ancient Greek athletics. Second, on many bookstore websites, I was wrongly described as the author of two biographies and several historical novels.

My corpus of books got much larger after the publication of my actual latest book, *Walking New York: Reflections of American Writers from Walt Whitman to Teju Cole*. I was happy to see that Walmart was selling my book, but it incorrectly listed me as the author of *Sweet Blonde*, a biography of Dolly Parton. And I soon found out that on the websites of many independent bookstores, I am described in the following way: "Stephen Miller currently teaches courses in Zoology, Biology and Invertebrate Zoology at the College of the Ozarks, Point Lookout, MO (Branson). He is also the author of *General Zoology Lab Manual*."

I emailed one bookstore to tell them that I am not a zoologist. They said it was not their fault: The information about me was given to them by a central book information service. They could do nothing about it. I got the same response from another independent bookstore. I wrote to my publisher to see if they could do something about the misattribution, but I have not yet received a reply.

Because my book is being sold on websites around the world, the problem of misattribution is not confined to the United States. The list of books attributed to me varies by country. On a Spanish website, I am the author of *La Mensajera* (*The Messenger*). On several German websites, I'm the author of a biography of Johnny Cash. On a Dutch website, I am the author of several books, including *Hawaii by Sextant* and *Piwik Web Analytics Essentials*. On a Polish website, I'm the author of *From Fat to Fit: The Simple Way to Transform Your Family Health* as well as *Starting and Running a Sandwich-Coffee Bar*.

On many websites in Europe and Asia, I have a middle initial: H. Why the H. when the name on the book jacket is Stephen Miller? There are several authors named Stephen H. Miller, including a Stephen H. Miller who wrote *Year Book of Plastic and Aesthetic Surgery*, but there are also several authors named Stephen G. Miller. I have not yet found an author named Stephen X. Miller.

Is this misattribution a joke being played on me by the shade of Jorge Luis Borges or Franz Kafka? I can see myself as a character in a short story who is trying to find the Transnational Ministry of Author Information, which is located either in a castle in Transylvania or in a strip mall in suburban Los Angeles. If I ever get in touch with these incompetent bureaucrats, I will say, "I want to be disambiguated. *Now*!"

I could address the misattribution problem by having a Wikipedia entry, but I am reluctant to set up one myself. It smacks too much of self-promotion. I could construct my own website, but one already exists. If you Google "Stephen Miller Author," you will find a website: stephenmillerwriter.com. The Author's Official Website. But this is not me. The same author also has stephenmillerwriter.org. My website would have to include my birth date in the address.

Lately I have begun to wonder if I should be so concerned about misattribution. Perhaps being described as the author of a wide variety of books is good for sales. I can see a would-be reader saying, "This guy is amazing. He is a scientist and a literary guy—a renaissance man!" So maybe I should say: Let a Thousand Misattributions Bloom. But often I daydream of publishing a book with the name Stephen X. Miller. ♦

THE NEW YORK TIMES **OP-ED** WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2

PAUL KRUGMAN

God, You're Stupid

I know it's not nice to say so, but there's an important point to be made here: You are stupid. Really, incredibly stupid, in fact.

Now, you might take offense here, particularly if you are beholden to right-wing ideology, and write this off as an ad hominem attack: a bit of vitriol dripping from a bitter and blackened heart. But that's just projection. In reality, you truly are incredibly stupid. I'll talk in a bit about why that is so.

You see, everything you think is demonstrably, ludicrously wrong. It's quite amazing, and there isn't room here to go into all the details. So let's take one example: triangles.

In recent years a lot of Very Serious People have tried to dupe the American public into believing a triangle has three sides and three angles, which add up to 180 degrees. This is a classic zombie: an idea that should have died long ago in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. So why hasn't it?

Because America is filled with villains, fools, and knaves, that's why. The villains have a vested financial stake in convincing people a triangle has three sides and three angles. It's a false narrative, and they know it, but they don't care. (They will even produce so-called "mathematicians" to provide intellectual cover for this massive fraud.) That's how despicable they are. These people are the Republican leadership.

Then there are the fools who have been tricked into believing what the villains tell them, despite the fact that this so-called conventional wisdom about triangles is both moronic and insane. The fools are also Republicans, and they believe such obvious lies because they hate black people. They are also prone to name-calling and character attacks. Even worse, they are totally lacking in self-awareness.

The knaves—these are mostly reasonable, well-intentioned people, otherwise known as Democrats—suspect the villains are lying, but they lack the courage to say so. In today's poisonous political atmosphere these cowards have decided it's too hard to overcome the easy appeal of falsehood and cynical deception by people who know nothing about geometry.

And then there are the media, who like to pretend that people who disagree with me have anything legitimate to say. This is an outrage, and in a more civilized age reporters like that would be horsewhipped.

But we live in an era when human scum—and no, that's not too strong a term—peddle scare stories and lies and then pay no price whatsoever for being totally wrong. If they had any intellectual integrity whatsoever, they would at least be open to the possibility that their entire belief system about three-sided triangles and other fairy tales is a complete joke—one that has been responsible for more human suffering and death than all of history's wars put together.

But no. Rather than face facts and concede defeat they retreat into confirmation bias and self-congratulation, and then spend their days justifying their own behavior by hurling invective at anyone who has the temerity to question their preposterous notions. Frankly, I can't imagine how they live with themselves.

And you? I've just explained everything you need to know, using small words and short sentences. And yet I'll have to explain it all, again and again, in future columns. Because you just don't get it, do you? Why?

Because you're stupid, that's why. □