the weekly Standard

THE CLINTON LOYALTY TEST
ERIC FELTEN

What Makes America Great?

DANIEL KRAUTHAMMER
on the question at the heart
of the debate over nationalism

MAY 8, 2017 • $5.99 • WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

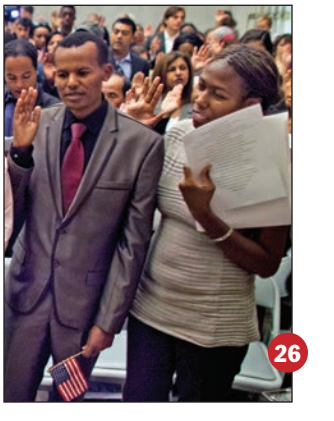
Contents

May 8, 2017 • Volume 22, Number 33

Articles

Feature

Books & Arts



Newly Resonant Nonsense

Ever since Donald Trump was elected, we've been in the middle of a dystopian fiction craze. The anti-Trumpers have sought to understand (and indulge in self-satisfied frissons of terror at) the rise of the Donald by imagining that the current moment is George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* come true. In April, for example, a gaggle of independent movie-houses staged screenings of the 1984 movie version of Orwell's masterpiece, declaring, "Orwell's portrait of a government that manufactures their own facts, demands total obedience, and demonizes foreign enemies has never been timelier."

Now it's Margaret Atwood's turn. Hulu is presenting a new streaming-TV miniseries adaptation of her novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. Critics have been quick to champion the miniseries as "must watch," not for its entertainment value but for the timely warning it provides. You see, a totalitarian theocracy like the one Atwood envisions is somehow just around the corner. The new adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*, we're told, is "All Too Real" (*Vice*), "Newly Resonant" (*New York Times*), "required 'resistance' viewing" (the media blog ATTN), and has "a whole new real-world resonance" (*Rolling Stone*).

As The Scrapbook has pointed out with regard to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the classic cautionary political stories of the 20th century don't match up very well with the particulars of the age of Trump. Those who say a given dystopic vision is "newly relevant" rarely inspire confidence that they've thought through the supposed similarities between fact and fiction. In fact, they rarely inspire confidence that they've read the fiction at all.

The "handmaid" of Atwood's title lives in an America that has been taken over by fanatical religious zealots. In a murderous coup d'état, the United States has been replaced by the Republic of Gilead, a hypocritically sex-obsessed theocratic tyranny. Celebrated as a "feminist *1984*" when published in the mid-eighties, Atwood's novel was taken to be a warning of the horrors a Christian fundamentalist Moral Majority would inflict given a chance.

In other words, *The Handmaid's Tale* was fright-fiction focused on what was, at the time, the left's favorite bête noire. Now the left has a new bête noire but instead of coming up with new fright-fiction, they're recycling the old favorites, no matter how bad the fit. And ill-fitting it is: Say what you will about Donald Trump, he is no Moral Majoritarian.

If you're looking for fiction that is relevant to the times and Trump, The Scrapbook recommends not Orwell but Orson Welles. Watch *Citizen Kane* again, and just imagine that the last-minute sex scandal that felled Charles Foster Kane's political ambitions instead (like the *Access Hollywood* tapes) fell short. What sort of president would Kane have made? It's a question with "a whole new real-world resonance." ♦

Becau$e That'$ Democracy, Baby

California's quest to tax itself into oblivion looks to be taking another great leap forward, with the state legislature approving a plan that will hike gas taxes by 12 cents a gallon. That will solidify the state's standing as one of the highest gas-taxers in the nation. Add requirements for "clean-burning" gas to existing taxes and Californians were already paying 67 cents a gallon more than the national average to fuel their cars.

The money raised by the new tax will supposedly go to road repairs,

TRUMP: ASSOCIATED PRESS

but count The Scrapbook skeptical. California is famous for playing a classic shell game. Step 1: Waste money on shiny, unnecessary projects (high-speed rail, anyone?). Step 2: Point to neglected but popular needs such as dilapidated roads, understaffed police departments, and underpaid teachers to justify tax increases. Step 3: Repeat.

Except that in the case of California's latest tax-hike, that standard strategy proved insufficient. Critics are now accusing Gov. Jerry Brown of buying reluctant votes. He succeeded in persuading key lawmakers to raise the gas tax by promising to fund infrastructure projects in their legislative districts. You know the whole process is unseemly when your governor is forced to explain to reporters the subtle nuances between legal and illegal bribery. Which is just what Brown did last week: "When somebody says, 'Here is $10,000, I want your vote,' you got bribery. It's illegal. When someone says, 'You know, I think this bill would be better if you included these projects or these ideas or these rules,' we listen, because that's democracy and that's openness and that is a compromise spirit that makes democracies work."

There you have it: backroom tax-

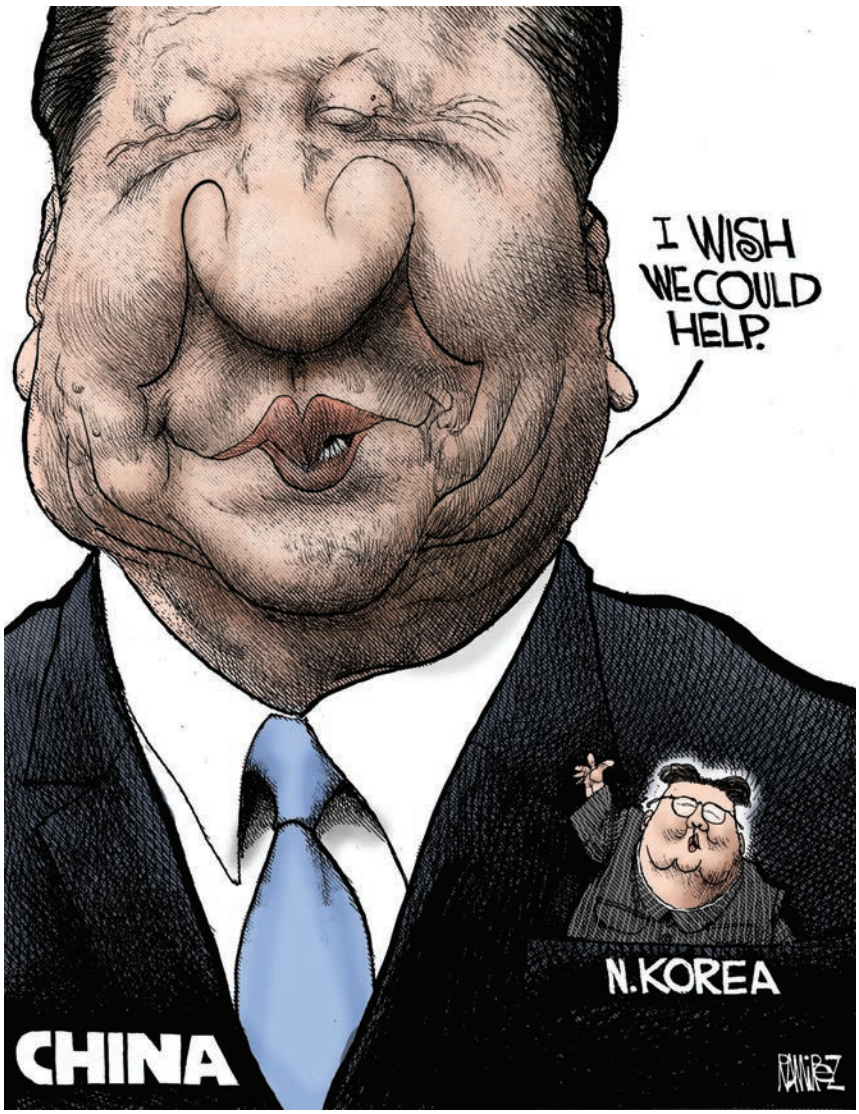


FIGURE: BIGSTOCK

hike horse-trading as the democratic virtue of "compromise spirit." Now you see why California is called the Golden State—the state finds a way to get all the gold.

• • •

In not necessarily unrelated news, growing numbers of people are leaving California. According to an article in the *Orange County Register* by urban affairs experts Joel Kotkin and Wendell Cox, a net 110,000 California residents "outmigrated" last year. The bulk of those fleeing were escaping the densely populated urban areas—Los Angeles, The Scrapbook is looking at you—where Gov. Moonbeam's style of left-wing rule is most entrenched. Even San Francisco—the playground of the leftist plutocrat class—lost population to the tune of 12,000 in 2016.

Kotkin and Cox focus on the desire of families to find "affordable, less dense housing." Some have been moving within the state in search of less expensive towns to live—modestly priced Modesto, for instance. But compared with the number moving into California, far more are moving out of the state altogether. Many of them are going to places such as Florida and Texas. Not only is the housing more affordable, but it's clear that for all the double-talk of politicians such as Jerry

Brown, people are quite capable of comparing state tax burdens. ♦

Survival of the Hippest

Just whose side is the *Washington Post* on: that of the little guy or the small plate? The paper approvingly cited an economic study last week that found minimum wage hikes in the San Francisco Bay area were more likely to shutter average restaurants than those favored by foodies. Eateries with middling ratings on Yelp are 14 percent more likely to go out of business for every dollar increase in the wage floor, according to the research from economists Michael and Dara Lee Luca. Five-star joints, by contrast, "don't experience that same effect," the *Post* reports. And that's okay—because, as the story's headline snootily states, "Minimum-wage hikes do close restaurants. Just not the ones you care about."

Of course, 'you' would never eat here.

NEWSCOM

Who is this "you" of whom the *Post* speaks? Clearly not the waiters, short-order cooks, busboys, and dishwashers at Average Joe's House of Hamburgers. They, after all, are likely to care about the restaurant where they make their living, even if it isn't Michelin material. If the owner can't afford the umpteenth increase in the minimum wage and turns out the lights, it's the workers who, deprived of wages and tips, pay the most direct price. But, hey, they'll find something else! "Because food service is a high-churn industry," the *Post* explains, "the fact that one restaurant closes does not necessarily mean more people will be unemployed." We suspect that's cold comfort food for those out of a job. But the *Post* has made it clear that those aren't the "yous" they care about.

Then again, the *Post* is hardly alone in discounting the plight of those put out of work by minimum wage hikes. Even the supposed advocates of those displaced workers prove to be glib Darwinians championing the survival of the Yelp-certified fittest. A lawyer for a labor rights group told the *Post*, "If anything, the study shows that a higher minimum wage might make the market more competitive and reduce the number of poor performers."

So go ahead, you politicians, raise the minimum wage. It will cull the restaurant herd of the weak, the "poor performers." No hipster will be inconvenienced by the loss of his favorite artisanal ramen-noodle place. No millennial will miss her salted-caramel-mocha-crappuccino of choice. No, only the sad little people who work at sad little restaurants will suffer. And we're sure they'll find something at some place less sad. Won't they? If not, what's the Yelp rating for the boutique *fromagerie* where they can go to get their hard cheese? ♦

Department of Corrections

A production glitch in last week's issue obscured the last line of the review "Finding the Founder: What was John Adams thinking?" With apologies to readers and to reviewer James M. Banner Jr., here is the concluding paragraph as it should have appeared:

> Ryerson's prose gives the lie to the assertion that academic historians can't write readable books. The best of them do, and always have. They surpass nonacademic writers of history in giving readers more than narratives and rhetorical color. They offer ideas, arguments, and strong points of view. *John Adams's Republic* is exemplary in those regards—an achievement unlikely to be surpassed, one of the finest works about the nation's second president that has ever been written. ♦

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, first week in July, and third week in August) at 1152 15th St., NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-274-7293. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-386-597-4378 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $5.99. Back issues, $5.99 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1152 15th Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1152 15th St., NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005.

BPA WORLDWIDE

Sweet Dreams Are Made of This

Whatever being a red-blooded American man means these days (not much, it seems), I like to think I am one. I chop wood. I've never had a manicure and refuse to wear skinny jeans. I relieve myself outdoors with great regularity, even when indoor options are available. And though I don't hunt my own meat, I sure as hell eat plenty of it.

But with my manhood established, I have an embarrassing confession to make: I like watching YouTube videos of women brushing their hair and whispering. This might not be as bad as coming out as a Brony, or as someone who collects bootlegs of Coldplay concerts. Close, though. As I've promised my wife, it's not sexual. It's hard to be lustful while being lulled into a coma. Which is precisely why I watch my whispering vixens, in an uneasy bit of rationalization that marks the cyber-age's final triumph over us as sovereign beings: The Internet—the very thing that overstimulates our brains—is now the only thing that can unplug them.

DAVID CLARK

I've never gone in for prescription sleep aids. And somewhere along the way, my favorite over-the-counter remedy, antihistamines 'n' Maker's Mark, lost its ability to render me unconscious. That's when I fell under the sway of the weird little subculture known as ASMR videos. Coined just seven years ago in a Facebook group, the term stands for "autonomous sensory meridian response." Which is intended to sound official, medical even. But it's really just a hollow pseudoscientific term, like "electro-gravitics" or "Al Gore."

The idea of ASMR videos is that they "trigger" you. Not in the negative way we've come to associate with triggering (an Oberlin undergrad being subjected to the humiliation of her media studies professor using a non-gender-neutral pronoun). Rather, your ASMRtist performs deliberative acts such as whispering softly or gracefully tracing a magazine ad with her finger (ASMRtists are about 95 percent female) that are intended to hit that magic lever in your brain, releasing serotonin and oxytocin, heightening sensation while simultaneously yielding complete relaxation.

ASMR has been known to give everyone from tightly wound corporate cubicle monkeys to war vets with PTSD something they'd never know otherwise—temporary release from their own thought prisons. Not for nothing do they call these sensations "braingasms"—though ASMR videos often last for 30 minutes to an hour. If you can have the other kind of gasm for that long, you have better things to do than fall asleep.

While non-erotic, ASMR is a bit like sleep porn. And as with the regular kind, it caters to every predilection. At this very moment, you can punch up videos of ASMRtists doing everything that could possibly float your boat as a sort of self-hypnosis. They might repeatedly tap their fingers on an Altoids tin, or run a makeup brush over their face, or pretend to do a lice check of your scalp (I'm not kidding), or crinkle gum wrappers—the last of which is a bit like nails down a blackboard to me. Come to think of it, there are nails-down-a-blackboard ASMR videos, too. The variations are endless. Which yet again evidences the deranged beauty of the Internet: However weird you think you are, someone weirder is always just a quick Google search away. To some, this makes the world feel a little less lonely.

Over the years, I've become attached to my own favorite ASMRtists, too myriad to list. But without ever communicating with them, it's like they've become members of my family. I noticed when "amalzd" showed up all of a sudden one day with a nose ring. (No! Don't do that.) When VeniVidiVulpes, the ginger queen of hair-brushing ASMR, stopped making videos two years ago, I felt like notifying the authorities to put out a missing-persons bulletin, enduring sleepless nights over all the nights I would no longer have her videos to put me to sleep. When Skyler Rain's brother died in an accident, as she announced one day in a video, she gradually went from a sunny, fetching blonde, to a more sober, sad brunette, before she dropped out of ASMR altogether. I miss her. She gave one of the best cranial nerve exams in the business.

To each of these, and many more, I owe a debt. As they've given me something that doesn't come easy—the gift of sleep. The triggered will tell you that sleep is the safest space. As Hemingway once put it, "I love sleep. My life has the tendency to fall apart when I'm awake, you know?"

Matt Labash

the weekly Standard

100 Down...

He should've stuck with "ridiculous." That was the word President Trump used in late April to describe the "first 100 days" standard by which new commanders in chief are judged for their productivity. Trump himself cited the timeline before the election in his Contract with the American Voter, a "100-day action plan to Make America Great Again"—as realistic as a one-day push to build Rome. He's learned since that legislating is a slog and externalities like foreign affairs and Congress's Russia probe don't politely yield to a domestic policy wish list. Acknowledging as much—"No matter how much I accomplish during the ridiculous standard of the first 100 days . . . media will kill!" he complained on day 92—wouldn't have been hypocrisy. It would've demonstrated a realization that there's only one FDR, who set the 100-day benchmark during the hyperactive first months of his administration. Nothing since has prompted a desperate rush of lawmaking quite like the Great Depression did. Not even American carnage.

. . . and 1,361 days to go

But as day 100 (April 29) approached, the White House made it seem that far from being a ridiculous cliché, the milestone was a sensitive point of pride. In response to Democratic and media criticism that Trump has underwhelmed to this point, WhiteHouse.gov launched an image- and video-heavy "President Trump's First 100 Days" webpage to highlight his accomplishments. The Republican National Committee began using the term in its releases: The April 24 subject line was "U.S. Economy Booms Under President Trump in the First 100 Days." On April 25: "RNC Releases New Video: '100 Days of Obstruction,'" referring to Democrats. On April 26: "President Trump's 100 Days of Streamlining Government." In the offing, perhaps: "100 Days of Emails About 100 Days."

A question for day 101: What is the significance of the first three months and a week, not just for Trump, but for any president? Conventional wisdom says a new administration's audience is most captive during the presidency's opening act. Washington is supposedly energized from the results of the campaign: The White House has its mandate from the public and a pile of "political capital" to spend, and Congress is not yet bogged down in discord. Never mind that the winning president has received more than 55 percent of the popular vote only four times since 1940 and the coequal branches of government resemble a sibling rivalry more than a partnership.

What's more, the beginning of a presidency is not necessarily predictive. The *Atlantic*'s David A. Graham compared the early troubles of President Clinton with those of President Trump, describing both with the same passage: "Reports of chaos, confusion, and infighting seem to leak out of the West Wing on a daily basis. The president is his own worst enemy, easily distracted, obsessed with minutiae, and uninterested in instilling much order in his administration." There are more substantive similarities, too. Clinton spent 1993 rolling out a "new Democrat" platform; Trump is trying to make over the Republican party in his image. Clinton was hampered by a disastrous budget rollout. For Trump, it's been health care. Neither administration had a healthy relationship with the press. Both suffered from awful polling—in June 1993, Clinton's approval rating was in the high 30s, according to Gallup. Yet he was reelected, and he polled in the 60s throughout his second term.

Consequential legislation passed in the first 100 days frequently signifies crisis, not achievement. See FDR and the dozens of economic bills Congress approved in 1933. See President Obama and the stimulus. Trump has touted his intention to reform the nation's health care and tax systems: monumental undertakings that can define a presidency. Obama didn't get the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act signed until day 428. President Reagan didn't get tax reform until day 641—of his second term.

Thus far, President Trump has appointed a highly impressive justice to the Supreme Court, assertively reoriented America's posture toward foreign adversaries, followed through on immigration policy about as much as he can from his office, begun to undo President Obama's regulatory legacy, and set sail into the high seas of health care reform. He's punted on some pledges, like declaring China a currency manipulator and renegotiating NAFTA. According to the *Washington Post*, Trump hasn't even started on the majority of his 60 "Contract" promises. Perhaps that's a failure. But knowing how quickly things can change, we suspect anyone looking back at the list will conclude it was ridiculous to care.

NEWSCOM

The 100-day standard doesn't have implications beyond a disposable news cycle. Most political analysts these days contemplate history 15 minutes at a time. Not a single voter will go to the polls on day 1,384 of the Trump administration and pull the lever for the other guy because Trump didn't come through 1,284 days before. Only if he didn't come through in the days thereafter, either.

—Chris Deaton

North Korea, Then and Now

Regrets—we've all had a few. *L'esprit de l'escalier*—that wonderful line coming to mind a moment too late—is a common annoyance after failed dates and dud job interviews; dented fenders and bum shoulders attest to avoidable failures of depth perception and misjudged forays into backyard football games.

When it comes to the development of nuclear weapons by rogue states, however, regrets become rather more profound.

Consider the apparently intractable problem of North Korea's weapons program. Pyongyang began surreptitiously developing nuclear weapons in the 1980s, and by the early 1990s, the totalitarian state had announced its intention to withdraw from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a bold statement of its desire to go nuclear. Come 1994, North Korea planned to extract enough raw material from its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon to create five or six nuclear weapons.

President Bill Clinton strongly considered launching a preemptive strike on Yongbyon—the defense journalist Jamie McIntyre reports that the administration had drawn up an attack plan consisting of cruise missiles and F-117 fighter jets. Clinton's—correct—calculus was that it would be unacceptable to allow a sociopathic dictatorship to arm itself with nukes, especially one with no regard for human rights, a history of threatening (and invading) its neighbors, and a penchant for unpredictability.

And then he blinked. With a little "help" from Jimmy Carter, who took a trip to North Korea to meet Kim Il-sung, Clinton by October 1994 had struck the "Agreed Framework" between the two countries. Bill Clinton, we suspect, has more regrets in his life than most, but this one should be atop the list: The Agreed Framework allowed the North Koreans to, in McIntyre's words, "cloak their covert nuclear program until they could build a working bomb." Now, North Korea has upwards of 20 nuclear weapons, with more on the way. The regime is making strides in its missile program, with the goal of launching intercontinental ballistic missiles—capable of hitting the United States and carrying nuclear weapons—tantalizingly close.

In other words, a preemptive strike in 1994 may have been the right thing to do, neutralizing North Korea's nuclear program *before* it became the global menace that it is today.

Preemptive strikes have certainly been effective before. In 1981, Israeli forces struck the Osirak nuclear facility near Baghdad, which was reportedly less than a month away from being operational. Saddam's nuclear program never recovered. In September 2007, the Israelis took a similar action against Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, destroying a suspected nuclear facility of his. Likewise, Syria has never gone nuclear. And indeed, even the much-maligned invasion of Iraq has this going for it: It was better to have taken out Saddam *before* he (or perhaps even worse, his horrific sons) was in possession of full-fledged weapons of mass destruction. Otherwise the world might have had another North Korea on its hands today.

The problem is, the benefits of preemption are all too often invisible. In the run-up to the year 2000, for example, companies spent millions of dollars to fix the Y2K problem—the so-called Millennium Bug that would have crippled many computer systems. When the New Year rolled around, and the world proceeded as normal, people guffawed: The Y2K bug had been overhyped! That corporations spending millions to upgrade their systems might have helped went unremarked. Likewise, travelers often grouse about having to take their off their footwear at airports, noting that there hasn't been a shoe bombing since Richard Reid's failed attempt at bringing down a flight between Paris and Miami in 2001. But isn't it possible that it is precisely *because* of the new airport security regulations that such an attempt has not been made?

The Trump administration has been hinting in recent months and weeks that it is considering striking North Korea—"all options are on the table" is the mantra. This would be a risky move, considering the North's close proximity to Japan and especially the ease with which it could strike its archenemy South Korea. South Korea's splendid capital Seoul, home to more than 20 million people, is precariously close to the DMZ. And indeed, while the North Koreans don't yet have nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles, it is widely understood that they possess short- and medium-range missiles capable of launching nuclear attacks on South Korea and Japan. It's also not clear how efficacious a strike would be: North Korea's weapons materials are dispersed widely throughout the country, with some components buried deep underground and others even underwater.

But the nuclear point is the most salient one: It is precisely *because* North Korea is now a nuclear power that dealing with it has become so difficult. Preemption works. "Post-emption" is a lot harder.

—Ethan Epstein

An Insider's Outsider

In France, the right is gauche and vice versa.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

You could tell the European political establishment had taken a shine to 39-year-old French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron by the number of articles in which he was referred to as both a "centrist" and an "outsider." Angelique Chrisafis, of Britain's *Guardian*, even called him a "maverick centrist outsider." Macron was a centrist to the extent he claimed to follow a politics that is "neither right nor left." He was an "outsider" to the extent that he had never been elected to political office.

But of course you can't be both. Macron, a former investment banker, was the economics minister of the outgoing socialist government and was for a time the most powerful cabinet member in it. As such he is not just an insider. He is the establishment's last hope for its own rescue. For years the French public has grown less inclined to believe its political leaders. The two main parties have not delivered on their promises. The conservative Gaullists long ago surrendered their selling point (national pride) to bring France into the multinational European Union. The Socialists surrendered theirs (jobs and benefits) to bring France into the global economy. And when the votes were counted in the first round of France's presidential election on April 23, neither of the parties that have dominated French political life since the 1950s was there. Macron and his En Marche! ("onward," or "on the march") movement topped the polling at 24 percent. Marine Le Pen, heir to a party of nationalism and demagoguery founded by her father, was just behind him at 21.

From Paris, the runoff, which is to be held on May 7, looks unloseable for Macron. He took 35 percent of the vote there to her 5. The main newspapers and television networks are unanimously in his corner. On the other hand, that's the way the U.S. election looked for Hillary Clinton early last November, if you were in Washington or New York. The moment you get outside of the cities, the country appears to be behind Le Pen. She won 48 of France's 101 *départements* (county-level units) and the majority of its communes (municipalities)—19,038 out of 35,416. (Macron won 7,135.) But the bigger the municipality, the more likely Macron was to win it. It would take some catastrophic event linked to the EU, immigration, or terrorism (all of which Le Pen obsesses over and Macron takes in stride) to shift the election. Either that, or Macron would need to commit an uninterrupted string of blunders.

THOMAS FLUHARTY

In the first few days of the two-week campaign, Macron did just that. He gave a victory speech at the grand café La Rotonde, Picasso's former haunt, in which he seemed to treat victory as if it were in the bag. He quickly called German chancellor Angela Merkel and opposition leader Martin Schulz. In the last days of April, he went to Amiens, where a strike was in progress at a factory where Whirlpool builds dryers. The American multinational plans to move the jobs of the 286 people who work there to Poland. Macron stopped at the town's chamber of commerce for a closed-door discussion with a handful of labor representatives. While he was there, Le Pen went to the picket line, spoke to the striking workers in the parking lot, ate a sandwich with them, and promised unconditionally to save their plant. "I'm on the side of the workers who are in the parking lot," she said, "not in some restaurant in downtown Amiens." Then she left.

It was made doubly embarrassing by the fact that Amiens is Macron's hometown. He didn't behave like someone who had any roots there, or anywhere. When Macron emerged to find out what had happened, he rushed to the factory itself. The workers whistled (that is, booed) him. He offered a few platitudes about "retraining" and opined that "protectionism is war." Jacques Attali, the Socialist guru and European Union advocate, called the layoffs an "anecdote" that was beneath the notice of a president of the republic.

Macron's campaign team quickly repudiated Attali. It did not escape notice, though, that many on that team were part of Macron's old Socialist entourage from the ministry of economics. Many had been protégés of ex-finance minister and IMF head Dominique Strauss-Kahn during the Socialist elite's last attempt to place an unelected finance expert in the presidency. The attempt was scuttled only by Strauss-Kahn's involvement in an embarrassing sexual encounter in New York in 2011.

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard.

Now, Macron asserted that Le Pen "didn't understand how the country works." He was likely right, but the problem for politicians since 2008 has been that everyone, even investment bankers, is under suspicion of not understanding how the country works. One is reminded of Hillary Clinton's complaint during the 2016 Democratic primaries about Bernie Sanders: "[His] numbers don't add up." This at a time when the administration in which Clinton served had added trillions of dollars to the national debt. *Nobody's numbers add up!*

That, ultimately, is why Macron, before launching his campaign, had had to create a new political brand. The "left" that the Socialist party used to embody is no more. It is just a name. The Socialists moved from being a party of factory workers to a party of intellectuals. And as industry moved from smokestacks to silicon chips, intellectuals became capitalist bosses. Who wants that? The official Socialist candidate, Benoît Hamon, finished fifth, with 6 percent of the vote.

The French "right" meanwhile, has revealed itself as a more demotic formation than its campaign rhetoric found it convenient to admit. It is the party of the toothless unemployed, not the party of the readers of Corneille and Chateaubriand. The Gaullist Republicans now have nothing to sell the public, except the possibility of driving the agenda once legislative elections take place in June, a month after the presidential contest is over. But Macron may have a means of putting himself in charge of that process too. He has told people who wish to campaign in the legislative elections under the banner of En Marche! that they will have to quit their old parties. Should he win the presidency handily on May 7, that demand will be easy to enforce. He would likely suck a majority of Socialists into his orbit and an as-yet-to-be determined number of Gaullists.

That, however, would leave the growing ranks of those disappointed in globalization unrepresented. Didier Eribon, who writes about homosexuality, the philosopher Michel Foucault, and growing up working-class in Reims, warned before the first round in the Sunday *Frankfurter Allgemeine* that over the long term "to vote for Macron is to vote for Le Pen." By this Eribon meant that it will establish her as the real alternative to a globalist elite and bring her to power eventually. That is not necessarily true. France has successfully waited out several populist revolts, just as the United States did William Jennings Bryan at the turn of the 20th century. It is never inevitable that a radical wave will reach shore.

Nor is it true, as press accounts often claim, that the political landscape left in this election's wake is "bizarre" or "surreal." No! It is classic. It is normal. It pits a party of capital-owners and wealth managers against a party of laborers. The only thing bizarre about it is that the former insist on calling themselves "the left" and the latter "the right." ♦

NEWSCOM

Trump Goes Bigly on Tax Reform

No taxation without reconciliation.

BY FRED BARNES

President Trump and the boys from Goldman Sachs have put together a dazzling tax reform plan. It has enough pro-growth incentives to energize the economy even after Congress eliminates some of them. But there's a problem: paying for it.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin (right) and National Economic Council director Gary Cohn outline tax reform, April 26.

Democrats aren't worried about this. They're against the whole bill, period. But Republicans should be concerned. They will have to choose between creating a permanent new tax system that benefits most Americans or an array of tax cuts likely to be temporary.

Unsurprisingly, a disagreement between Trump officials and Republican leaders in Congress has already surfaced. This has excited the media. *Politico* jumped in first with a story that House speaker Paul Ryan is "likely to get rolled on tax reform."

I doubt he will, though word is being spread by the Trump administration that paying for tax reform won't be necessary. Why? Because a surge in tax revenues from faster economic growth will solve the problem. That will make up for the lost taxes from deep tax cuts.

But it's not that simple. For tax reform to pass Congress, it will have to sneak through the reconciliation process—you know, the same maze that repeal and replace of Obamacare must pass through. For this to happen, the tax bill will have to be "revenue neutral." That means "paid for." If this arcane process works, the result will be worth it: permanent tax reform with deep tax cuts.

Why is permanent so important? That's another story. "Permanent policies have a greater bang for the buck than temporary ones," Douglas Holtz-Eakin, the former head of

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the Congressional Budget Office, says. They will stimulate more private investment. If the policies are temporary, the business community will be uncertain how long the new tax incentives will last. And they will invest less.

President Bush's tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 are an example. Growth was less than robust. The cuts were temporary and would have expired in 10 years had President Barack Obama and Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell failed to negotiate a compromise. They agreed to save the cuts for the middle class. And McConnell managed to preserve the cuts for millions of upper-middle-class taxpayers as well. Tax rates for the rich went up, pleasing Obama.

Where does this leave us? Trump and his advisers are mistaken in their belief there's a way around reconciliation, which bars filibusters and would allow a 51-vote majority to enact tax reform. Republicans narrowly control the Senate, with 52 seats.

The chances that Trump's I-won't-pay plan will meet the rigors of reconciliation are nil. And absent reconciliation, it's not likely he could attract eight Democrats to kill a filibuster either. The truth is tax reform will die, at least in the current Congress, unless reconciliation is used.

Ryan explained why on Fox Business in March. "The left does not believe in what we're trying to do on tax reform," he said. "They don't want us to lower tax rates. They don't want to go to a territorial system [on overseas profits]. They don't believe in these things." Democrats will oppose tax reform en masse.

But Republicans do believe in all those things. Peter Roskam, the chairman of the House Ways and Means subcommittee on tax policy, says we've reached a "national inflection point" in 2017, "a transformational moment." Tax reform is a way of seizing that moment. "To squander it would be foolish," according to Roskam, who represents a district in the suburbs west of Chicago.

"Nobody is defending the tax code," he told me. "And nobody likes the IRS. If the IRS was a person choking on the side of the road, people would walk up and say, 'I don't think you're going to make it.' And walk away."

Done right, tax reform would spur "real growth, simplify the tax code, end the erosion of the tax base, and create a permanent tax system," Roskam says. Done wrong, the deficit will soar, and Republicans will be blamed for doing what they blamed Obama for doing: driving up the national debt.

There are ways to pay for tax reform without increasing the deficit, slashing spending, or raising taxes. The most famous was followed for tax reform in 1986. Tax loopholes and special interest preferences were eliminated, making room for lower tax rates and a broader tax base.

Getting rid of loopholes is very difficult. Every break has a constituency, often a wealthy one. Passage of the 1986 reform took two years. Thirty years later, new loopholes fill the tax code again. Their beneficiaries won't surrender without a fight.

Last year, House Republicans campaigned on a plan featuring a 20 percent "border adjustment tax." Imports would be taxed, exports wouldn't. The tax would not be unfair to other countries. They have their own ruses to tax American imports, such as a value-added tax.

The border tax split the business community. Retailers, given all the stuff they import from China, were furious. They mounted an aggressive effort to vilify the tax. But Ryan hasn't given up, since the tax makes sense. It would make it possible to cut the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 20 percent while sticking to revenue neutrality. Trump wants 15 percent.

The fault line is between permanent and temporary tax cuts, Roskam says. It pits a border tax against growth-generated revenue from tax cuts. It puts Ryan and Trump on opposite sides.

"This needs to be melded into one bill," Roskam says. Once it happens, "we can get the kind of economic growth we need, which will solve so many problems we have in this country," Ryan told PBS. That's worth praying for. ♦

The Tehran Two-Step

The Obama team dances around a rotten Iran deal.

BY JENNA LIFHITS

Details of the United States' 2016 prisoner swap with Iran continue to surface more than a year later, forming a picture much different from the one the Obama administration presented at the time. The latest revelations are the most shocking yet. Under the deal, the United States granted clemency to 7 Iranians and dismissed charges against another 14 in exchange for the release of 4 Americans held in Iran. President Barack Obama called it "a reciprocal humanitarian gesture"—but it turns out the Justice Department had labeled many of those Iranians "a clear threat to U.S. national security."

Obama made the announcement on January 17, one day after the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal with Iran took effect, along with the news that Tehran and Washington had settled a decades-old claim over an arms deal gone awry. Obama administration officials claimed the settlement—$400 million plus $1.3 billion in interest—saved American taxpayers a significant sum by avoiding a Hague Tribunal proceeding.

The string of briefings left dozens of questions unanswered, but most of Washington focused on the timing of the agreements. Officials repeatedly stressed that the money and the prisoners were separate from one another, and from the nuclear deal that had been a top priority for the administration. Skeptical lawmakers and members of the media swamped the administration with requests for information about the mechanics of the $1.7 billion outlay amid allegations that it was a ransom payment for the jailed Americans. Those questions were slowly answered over months—though not by the White House.

The *Wall Street Journal* ignited the firestorm in August 2016 with its report that the Obama administration had delivered to Iran $400 million in cash, the first installment of the settlement, via an unmarked cargo plane. Members of Congress toughened their demands for information and raised concerns that Tehran would use the hard currency to boost the Lebanese militia Hezbollah or Bashar al-Assad's murderous Syrian regime.

GARY LOCKE

"For the administration to continue to refuse to answer simple questions regarding its suspicious delivery of $400 million in pallets of cash to Iran only raises more questions," then-congressman Mike Pompeo told THE WEEKLY STANDARD in August. Iran ended up authorizing the money for transfer to its military, according to a September policy brief by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Administration officials claimed they used cash because the United States did not have a banking relationship with Iran. "What we have is the manufacturing of outrage in a story that we disclosed in January," Obama said. "The only bit of news that is relevant on this is the fact that we paid cash. . . . We couldn't send them a check and we could not wire the money."

But as *TWS* reported in September, the administration made such wire payments to Iran before and after the president's claim, in July 2015 and April 2016.

As controversy over the cash payment raged, administration officials maintained that the financial settlement and prisoner swap were not coordinated; it was a "coincidence" that the money arrived in Iran at almost the same time the regime freed the American prisoners.

But in fact, as another *Journal* report revealed a few weeks later, the cash payment was part of a "tightly scripted exchange" tied to the release of the Americans. Iran could take possession of the cash only once the Americans were in the air (three left that day). Another two cash shipments totaling $1.3 billion were delivered in the weeks that followed.

Following the *Journal*'s disclosure, Obama officials said that the administration had used the cash as "leverage."

"We took advantage of leverage that we felt we could have to make sure that they got out safely and efficiently," then-State Department spokesman John Kirby said. "I don't think anybody in the administration is going to make any apology for having taken advantage of those opportunities to get these Americans home." He admitted, "I certainly would agree that this particular fact is not something that we've talked about in the past."

Then, in late September, the *Journal* shed light on another deal: The United States had agreed to support lifting United Nations sanctions on

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two Iranian banks critical to financing Tehran's missile program. Senior State Department official Brett McGurk signed three documents the morning of January 17, 2016, the report revealed: one for the prisoner swap, one for the $1.7 billion payment, and one committing to support lifting the U.N. sanctions. The decision received minimal press coverage at the time, and Obama did not mention it that day. "We still have sanctions on Iran for its violations of human rights, for its support of terrorism, and for its ballistic missile program," Obama said in announcing the swap and settlement. "And we will continue to enforce these sanctions, vigorously."

The three agreements were certainly linked, said Mark Dubowitz, executive director of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, all rooted in the Obama administration's desire to secure the JCPOA.

"The nuclear deal was, for the Iranian regime, not the end of negotiations. It was nearly the beginning," Dubowitz told *TWS*. "They saw an opportunity in the waning year of the Obama administration to try and extract as many concessions as they could from an administration that was clearly . . . desperate for a deal." He added, "The notion that somehow the $1.7 billion was about an outstanding military account, and that had nothing to do with the hostages, which had nothing to do with Bank Sepah is completely absurd."

And now, explosive details about the prisoner swap and its effects on counter-proliferation efforts have come to light. *Politico* reported this week that the administration significantly downplayed the backgrounds of the Iranians let off the hook—and made sure some of them weren't captured before the nuclear deal was signed.

In his January remarks, Obama focused on the seven Iranian prisoners in the United States. "These individuals were not charged with terrorism or any violent offenses," he said, calling them "civilians." But the Justice Department had declared a number of these individuals threats to U.S. national security, allegedly central to or involved in illicit efforts to acquire for Tehran American multi-application technology, including that used in satellites and cruise missiles.

The State Department noted in its January statement, "The United States also removed any Interpol red notices and dismissed any charges against 14 Iranians for whom it was assessed that extradition requests were unlikely to be successful." Some of these fugitives were allegedly entrenched in efforts to acquire weapons and Boeing planes, according to *Politico*, and one likely contributed to the deaths of Americans. Amin Ravan was an alleged conspirator in a procurement network that got high-tech parts to Iran then used in IEDs, which Shiite fighters used to kill American soldiers in Iraq. U.S. military and intelligence officials have pointedly stated that targeting American troops is Iranian regime policy. "It is the policy of the Iranian government, approved to the highest levels of that government, to facilitate the killing of Americans in Iraq," then-CIA director Mike Hayden said in 2008.

'The State Department took a list from Iran of who they wanted un-indicted and pretty much accepted it, even as the people were credibly guilty of breaking U.S. laws,' said David Albright, founder of the Institute for Science and International Security.

The administration's decision to release or drop charges against these 21 was a concession to Iran fueled by its desire to protect the nuclear deal, a top proliferation expert told *TWS*.

"The State Department took a list from Iran of who they wanted un-indicted and pretty much accepted it, even as the people were credibly guilty of breaking U.S. laws," said David Albright, founder of the Institute for Science and International Security. "This was really a very extensive effort to appease the Iranians, who were very upset that their people were being arrested."

Worse, there was a broader pattern of administration officials delaying or denying investigations into Iranian figures in the run-up to the nuclear deal, *Politico* reported. Requests to lure Iranians with arrest warrants against them abroad, to countries in which they could be nabbed, were also put off. (A Chinese associate of one of the Iranians was arrested in London when he flew there to see a soccer match.) The State Department was central to stunting these efforts, Albright said. "This stuff stopped on Kerry's desk," he said. "When State Department and particularly Kerry didn't sign something, they couldn't proceed."

Kerry's former chief of staff Jon Finer disputed *Politico*'s reporting that federal law enforcement agencies worry that years of work in counter-proliferation have been destroyed by State's single-mindedness. Every administration department agreed on the prisoner swap, he told *TWS*. "This notion that somehow this involved the White House, the State Department, in conflict with the DoJ or the FBI over these outcomes—the reality of those conversations, which I and others were involved in, is that there was a 100 percent unanimous consensus among principals in the Obama administration," Finer said. "In the end, all of the principals, including of the agencies that were described as having dissented to this, actually, in the end, supported."

But then, the secretary of state's former chief of staff also denied that the administration had downplayed or concealed the terms of the swap.

"The Obama administration, far from having hidden what were the terms of the prisoner exchange that took place, was pretty clear at the time—both at the level of the president of the United States and the secretary of state," Finer said. "Both of them made pretty detailed statements in the immediate aftermath of that arrangement about what it constituted, who was included and who wasn't, and also why." ♦

Wit and Witness

Remembering Kate O'Beirne, 1949–2017.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

Last May, I traveled to Rome with a small group of journalists. We met with bishops and cardinals. We toured the Scavi beneath St. Peter's and explored the Vatican Museums with a renowned art historian. We were welcomed onto the terrace atop the papal apartment, giving us an extraordinary view of Bernini's piazza at the magic hour. Among all of the pleasures of this pilgrimage, the one I treasure most might be the evening I found myself ambling across the cobblestones of Borgo Pio, arm-in-arm with Kate O'Beirne, on the hunt for late-night gelato.

I did not know Kate well. I almost didn't know her at all. As Jonah Goldberg wrote last week, Kate had been something like the den mother for just about every young conservative writer in Washington over the last 20 years. But for whatever reason, our paths rarely crossed, and when they did I avoided her. It seems ridiculous now, but the simple fact is that she intimidated me.

Kate was one of the great writers of her generation. She had worked in government starting with the Reagan administration and then became Washington editor of *National Review* and a fixture on political TV shows like the *Capital Gang*. I revered her from afar and was mildly terrified that if we met, either (a) I would turn into a puddle; (b) she would turn out to be less wonderful than I'd imagined; or (c) both. As is so often the case, I was wrong on all counts.

I met Kate in a little hotel courtyard 30 feet from the Piazza San Pietro. She was standing in the sun wearing a pair of Wayfarers with green lenses. Our mutual friend April Ponnuru—in whom I'd confided my reservations about meeting her—introduced us. April puckishly told Kate that I found her intimidating. I turned red. Kate laughed and hugged me. I loved her instantly.

O'Beirne on NBC's Meet the Press, *February 17, 2008*

Over the course of the next week, I sat beside Kate at meals, in taxis, in churches, in outdoor cafés over espresso. She told me about her sons and her grandchildren. We talked about parenting and the church and art. We walked all over the city and I was continually struck by her physical presence: She was tall and lanky, with the languid gait of a movie star. She had a distinct, easygoing glamour.

Kate was the quickest wit I've ever encountered. The Doc Holliday of wit. As we sat awaiting Pope Francis's arrival at the Wednesday papal audience, Kate recounted another such Wednesday, a few years back. It was a hot, sticky Roman day and the Holy Father was running late. The crowd grew restless and, eventually, rather cranky. Kate turned to her companion and stage-whispered, "Give us Barabbas."

One evening, our little group attended mass in the basement chapel of the Pontifical North American College, a snug, dim room whose pews each had room for two. Kate and I sat together. As we waited silently in the shadows for the priest to begin, sirens suddenly began wailing outside. After several disconcerting minutes of this racket, Kate leaned over and muttered, "They've got to do something about those sirens. I feel like Anne Frank." I have never laughed so hard in a church. I doubt I'll ever forget that moment. Nor what happened afterward, when I got to kneel alongside her, embrace her at the sign of peace, and receive the Eucharist with her.

There's something strange and wonderful about meeting someone on a pilgrimage. It's a period that exists out of time; you are surrounded by constant beauty, each marvel surpassing the last, not one of them like anything in your everyday life. And the pilgrims all share something foundational, even if each experiences it differently. Even if it's unspoken.

Which may be why, more than her charm, or wit, or generosity—more than her kindness, even—what struck me most about Kate was her holiness. She'd laugh at that, I'm sure. She wasn't any kind of a hairshirt-and-mantilla Catholic. Even so. She was the real deal. It radiated from her.

Last Sunday, a small army of conservatives lost their godmother. I know that for them and for her family, her death is a heartbreaking loss. I count myself grateful just to have met her, and blessed to have followed in Peter's footsteps with Kate O'Beirne by my side. ◆

ALEX WONG / MEET THE PRESS / GETTY

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Pledging Allegiance

The Clintons' loyalty scale.

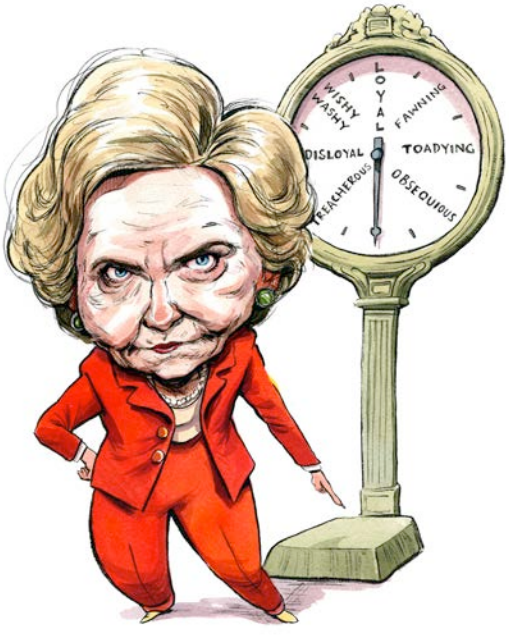
BY ERIC FELTEN

Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton's Doomed Campaign has been all the buzz in Washington. The book, by Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes, is full of stories that probably never would have been told if Hillary had eked out an Electoral College win. Not just because a victorious campaign tends not to air its dirty laundry, but because President Hillary Clinton would have been in a position to punish anyone caught being disloyal. And if there was anything the residents of Hillaryland knew, it was not to run afoul of the boss's obsessive demands for loyalty.

Hillary had her ways of knowing whose devotion could be counted on: Among the most eye-grabbing revelations in a book full of eye-grabbing revelations is that Hillary—convinced disloyal staffers were to blame for the failure of her 2008 campaign—set out, Queeg-like, to prove it. According to *Shattered*, she "instructed a trusted aide to access the campaign's server and download the messages sent and received by top staffers." She set about reading her team's correspondence. Why did she stoop so low? She was driven to it, "Prizing loyalty most among human traits."

Loyalty can be beneficial, a glue that holds people together in a common endeavor—and indeed it did work at a time of crisis for the Clintons. Never mind what the truth was about Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, when impeachment loomed, "It had been Hillary, who, at the darkest moment, while others were floundering, had assigned a fanatically loyal entourage of men and women to report Sunday mornings to plan for the battle," Carl Bernstein wrote in his book *A Woman in Charge*. "Hillary surrounded herself with people who were loyal to her cause." And how was that loyalty demonstrated? They were people who "would do her bidding."

The Clintons had an expansive concept of who should be doing their bidding, expansive enough to include every Democratic member of Congress. In another of *Shattered*'s gobsmackers, Allen and Parnes write that Hillary and Bill devised their own loyalty scale and used it to weigh, systematically, lawmakers' fidelity to the Clintons: "After the 2008 campaign, two of her aides, Kris Balderston and Adrienne Elrod, had toiled to assign loyalty scores to members of Congress." According to Allen and Parnes, the scale ranged from one to seven: "one for the most loyal to seven for those who had committed the most egregious acts of treachery."



BRITT SPENCER

For politicians, loyalty isn't just a tool for binding people together, it is also a rough measure of power—the obsequiousness of others being proof that one is powerful enough to be feared. By the same measure, suffering disloyalty can be seen as a humiliating demonstration of one's impotence. Hillary was so obsessed with what loyalty said about her power that she made that rough measure into a precise gauge of her status. "As long as she was seen as the prohibitive favorite to win the primary and the election, Democrats would fear being branded traitors or leakers," Allen and Parnes write. But how, after losing the 2008 nomination, would she inspire—or compel—loyalty? If "she wasn't going to be in a position to reward or punish them, they had no reason to worry about whether they were rated as ones or sevens on her loyalty scale."

That's where Bill earned his keep—as an enforcer. He "campaigned against some of the sevens in subsequent primary elections, helping to knock them out of office," the authors of *Shattered* report. "The fear of retribution was not lost on the remaining sevens, some of whom rushed to endorse Hillary early in the 2016 cycle."

What does it mean to be loyal to a politician? Lyndon B. Johnson had a clear concept of what he wanted from anyone who worked for him: "I don't want loyalty," LBJ once said of what he was looking for in an aide. "I want *loyalty*. I want him to kiss my ass in Macy's window at high noon and tell me it smells like roses. I want his pecker in my pocket." That corrupt sort of loyalty may get people to do what you demand, but it is a fatal weakness in an organization. LBJ demanded that his aides proclaim to be true things they knew to be false and in the process deprived himself of the information he needed to save his presidency from disaster. (Johnson, for example, was particularly enamored of Robert McNamara's willingness to tell him how well things were going in Vietnam.)

When truth-telling comes to be seen as an affront to loyalty, lying becomes a bizarro-world sign of good faith. Psychiatrist Jerome H. Jaffe, head of drug

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abuse policy for the Nixon administration, diagnosed the core problem in that doomed White House: "To dissent was to be disloyal."

Instead of learning from that, Hillaryland became Nixonville. Loyalty, taken to extremes, ceased to be a source of virtuous strength and instead became a hobbling vice.

Leaders need their subordinates to tell them the truth if they are to have any hope of making sound decisions. The kind of truth-telling the Clinton campaign desperately needed was candor about what wasn't working, both in strategy and execution. But candor, in Hillaryland, was taken as a sign of unreliability: "Most of the people around her were jockeying to get closer to her," Allen and Parnes write, "not to make her wonder about their commitment."

That was especially the case when it came to assessing the performance of the candidate herself. Everyone knew the campaign's biggest problem was Hillary, but "no one who drew a salary from the campaign would tell her that. It was a self-signed death warrant to raise a question about Hillary's competence—to her or anyone else—in loyalty-obsessed Clintonworld." Her staff was so busy telling her she smelled like roses, she believed it too.

The demands of loyalty were so stifling that not only couldn't aides be candid about the candidate, they couldn't speak their minds about the failings of their colleagues. Take chief speechwriter Dan Schwerin. When he proved unable to come up with a narrative for the campaign (a problem that, of course, had its source in Clinton herself), communications director Jennifer Palmieri wanted to give the task to a hired gun. But Schwerin was a made man. "If she undercut him and outsourced his job, she risked making an enemy out of a protected citizen of Hillaryland," according to Allen and Parnes. "Though some of Hillary's aides were both competent and loyal, the candidate favored the latter over the former, which is one major reason the campaign's gears often got stuck."

This was how Hillary Clinton had worked for years, according to Allen and Parnes. When it came to staffing the State Department, Madame Secretary "prized loyalty to a degree that sometimes overshadowed competence and sound judgment." As they had reported before the campaign, "If there was one person who played best to Hillary's demand for loyalty, it was Huma [Abedin]." The trusted longtime personal assistant was the great example of how high a third-rater could climb in the Clinton hierarchy if fully devoted to toadying. Imagine a White House run on that same principle.

Loyalty is a fine thing—without it there can be no love, no friendship, no community. But of the virtues, it is the one most likely to be abused, the most likely to curdle into vice. Beware those who demand absolute loyalty. Chances are it isn't love and friendship they're after, but ongoing participation in shabby little conspiracies (or worse).

By the same token, though loyalty can be empowering, taken to extremes it becomes debilitating. The loyalty that Hillaryland prized was so extreme as to be cartoonish, which goes a long way toward explaining the catastrophe that befell the Clinton campaign. It's a delicious irony that in telling their tales to Allen and Parnes, Hillary's former loyalists are racking up solid sevens on the Clinton betrayal scale. ♦

Wow If True

Trump's alternative media.

BY MARK HEMINGWAY

The news that former national security adviser Susan Rice was responsible for "unmasking" the identities of associates of President Trump in government surveillance reports sent shockwaves through Washington. But almost as newsworthy was the identity of the man who got the scoop: vociferous Trump booster and blogger Mike Cernovich.

Though it was Bloomberg's foreign policy reporter Eli Lake who nailed down the details of the Rice story on the morning of April 3, the evening before Cernovich had published a short report on Medium, an Internet platform open to anyone, headlined "Susan Rice Requested Unmasking of Incoming Trump Administration Officials." The post had a few original details, but beyond the revelation in the headline, the article was notable for its attack on *New York Times* reporter Maggie Haberman. According to Cernovich, Haberman had been sitting on the story "in an effort to protect the reputation of former President Barack Obama."

Then, the day after Lake had produced his much more credible and detailed account, Cernovich lashed out at him, claiming Lake, too, had been sitting on the story.

"Eli Lake had it. He didn't want to run it and Bloomberg didn't want to run it because it vindicates Trump's claim that he had been spied upon. . . . I'm showing you the politics of 'real journalism.' 'Real journalism' is that Bloomberg had it and the *New York Times* had it but they wouldn't run it because they don't want to run any stories that would make Obama look bad or that will vindicate Trump."

Haberman tells me she "first heard the Susan Rice detail in the Cernovich piece." Lake says, in no uncertain terms, that Cernovich's grasp of "real journalism" is wanting. "I don't think Cernovich understands what we do," he says. Lake notes that he had to nail down the facts before publishing. "I get information and verify it," he says. "Why would I sit on it? It's a huge story. He's a fake news artist."

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There's no question who the White House thought deserved the most credit for the Rice story. On April 4, Donald Trump Jr. tweeted, "Congrats to [Mike Cernovich] for breaking the #SusanRice story. In a long gone time of unbiased journalism he'd win the Pulitzer, but not today!"

Cernovich claims he got the story "from somebody who works in one of those media companies. I have spies in every media organization," which is implausible. Less implausible is that Cernovich might have sources in the White House. Given that the Trump administration and national media establishment are combative to an unprecedented degree, should it be a surprise if the White House hands off a big story to a blogger whose fealty can be counted on? Cernovich has over 250,000 Twitter followers. In the 21st century, you don't need Bloomberg or the *New York Times* to break a big story. And the media can be obnoxiously self-congratulatory considering how many political "scoops" involve little more than waiting by the phone for the next big leak from a partisan source.

It would be hard, in other words, to begrudge the White House its bestowing a scoop on a friendly blogger. Except that's not all Cernovich is. He's also a crackpot. He's the author of the self-published books *Gorilla Mindset: How to Control Your Thoughts and Emotions, Improve Your Health and Fitness, Make More Money and Live Life on Your Terms* and *MAGA Mindset: Making YOU and America Great Again*. Among the self-improvement ideas he pushes are claims of astral projection and instructions to men on developing "super serum" that makes women addicted to them (you don't want to know the details).

As for his other thoughts on women, Cernovich is a real charmer. On his blog, *Danger and Play*, there are such notable entries as "Misogyny Gets You Laid," "When Should You Compliment a Woman?" (A: "During or after sex"), and "How to Cheat on Your Girlfriend." And he was also one of the major promulgators of the "pizzagate" conspiracy theory, which held that the Democratic party was involved in a pedophile ring run out of a Washington eatery. The whole thing seemed too bizarre to take seriously—until a man spun up by the hoax drove to the restaurant and fired multiple rifle shots (he was arrested and pled guilty to assault).

Cernovich is not the only iffy blogger the Trump family has decided to elevate. In January, it issued White House press credentials to Jim Hoft, aka *Gateway Pundit*. Like Cernovich, Hoft is undeniably popular. "During the election, I had one million readers a day come to *Gateway Pundit*," Hoft bragged at the "Deploraball" inauguration event. "And the reason was

Mike Cernovich and Jim Hoft

because I was telling the truth, and the mainstream media was telling the fake f—ing news."

Whatever one might say about the lousy performance of the mainstream media—and there's quite a lot to say—a blogger who propagated the lunatic claim that President Obama was Photoshopped into the famous picture of the White House Situation Room during the Osama bin Laden raid isn't in a strong position to lecture on "fake news." (The list of similarly dubious stories Hoft has run with is far too long to detail.)

As with Cernovich, there are good reasons to believe *Gateway Pundit* has a following in the White House. On March 3, as the investigation into Trump and Russia was heating up, the president tweeted, "We should start an immediate investigation into [Senate minority leader Chuck] Schumer and his ties to Russia and Putin. A total hypocrite!" Attached to the tweet was a photo of a smiling Schumer and Vladimir Putin, enjoying donuts and coffee in New York in 2003. *Gateway Pundit* had featured the photo on its home page the day before. And *Gateway Pundit* is undeniably influential in the Trump-friendly media ecosystem. In February, Sean Hannity tweeted a *Gateway Pundit* story to his 2.3 million followers about "globalist war criminal John McCain" soliciting campaign donations from Russia. Hannity's comment: "Wow if true."

If journalism in the Trump era had to be reduced to one slogan, "Wow if true" would do the trick. Whether by design or not, Trump appears to have broken the media in ways from which it will be difficult to recover. As troubling as the White House's ordaining Mike Cernovich and Jim Hoft into the Beltway clerisy might be, the traditional media have reacted to Trump's desire to operate outside the usual journalistic rules by further eroding their own credibility.

CNN responded to Cernovich's scoop by trying to discredit it, never mind that Rice isn't denying she's the unmasker and that it had been verified and detailed by Eli Lake, a reporter with an established record of breaking big foreign policy stories. Multiple network personalities dismissed the story and defended Rice on air without any substantive reason for doing so. CNN even referred to the story as "false" in the chyrons on the bottom of the screen.

And of course, the left is rallying around their own Cernoviches and Hofts. Louise Mensch, a former Tory MP, is running a conspiracy-laden investigation of Trump on social media. Mensch did some reporting last fall that appeared to have some germs of truth regarding probes of Trump's Russia connections. Since his inauguration, though, she's seemed to be having a public meltdown on Twitter. *BuzzFeed* has documented at least 210 people and organizations Mensch has accused of being under Russian government influence—the longest list of supposed foreign agents uncovered by one person since Joseph McCarthy waved his infamous list of 205 Communist moles in the State Department at the Republican Women's Club of Wheeling.

Despite this, there's a huge cult of people who should know better sharing

IMAGES: VIA YOUTUBE

Mensch's increasingly wild theories. The *New York Times* published an op-ed by her on Trump and Russia in March. Online, everyone from Hollywood actor and director Rob Reiner to the editor in chief of the *MIT Technology Review* has been touting her theories of pervasive Russian influence.

Former National Security Council spokesman and longtime CIA analyst Ned Price earned quite a lot of media attention for resigning in protest over Trump's policies in February. On April 19, Price tweeted out this blog headline: "Intel source: FBI discovers Kremlin is blackmailing [resigning congressman] Jason Chaffetz over Donald Trump and Russia." Price's comment on it was less concise than "Wow if true" but amounted to the same thing: "Interesting, if single-sourced, article from a few days ago. Just getting around to sharing it now cause, well . . ."

Speaking of single sources, the article Price linked was from something called the *Palmer Report*, one of the exhibits in a recent *Atlantic* article on "fake news aimed at liberals." The *Daily Caller* observed that the *Palmer Report*'s lone source was . . . Louise Mensch. Price defended his comment, saying, "every once in a blue moon, the tin hat can fit."

The Trump administration may end up regretting its unorthodox media strategy. Trump's friends in alternative media can be remarkably effective, but some of them are "alternative" not because they are brave dissenters but because they're unhinged—and that makes them unreliable. When Trump bombed Syria in retaliation for Bashar al-Assad's chemical weapons attack, two of the loudest critics were former allies: Alex Jones's conspiracy theory network *InfoWars* and none other than Mike Cernovich.

In the course of ranting about how the "deep state" had tricked Trump into war, Cernovich speculated that Syria's chemical weapons attack was faked. "Did McCain give 'moderate rebels' (ISIS) in Syria poison gas and Hollywood style film equipment?" he tweeted on April 6. The relationship between Cernovich and the White House was briefly strained but now appears to be on the mend. On April 25, Cernovich reported on Twitter that after a "misunderstanding" he had been granted a White House press pass.

The media, however contemptible they can be, remain a vital American institution. And the Trump presidency has Washington journalists in disarray in ways that are deeply worrisome for those who think news should be grounded in reality, and reporting skeptical and rigorous. On April 13, Charlie Spiering, the White House correspondent for Breitbart News—the wildly pro-Trump media outlet previously steered by Steve Bannon, now senior adviser to the president—reported that the president made a point of calling the reporters in the White House press pool "very honorable people." It was probably sarcastic, but wow if true. ♦

Left, Right, Reverse

Liberals for capital, conservatives for labor?

BY JAY COST

In the heart of Wall Street, a new statue is causing quite a kerfuffle. Sponsored by State Street Global Advisors, one of the world's largest asset-management firms, the "Fearless Girl" was installed earlier this year to stand in front of the famous "Charging Bull" in Bowling Green Park, just a short walk from the New York Stock Exchange.

Arturo Di Modica, the sculptor of the Charging Bull, has asked for Fearless Girl to be taken down. This prompted public defenses on Twitter from Mayor Bill de Blasio and Sen. Elizabeth Warren, two of the nation's most prominent progressives, who celebrated the new statue as a statement of feminist resolve.

What a strange "issue" for progressives to fuss over! Conservatives do not have a dog in this hunt, but it is still a fascinating illustration of how the political left has evolved over the last century: What was once a farmer-labor coalition is increasingly Wall Street-friendly and centered around upper-middle-class cultural anxieties.

When Woodrow Wilson, the first progressive president, was reelected in 1916, his coalition was forged by those who worked with their hands. The farmers of the Midwest and the workers in the big cities came together to give him a narrow victory, which would serve as a template for the Democratic party for the next two generations. Franklin Roosevelt's 12 years in office were anchored by the farmers and the labor unions. So also was Harry Truman's narrow victory in 1948.

But that started to change in the 1960s. The country grew prosperous in the postwar era, membership in labor unions peaked and then declined, and a new left began to grow, first on college campuses and then in the suburbs. Political liberalism transitioned into an alliance between racial and ethnic minorities and upwardly mobile, college-educated whites. The loyalties of the working class fractured along racial and ethnic lines—with minority workers voting Democratic and white workers voting Republican.

And so it was in 2016 that Uniontown, Pennsylvania, voted overwhelmingly for Republican Donald Trump, while Westchester, New York, went for Democrat Hillary Clinton.

The self-interests of upscale white liberals are not tied to better wages and working conditions. Unlike the coal miners of eastern Kentucky in the 1930s, they are not stuck in dangerous, low-paying, dead-end jobs. Their priorities, accordingly, are different.

Jay Cost is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

In solidarity with unions and minority workers, upscale white liberals support such initiatives as the $15 minimum wage, but their own liberalism emphasizes issues like gay rights, abortion, and environmentalism.

In many respects, these issues have substantive implications—for instance, whether to fund Planned Parenthood and whether to ratify the Paris Agreement on climate change. But there is a decided emphasis these days on manners and symbols among upscale liberals.

College campuses, for instance, have become a briar patch of rules and norms regarding what kind of speech is legitimate and what is unacceptably déclassé. And Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign was premised, in part, on electing the first female president—something that would be of direct material aid to precisely one woman, Hillary Clinton herself, and only a symbolic "win" for the rest of womankind.

It is fair to say that conservatives have fallen prey to this tendency as well. I have certainly read more articles from conservative webzines bemoaning transgenderism than I have ever met transgender people, for instance. Perhaps it is a consequence of the fact that since life is so much easier now than it was even 40 years ago, we have time to idly debate issues that substantively affect only a handful of individuals. Our forebears were too busy putting food on the table to fuss over intersectionality and the supposed dangers of transgender bathrooms.

These changes have had important implications on the politics of the corporate boardroom. Seventy years ago, the vanguard of the progressive left was pushing nationwide strikes by industrial unions after World War II. The intention of the labor-left was to force the great industrial magnates to renegotiate the distribution of the national income. Now, however, the vanguard of the left is posing for pictures behind a statue paid for by a firm that manages $2.5 trillion in wealth.

Big business has been the big winner. It is substantially easier for big business to make peace with EMILY's List and the Human Rights Campaign than it was to cut a deal with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers or the United Mine Workers. Barack Obama may have been the most liberal president since Harry Truman, but there is no way Truman would have been comfortable taking a $400,000 speaking invitation from bond firm Cantor Fitzgerald, as Obama just did. And if Truman had, "Give 'em Hell" Harry probably would have lived up to that nickname.

And of course, the Republican party remains decidedly in the camp of big business. Advancing the interests of business has been the party's raison d'être since it freed the slaves back in 1865, and remains so to this day. One need look no further than the 2014 farm bill, passed through the House despite the fact it was stuffed full of goodies for big agribusinesses, and the Export-Import Bank, which most Republicans support despite the fact it is mainly a way for the American taxpayer to subsidize Boeing.

It seems, then, that no matter which way the American people vote, big business is going to do just fine. That's not the way it always was, and that is not a positive development. It is one thing to support a capitalistic system, as conservatives do. It is quite another to back a concentration of capital that is facilitated, at least in part, by government regulations, favors, and subsidies—which is closer to what we have.

It would be nice to have a real conversation about the nexus between American politics and business interests. At one point, deep in the past, Americans had at least one side of the aisle ready to ask uncomfortable questions of our corporate titans. Now, though, they're too busy posing for pictures in front of a silly statue paid for by a hedge fund. ♦

Teen Tech Times

The entrepreneurial spirit is alive, well, and youthful. BY TONY MECIA

By most measures, Will Manidis is like many other American high school students. He plays lacrosse for Westtown, his Quaker boarding school outside Philadelphia. He's captain of Westtown's robotics team, which has deepened his interest in math and computer science. Last fall, in the heat of the election, he helped organize debate nights.

Such activities are great material for college applications. When he enrolled at Westtown, Manidis figured he'd wind up at Harvard or Princeton, maybe go on to earn a Ph.D. and do cutting-edge research.

"I was going to be that dude behind a keyboard that never talked to anyone," he recalls.

Tony Mecia is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Over a year ago, though, those plans started to change, after many hours of working closely with two fellow members of the robotics team, Roger Balcells Sanchez and Rachel Coe. Balcells had recently lost his grandmother to Parkinson's disease. Instead of programming robots to defeat other teams' robots in games, they thought, what if the three of them used their knowledge of algorithms and technology for something more meaningful? Could they help Parkinson's patients live longer, richer lives?

They set out to develop a smartphone app that provides Parkinson's patients with feedback on what activities make them feel better. Manidis now often uses recess for quick calls to medical doctors or tech experts. He sometimes schedules business meetings in the school's science building.

And he occasionally relies on his mom to drive him to connect with venture capital firms. The company, TrackYourDisease, is hoping to raise $150,000 from investors.

He says his parents are supportive but "a little weirded out that I'm running a business full-time while in school. The world they grew up in is very different than the world I'm becoming an adult in."

There's no guarantee Manidis and his partners will succeed, of course. Most businesses fail, even those whose founders aren't constrained by classes and curfews. But their example demonstrates that the spirit of entrepreneurship remains alive among today's youth. There are no firm numbers on teenage startups, but research suggests that people in their 20s and early 30s are slightly less likely to become entrepreneurs than they were 20 years ago. Some companies that have grown into household names were founded by teenagers, including Dell, Subway, IKEA, and Facebook.

George Orwell observed that "each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it." Complaints about today's teenagers are legion: that they are self-absorbed and selfie-obsessed, spending hours a day Snapchatting and Instagramming on their phones to the detriment of real relationships with friends and family. Generation Z, the post-millennial generation, is the first born in the era of widespread Internet availability. That steady stream of access to technology has clear downsides. But for entrepreneurial-minded young people, it also comes with significant advantages—in addition to the natural enthusiasm, idealism, and can-do attitude of youth. In some ways, the environment for teenagers starting businesses is more favorable than in the past, and many are taking advantage. Who knows what great advances of tomorrow are being developed by young entrepreneurs today?

"This is the first generation that has grown up without gatekeepers," says Rich Sedmak, founder of Schoolyard Ventures, a suburban Philadelphia company that helps high school students launch businesses. "It used to be if you had an idea, you had to go to venture capitalists to tell you if it's a good idea or not. So many of the industries that were ruled by gatekeepers aren't ruled by gatekeepers anymore. So many things that were hurdles in the past aren't hurdles to this generation."

Nowadays, young entrepreneurs can glean business advice from blogs and Internet message boards. They can crowdfund for seed money or get paired with investors on specialty websites. They can network on their phones and find out about and enter the growing number of business competitions. They can watch other people's startup ideas get picked apart on TV shows like *Shark Tank*.

AcoustiGlass's prototype

VIA YOUTUBE

The types of businesses most common among young entrepreneurs, Sedmak says, include mobile app development, social media marketing, and apparel- or food-based businesses. He's worked with high school students who have founded companies that roast coffee, make organic bone broth, and sell a liquid repellent spray that keeps clothes from getting dirty. Starting businesses while in high school is not just a half-baked, calculated effort to burnish college applications, either. Some of these companies are making big money and providing an early foray into the business world for a generation that expects to change jobs repeatedly over the course of a career.

With many teens overscheduled, finding time to work on their businesses is often the biggest obstacle. Kotaro Kojima, 15, and his younger brother Kei, 14, of Medina, Ohio, have black belts in karate and practice two hours a day for their youth orchestra. That leaves little time to work on their invention, AcoustiGlass: eyeglasses for the deaf that sense sounds and relay them above the lenses with flashing LED lights.

Inspiration struck the brothers three years ago, when at a summer family camp in Tennessee they were playing basketball with a group of deaf teens. A horn sounded for everybody to move to the next activity, but the deaf teens didn't react until they saw everybody else moving.

"That really alerted us to it, to the challenges they face every day," Kotaro says. "To have an opportunity to make a difference in deaf people's lives, it's really amazing." The brothers developed a business plan, started writing software to recognize sounds such as sirens and alarms, programmed LED lights to blink, and applied for a patent. In early April, they won the $11,000 first-place prize in the business concept category of the Diamond Challenge for High School Entrepreneurs, an international competition held at the University of Delaware.

There's plenty of other support emerging for young entrepreneurs, too. The investment firm Blackstone is pouring money into a program called LaunchPad that works with college-age entrepreneurs. Tech investor Peter Thiel's charitable foundation has started a two-year fellowship program in lieu of college for aspiring business leaders aged 22 and under.

"There's more money than ever flowing into this space," says Justin Lafazan, a rising junior at the University of Pennsylvania who cofounded the Next Gen Summit, an annual conference for young entrepreneurs.

As for Manidis, he has traded his Ivy League impulses for what he calls his "dream school": Olin College, a small, collaborative engineering school outside Boston, where he will start in the fall. He plans to keep working on TrackYourDisease but says he has more big ideas in him. When young entrepreneurs meet, he enthuses, everybody is encouraged by the infectious idealism of youth: "We are all dissatisfied with the world we were born into in a fundamental way. And we are all foolish enough to think we are able to do something about that. We haven't been broken. We're not cynical yet. We're developing something to try to change the world, which is incredibly exciting." ♦

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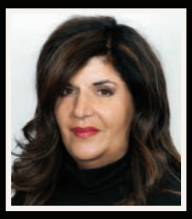

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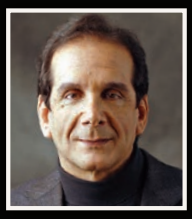

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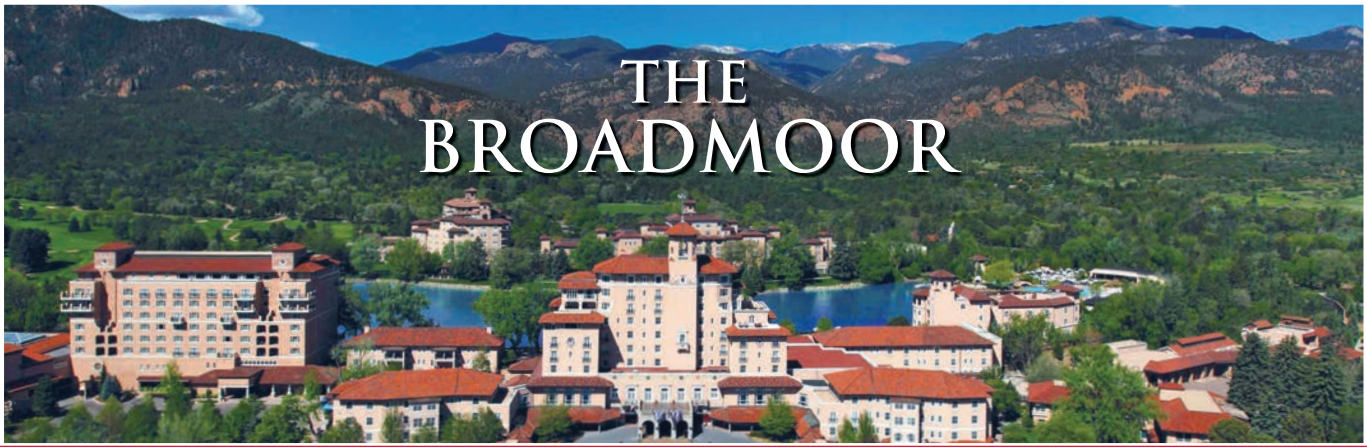

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What Makes America Great?

The question at the heart of the debate over nationalism

By Daniel Krauthammer

The rise of Donald Trump began a debate about the proper place of nationalism in American politics. A growing chorus on the political right, including even many who opposed his candidacy, has been praising the president's "America First" agenda as a healthy restoration of nationalism and fleshing out an intellectual framework to fit his worldview. It is right to give his ideas serious and thoughtful examination, as it is to consider any ideas that seek to protect our country and unite its people. But there are good ways and bad ways to pursue these goals, ways that stay true to the ideals on which this country was founded and ways that do not.

The center-right in particular is engaged in a civil war of sorts over the issue. Much of its leadership—politicians, intellectuals, and commentators alike—were so vociferously opposed to what candidate Trump advocated that they formed the NeverTrump movement to stop him. Faced with his electoral victory, many have split off and sought accommodation with the president's views. Conservative outlets like *National Review* and the *Washington Free Beacon*—never before within Trump's orbit—have led the way, publishing pieces that aim to bridge the gap between the formerly NeverTrump center-right and the intellectual organs of Trumpian nationalism, exemplified both by the new journal *American Affairs* and by older conservative stalwarts like Pat Buchanan.

These New Nationalists, as I will refer to them, are not wrong in identifying worthwhile principles and policies within the president's program, but they miss the forest for the trees. They largely ignore or minimize the many unsettling aspects of his rhetoric and executive actions in order to make Trump fit their conception of a measured and inclusive nationalism. They equally mischaracterize and malign the traditional American conceptions of a politically rooted patriotism as enablers for a globalist mindset that corrupts the country's elite. That they fail to appreciate how the president's agenda undermines the core values that have guided the nation since its founding is largely because they focus on the wrong slogan. "America First" sounds like the underlying principle of a new foreign policy, but it is actually meaningless without the straw man counterpart of "America Second" advocated by some imaginary foe. The real animating spirit and logic of the president's nationalist agenda lies in his campaign pledge to "Make America Great Again." What he means by "greatness," he has made clear, is very different from what it has meant to American presidents for more than two centuries. It ignores the moral mission that lies at the heart of the American experiment and leaves behind the guiding vision of our own exceptionalism that we should not readily abandon.

Daniel Krauthammer is a consultant in San Francisco.

EXCEPTIONAL ORIGINS

'Americans and Europeans alike sometimes forget how unique is the United States of America. No other nation has been built upon an idea, the idea of liberty." Margaret Thatcher's 1991 words perfectly reflect the essence of American exceptionalism: that uniquely among the countries of the world, the United States was founded not on bonds of blood or race or religion or tribe, but on the ideals of freedom, equality, and self-government. From that heritage flowed an array of unique characteristics and traditions that shaped how Americans see themselves and their country's place in the world.

Our Founding Fathers did not declare independence out of some sense that "we are Americans and they are Englishmen." Their very justification for rebellion was that they were being denied the rights due to Englishmen. And they created a new country based on political principles, establishing something the world had not truly seen since the days of ancient Rome—a citizens' republic. They were so aware they were forging a new nation from many different peoples that the first design for the Great Seal of United States featured a shield divided into

six parts to represent the nations where most of the colonists of that time had originated: England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, and Holland. Below that shield lay our motto: *E Pluribus Unum*, "out of many one." What melded the varied inhabitants of the 13 colonies into a nation was the common commitment to a moral proposition: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

This is the heart of the American creed, and to billions of people around the globe, Thomas Jefferson's words are synonymous with the very idea of America. To believe in this proposition is, in a very real sense, to believe in America. The idea forms the bedrock of our national culture and has made that culture uniquely accessible to immigrants wishing to gain not just American citizenship, but an American identity. In an 1858 speech, Abraham Lincoln argued that immigrants who believed in the principles proclaimed by our Founding Fathers, who felt that the "moral sentiment taught in that day evidences their relation to those men . . . have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh of the men who wrote that Declaration, and so they are." In most times and places throughout human history, blood relations—and blood relations alone—were what defined one as belonging or not belonging to a nation. The idea that dedication to political ideals and an oath of citizenship could be just as—or even more—meaningful than blood was revolutionary. It remains rare in the world even today, and we can easily forget how ours is quite different from most traditional understandings of nationality.

There are other countries whose identities are defined by political ideals. The notions of "Britishness" or "Frenchness," for example, have become infused with liberal values that immigrants can adopt. But those nations existed for centuries before such values became part of their identities. Even other settler nations like Canada and Australia, though welcoming to immigrants, never put universal political ideals so explicitly at the heart of their society—or even broke away to form fully separate identities from their mother country.

In much of the rest of the world, citizenship and nationality are not even synonymous. Numerous countries require that all citizens be officially designated among several government-recognized nationalities, which sometimes even afford different legal status. This sub-state differentiation in nationality has existed everywhere from Russia and Croatia to China, Malaysia, Israel, and Lebanon. States like Canada and Belgium are essentially binational, and many of the young countries in the Middle East and Africa cram a plethora of nationalities together with little coherent sense of statehood.

The American conception of belonging is starkly different. There is no such thing as an American national who is not an American citizen. If you forfeit your citizenship, you cease to be American in a sense that is more meaningful than for any other nation on earth.

New U.S. citizens take the Oath of Allegiance in Washington, D.C., September 17, 2012.

NEWSCOM

And just as nationality is often not bestowed with citizenship, so too it often does not cease to be recognized even without citizenship. The Chinese government regularly claims foreign citizens as Chinese nationals subject to Chinese law simply because of their ethnic parentage. Indeed, they claim all of Taiwan by the same logic. Russia makes the same argument for Crimea and for ethnic Russians throughout all the other former Soviet states. Dozens of countries around the world have repatriation laws that grant preferential and expedited citizenship to immigrants who have ethnic ancestry there.

Many governments see their role as protecting millennia-old national identities from foreign encroachment. Saudi Arabia bars non-Muslims from obtaining citizenship; Japan grants immigrants citizenship at a rate of 0.008 percent per year (almost 30 times less than the United States); and China, a country of 1.3 billion people, has exactly 1,448 foreign-born naturalized citizens (as of 2010). Even where legal status is not the barrier, true assimilation and acceptance as a member of a nation can for all practical purposes be impossible. Imagine a Kenyan or an Italian moving to South Korea and trying to be accepted as Korean—or even having children born there who try to do so. Nationality and national identity, in other words, often have far more to do with one's parentage than with one's oath of citizenship.

The American conception of belonging is starkly different. There is no such thing as an American national

who is not an American citizen. If you forfeit your citizenship, you cease to be American in a sense that is more meaningful than for any other nation on earth. Likewise, if we as a nation were to stop believing in our founding principles, we would cease to be America in a way that no other country would.

NATIONALISM AND PATRIOTISM

The distinction between nationalism and patriotism is often overlooked. Unlike the United States, most countries were nations long before they became states. And nationalism has traditionally been an ideology that advocates the aggrandizement of particular national groups—not whole countries inclusive of minority ethnicities and nationalities. The word *nationalism* was first used in this sense in 1772 by the philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, and it came to be embraced as an animating ideology by Germans in their response to the ideals and invasions of the French Revolutionary era. They rejected the liberal ideas of political citizenship and universal rights and instead embraced a unifying vision of a German *volk* rooted in ethnicity, language, blood, and mythology. German nationalism predated the creation of the German state by a century.

Patriotism, on the other hand, is a concept whose etymology and history is closely linked with ancient Greek and Roman ideas of membership in a political community. It is a term for devotion and commitment not to the ethnic group into which one is born, but to a political state of which one is a citizen. It does not exclude minorities within that state, nor does it extend to members of a common national group outside that state. An ethnic German living in Poland as a Polish citizen in 1939, for instance, could have fought against the Nazi invasion as a Polish patriot, but not as a Polish nationalist. Likewise, the defense of a political republic can be patriotic even if it undermines nationalist goals. The Wehrmacht officers who broke their oath and tried to kill Hitler in 1944, for example, are regarded as German patriots, not nationalists.

In America, because our sense of national identity is so intimately tied to our political ideals and our notions of citizenship, patriotism and nationalism are less easily distinguished. One must go to extremes to see the difference clearly. Suppose, for example, that an American leader completely rejected the essence of the American creed, declaring the ideas of human rights and equality under the law to be absurd and espousing a totalitarian vision that aimed to establish a dictatorship, exterminate certain ethnic groups or classes, and enslave the rest of the world for the greater glory of the American nation. His would be a warped version of American nationalism, but by no definition would it be American patriotism.

What is remarkable is how successful Americans have been at keeping an exclusive and chauvinist nationalism at bay while, seemingly paradoxically, maintaining a vigorous and collective love of country and rising to become the most powerful nation the planet has ever seen. There is nothing inherent in the idea of nationalism that would lead us to expect this result. Indeed, the history of the rest of the world provides mountains of evidence to the contrary.

The answer to this riddle lies in the nature of American exceptionalism and its morally anchored definition of greatness. Its birth from political ideals endowed the United States not only with a unique national identity, but also a unique moral mission—to fulfill the promise of those ideals. Just after leaving the presidency in 1809, Jefferson eloquently described the awesome responsibility that fell to Americans, who are

> Trusted with the destinies of this solitary republic of the world, the only monument of human rights, and the sole depository of the sacred fire of freedom and self-government, from hence it is to be lighted up in other regions of the earth, if other regions of the earth shall ever become susceptible of its benign influence.

For 240 years, Americans and their most celebrated leaders have defined the nation's greatness not by conquest or glory or riches, but by its success in making real the ideals of liberty at home, and in being an example and, at times, a defender of liberty for the rest of the world. This is what made America Lincoln's "last best hope of earth." This is what made it Reagan's "shining city upon a hill." This is what made America great.

AN ABSTRACTION MADE REAL

The New Nationalists have, as part of their intellectual architecture, mounted an assault on this conception of American exceptionalism and politically rooted patriotism. Taken to its logical conclusion, they argue, it constitutes a cosmopolitan mindset that leads to globalism abroad and divisive identity politics within. It is too abstract, too universalist, and too disconnected from people's daily experience to be the root of the emotions we all identify as our love for this country. Americans, they argue, have a visceral connection to the actual places, traditions, and symbols of the country, not to some set of esoteric political theories written down on parchment in the summer of 1776.

These are valid points. But they also reveal a misunderstanding of American exceptionalism. True, America is not just an idea. But it is the realization, the earthly manifestation, of an idea. No other country has declared its independence so explicitly and specifically to fulfill political ideals. And it was the nation the founding generation established that gave reality to those ideals. The Declaration of

Independence proclaims a belief in universal rights that extend to all men everywhere, but it also proclaims another belief: "That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Governments, unlike the rights they are meant to protect, are not universal. Republics are formed by man-made pacts that establish political communities whose members pledge to mutually protect each other's rights by taking up the responsibilities of citizenship. This points to a core distinction between human rights and civil rights. Human rights, as the Declaration posits, predate all governments and exist whether a state recognizes them or not, for they are inherent in mankind's being by way of "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." Civil rights, on the other hand, are granted—along with corresponding responsibilities—to the citizens of a political community in order that they may partake in the maintenance of their own government. The very word "civil" derives from the Latin *civis*, meaning citizen. The Declaration of Independence did not establish a government to protect the rights it proclaimed (the 13 individual states retained full sovereignty at the time). That national government was established by the Constitution of the United States (and briefly by the Articles of Confederation before it). If the Declaration defined the mission, the raison d'être of the new nation, the Constitution provided the marching orders—a mutual pact that Americans made to fulfill that mission.

American patriotism is not just a belief in disembodied American ideals. It is a love for, pride in, and commitment to the place that has made those ideals real. Freedom is not free, as the saying goes. Maintaining the republic has been the work of people shedding blood, sweat, and tears for 240 years. That herculean effort was not driven by politics alone; it rested on a culture that kept the citizenry active and engaged in the project of their own self-government at every level of community.

AMERICAN CIVIC CULTURE

The New Nationalists emphasize the importance of our common history, traditions, mores, and symbols in binding the American people together in ways that politics alone cannot. But they fail to recognize how much that national culture is, at its core, a civic culture, and how fundamentally it has been shaped by the political ideals that lie at its heart.

The Founding Fathers had a phrase to describe the most important traits they saw in their fellow citizens: republican virtue—things like hard work, self-reliance, honesty, religiosity (broadly understood), tolerance, neighborliness, an egalitarian and cooperative spirit. These virtues were molded by distinct historical factors like frontier living, the Protestant work ethic, and the English parliamentary tradition, among many others. But they were never just some arbitrary set of ethnic, linguistic, or religious inheritances. They had moral value not because they were American, but because they were essential to the health of a republic of self-governing citizens. Democracies need them to survive; dictatorships do not. The Founders' recognition of their precarious nature was neatly summed up in Benjamin Franklin's possibly apocryphal warning after the Constitutional Convention: "a republic, if you can keep it." These virtues require renewed effort and commitment by every generation. And by the same token they could be—and were—adopted and held by generation after generation of new immigrants who came to America and became part of the fabric of our civic culture.

It is no accident that nearly everything in our culture that we deem to be 'great' affirms and celebrates our democratic republican values in some way. They are the wellspring of our identity in ways so commonplace we barely even notice.

Much of this culture already existed at the nation's beginning. It wasn't forged by the Founders from a tabula rasa. But that is simply a truism. No culture ever pops into existence without a historical and organic origin. What matters is not simply that there is a distinctly American culture today or that there was one in 1776 (and the two have many differences). What matters are the elements that have lasted from one epoch to the next, that we have consciously elevated and celebrated and made central to our identity as Americans. It is no accident that nearly everything in our culture that we deem to be "great" affirms and celebrates these democratic republican values in some way. They are the wellspring of our identity in ways so commonplace we barely even notice, which is why the most insightful commentators on this subject have so often been foreigners, Alexis de Tocqueville being only the most notable of many.

From Huck Finn to Sam Spade, our greatest books and films feature everyman heroes who question illegitimate authority and fight for a fair shake. Our music, from jazz to rock 'n' roll, celebrates both individual expression and the common man. Our sports heroes are as much honored for breaking social barriers as for breaking records. And our mythology and folktales extol the idea of the self-made

man, be he a Horatio Alger youth, a Western cowboy, or a president who grew up in a log cabin.

Our understanding of our own history is shaped by these ideals as well. This is the reason that the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and World War II hold such central places in American history: They clearly embody the fight for the principles we hold dear. America proved its power and material superiority far more resoundingly in the Mexican-American and Spanish-American wars, for example. But we recognize that these were driven more by aggressive nationalism than by a patriotic defense of liberty, and so we merely accept their place in our history rather than celebrate them.

We recognize our "Greatest Generation" not because of their wealth or prestige, but rather because they preserved our democracy through two of the greatest challenges—economic and military—it ever faced. The Nazis built public works and infrastructure just as impressive—sometimes much more so—than any built under the New Deal. But we would not look at the Golden Gate Bridge and Hoover Dam with such pride today had the country resorted to fascism to build them.

Our monuments are seldom adorned with scenes of glorious victory in battle. Words, more than anything else, define our greatest shrines: "all men are created equal," "a new birth of freedom," "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself," "I have a dream." We build memorials to moral giants like Martin Luther King Jr. even before we build them to great generals and presidents like Dwight Eisenhower. James Polk, who through conquest enlarged the country more than any other president, is seldom remembered in America.

Abraham Lincoln is widely regarded as our greatest president. We do not celebrate him as the conqueror of the rebellious South, but instead as the Great Liberator. He made greater strides than any other in fulfilling the promise of our nation—and in ways the Founders themselves failed to do. The words etched in stone on his memorial declare, "he saved the Union." He did so because he saw a moral mission inherent in the country's very existence. He led the country through its most brutal and destructive war in order to ensure a vital outcome: "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Greatness, in our national tradition, comes not from glory and victory and power over others, but from rightness. The American creed is a moral North Star by which we implicitly orient ourselves. We have not always lived up to our ideals, but our greatest internal struggles have been fought to rectify our shortcomings. Thus our culture has both been built atop liberal democratic ideas and served to continually reinforce them. This phenomenon is not unique to the United States, but the symbiosis is more complete and fundamental in this nation than in any other.

As in any nation, our culture manifests in specific ways—songs, flags, place names, icons, symbols of all kinds—that are familiar and close to us alone. These are things to which we have a raw emotional connection. But that need not detract from an awareness of the deeper meaning behind them. In the United States, these are symbols not just of our nationhood, but our identity as a nation dedicated to universal truths. It is that very awareness that gives Americans a special pride when we wave our flag, sing our national anthem, salute our servicemen, and cheer our Air Force flyovers. Europeans are often chagrined at these sights, for their national histories followed very different paths: Their flags more often represented exclusive ethnic identities and their armies more often sailed overseas to subjugate new lands. To their eyes our demonstrations of national pride connote chauvinism, racism, xenophobia, or militarism. But we find ourselves in the historically lucky position that—more than any other nation—our national projects, our symbols, and our military might have been used in the service of liberty more than glory. Our culture—in all its facets—binds us together not just as members of a nation, but as citizens of a democratic republic.

In the United States, songs, flags, place names, and icons are symbols not just of our nationhood, but our identity as a nation dedicated to universal truths. It is that very awareness that gives Americans a special pride when we wave our flag, sing our national anthem, salute our servicemen, and cheer our Air Force flyovers.

THE GLOBALIST STRAW MAN

The New Nationalists essentially ignore the connection between our political ideals and our love of country. They have drawn a caricature of the other side of the debate: To believe America's core identity is built on universal ideals, they argue, is to adopt a globalist mindset that inevitably leads to open borders, open trade, and the loss of national sovereignty.

This argument is simply wrong. None of the ideals of American exceptionalism contradict the supposition that

the U.S. government should put the well-being of American citizens first. The purpose of the government established by the Constitution is to protect the rights of the citizens that make up the political community known as the United States, not to protect the rights of all people everywhere on earth. To believe, as the Declaration of Independence posits, that all persons everywhere possess equal fundamental rights endowed by nature does not mean that our particular government must be the one to protect those rights or to grant further civil rights to allow all to partake in our political system. By much the same principle, the mayor of Chicago can and should prioritize the well-being of Chicagoans over the well-being of New Yorkers without giving up the belief that New Yorkers possess the same natural rights as Chicagoans and ought to have full civil rights—and responsibilities—to participate in their own self-government.

T-38 fighter jets over the Ohio State-Iowa game in Iowa City, November 20, 2010

NEWSCOM

Our ideals actually guard against ceding sovereignty to supranational undemocratic governance structures. A polity requires citizenship. Our republican principles dictate that governing authority derives from the people themselves. Active citizenship and participation in government is the only source of legitimacy. The U.N., the WTO, the ICC, NATO—none of these grants any of the rights or responsibilities of citizenship to individuals. The constituent members are nation-states, not people. There is no world polity, and the United States is part of no supranational organization that even begins to involve citizens directly in self-government. As a nation, we choose when to engage with these supranational bodies out of our national self-interest. Reasonable people disagree on where the optimal balance lies, but that debate is about national strategy, not political principle.

There are true globalists out there, but claiming that the New Nationalist agenda is the only counter to their arguments ignores numerous contrary positions all across the political spectrum. On most substantive matters, labeling the other side as "globalist" simply impugns the motives of the other side and closes down debate. Most of those accused of the sin of globalism would assert they are looking out for America's interests the best way one can in the modern interconnected world—by working with other nations. If you believe climate change is a real threat, there is no way to address it without international engagement. If you think free trade benefits Americans, you have to sign trade deals with other countries. One must win the argument on the issues rather than simply asserting that the other side is acting as part of some nefarious plot for a world state.

Some of the New Nationalists ascribe a whole host of failures to the evils of globalism, from Obamacare, an overactive EPA, and federal welfare laws to the disastrous government handling of 9/11, the Iraq war, Hurricane Katrina, the financial meltdown, and the Arab Spring. But these issues have nothing to do with global governance. Shut down America's borders permanently and cut off ties with all international organizations and the same problems remain. The only common factor here is a conservative antipathy toward bloated federal bureaucracies.

What is really at issue is not so much the "globalist" part of the equation but the "elite" part. The New Nationalism is attempting to co-opt the populist outrage at a wealthy technocratic elite that has seemingly escaped all accountability through successive national disasters and cocooned itself in a material comfort the rest of America can scarcely imagine. This anger is directed as much toward Bernie Sanders's "1 percent" as at Donald Trump's "liberal coastal elites." The American crisis of confidence is real and profound. If, as some of the New Nationalists contend, a managerial elite has corrupted both capitalism and democracy in America, it will take fundamental, even revolutionary, reforms to restore the social contract in our society. The question requires a far-reaching national conversation. The only sure thing is that simply banishing a "globalist" mindset in favor of a nationalist one won't solve anything.

The New Nationalists' embrace of "America First" relies almost entirely on a globalist enemy that doesn't exist in America. In Britain, the same arguments would have been apt in favoring Brexit (in a situation where significant portions of national law-making and enforcement authority really had been ceded to a supranational body run largely by unelected bureaucrats). But the United States is already far more independent than any post-Brexit United Kingdom will be. In terms of actual policy, the New Nationalists avowed aims are already met in the United States. They are endeavoring to bridge the gap to the president's new ideology, but they are doing so with a version of nationalism that is extremely limited in nature. "America First," as they define it, would be supported by nearly any traditional Republican, and likely some Democrats as well. Whether to put America's interests first is not the point of contention in the Trump era. The real question is what that actually means—what America's true interests really are.

THE TRUMP BRAND OF NATIONALISM

The only way to discern what President Trump's nationalism truly represents is to examine his words and actions—something the New Nationalists generally avoid. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the president's brand of nationalism is the lack of anything uniquely American about it. Unlike every president (and presidential candidate) in living memory, Donald Trump almost never employs the ideas and language of the Founders. Try to think of a time you have heard him extol liberty, freedom, democracy, rights, equality, justice—or even utter the words. His speechwriters from time to time insert a few token phrases into his prepared speeches. But in Trump's unprepared remarks at rallies, in debate performances, TV interviews, press conferences, tweets, they barely appear. Clearly, they do not preoccupy him. Our ideals and their fulfillment are not, in his view, what made America great.

So what is it that actually does make America great? The president's answer has always been crystal clear: winning. That was what his whole campaign was based on. His language is never about political ideals; it is about defeating opponents, being better than the other guy—*win*, *beat*, *kill*, *huge*, *rich*, *big league*. His sense of national greatness seems largely transferred from his views of what makes a business or an individual (namely himself) great: wealth, power, status, deal-making. Greatness is achieved, most fundamentally, by winning a long streak of zero-sum competitions. To lose such competitions makes you weak. What is America's true problem, according to the president? He answered time and again on the campaign trail: "We don't win anymore." And what, if anything, was his central promise as a candidate for the highest office? "We're going to win so much. You're going to get tired of winning."

Trump's sense of national greatness seems largely transferred from his views of what makes a business or an individual (namely himself) great: wealth, power, status, deal-making. Greatness is achieved, most fundamentally, by winning a long streak of zero-sum competitions.

Restoring American greatness, by this reasoning, means that we need to start winning against someone again. Generally speaking, that someone is foreigners, primarily illegal immigrants at home and various trade partners abroad, all of whom are apparently abusing us and bleeding us dry. And the Mexican rapists and Chinese currency manipulators are being aided and abetted by a turncoat globalist elite that has sold out real Americans. This is not a new trope. It's been the refrain of nativists the world over for centuries, including the last standard-bearers of "America First," who, before Pearl Harbor, argued that World War II was none of our business. For them it wasn't the Nazis who posed the greatest threat to America, but rather the Jews and the British who were trying to subvert America's true interests to their own.

A similarity to past nativism does not make all the president's arguments invalid. But his outsized emphasis on blaming foreigners for America's biggest problems—when evidence shows that up to 85 percent of manufacturing job losses are due to automation rather than trade, and when only around 6 percent of crime in the country is attributable to illegal immigrants (who, statistics indicate, commit crimes at a lower rate than native-born citizens)—is worrying. So is how little he has offered in the way of a positive program to address the very real problems and legitimate anxieties of the American people. His rhetorical focus remains on protectionism against foreign imports, immigrant labor, and corporate outsourcing—strategies that have done more harm than good for Americans' material wellbeing over the past century. He exhibits little forward thinking on how to get wages rising. He doesn't speak much of boosting the productivity of American workers through education, training, or promoting innovation. He has not entertained any serious discussion of how to mitigate the disruptive effect of technological change on the working class, or how to reform entitlements and get America's debt burden under control. He has not called for any kind of national conversation to address the fraying of our civic culture or family structures, nor sought to engage our citizenry in the rebuilding of communities he says have become scenes of "American carnage." His solutions rest disproportionately on "[bringing] back our wealth" from foreigners who have robbed Americans of their rightful riches.

The president's search for opponents to defeat has also resulted in regular displays of contempt for our dearest values. He has impugned the legitimacy of the democratic process and our elections, claiming voter fraud on levels that—if true—would make a mockery of the entire electoral system. He has questioned the authority of the judiciary, once on the basis of ethnicity. He continually lambastes the free press as "such lying, disgusting people," and even declares them "the enemy of the people" (a term famously employed by both Lenin and Mao). He has exhibited a nostalgic fondness for violence at political events, pining for the old days when protesters were "carried out on a stretcher" and complimenting a supporter

who punched a protester in the head as someone who "obviously loves his country." And he regularly fans the fears about Muslim immigrants beyond all reasonable proportion, as when he tweeted that "many very bad and dangerous people may be pouring into our country" as a result of the judicial stay on his travel ban, and that if given even "one week notice, the 'bad' would rush into our country during that week."

In this context, it is hardly surprising that so many Americans have come to see the president's agenda not as some all-inclusive citizens' patriotism, but as exactly the kind of narrow ethnic "blood-and-soil" nationalism that the New Nationalists claim not to endorse. When a president so thoroughly omits all the ideals of the American creed from his program, yet continues to stir so much passion, anger, and resentment against "the other," the vacuum of ideas will be filled by something very ugly, whether actively encouraged or not. That is why so many white nationalists and other hate groups gravitated to the Trump campaign. They see themselves as the only group with the proper historical, cultural, religious, and ethnic bona fides to be "real" Americans. When the rallying cry is "Make America Great Again," the "again" can cause a great deal of unease for the large segments of the American population that only relatively recently won their full rights of citizenship. Such is the danger of a unifying ethos based on a purely national identity without a veneration for the political ideals on which our citizenship is built.

THE ZERO-SUM WORLD

The "again" in Trump's mantra matters a great deal on the world stage as well. Finding glory in a nation's past—real or mythical—has been a perennial hallmark of nationalisms the world over. The president complains that "we were a very powerful, very wealthy country. And we're a poor country now." We've fallen so far, in fact, "we're like a third-world country." By any and all possible measures this claim is absurd. America is hugely richer now than it has been at any time in its history—whether it's the 1950s, the 1980s, or any other period the president may have in mind. The fact that this wealth has been distributed extremely unequally within the United States—and has largely bypassed the middle and working class—is an issue of utmost importance, but one that can only be addressed through bold and innovative domestic policy reforms. What was different in the past, of course, was that other countries were so much poorer. To be true, the president's claim must be entirely relative. They've gotten richer, so we must be poorer. We don't need to think critically and come up with innovative solutions to our own problems; all we have to do is "bring back our wealth." This economic revanchism has little to do with real world economics and everything to do with the relative pecking order.

This zero-sum outlook leads to an adversarial and combative approach to nearly every major trading partner. Whether he's lambasting China, Mexico, Canada, Japan, South Korea, or Germany for unfair trade practices, the refrain is always the same: Because of them, "the jobs and wealth have been stripped from our country." Beyond the economic unreality of that accusation is the shock of how little regard he shows for even our closest allies, risking trade wars, fraying ties that have taken generations to build, and potentially even destabilizing a still relatively fragile democracy like Mexico.

Even more worrying is the president's application of this mindset to matters of national security. He has criticized NATO as obsolete; castigated Germany, Japan, and South Korea for owing the United States "vast sums" for the protection we provide (ignoring how the spending agreements are actually structured); and threatened that the United States may attenuate its common defense commitments (including the withdrawal of its nuclear umbrella) if his pecuniary demands are not met. The president seems to view our most important military alliances as pay-for-play arrangements whereby we provide what amount to mercenary services. His fixation on the dollar component shows a fundamental lack of understanding of our alliance network's primary purpose: deterrence, which rests entirely on the threat that an attack on one will be considered an attack on all. The credibility of that threat has prevented the outbreak of any large-scale wars since 1945. Undermining that credibility—and thus increasing the likelihood of a major conflict—for a few extra dollars hardly seems like a "great deal."

Everything about the president's foreign policy indicates that his worldview is entirely transactional and calculated on a one-off, zero-sum basis. Until his abrupt about-face after the chemical weapons attack in Syria, he had abjured any talk, much less action, on the enforcement of international law, the defense of human rights, or the promotion of democratic values abroad. This is not unprecedented in American history: American idealism and the long-term vision of a worldwide triumph of democracy have always come into conflict with foreign-policy realism and America's immediate strategic interests. But this president outlines no grand strategy at all.

His objection to normalizing relations with Cuba was a perfect example of his thinking. This had nothing to do either with that country's lack of freedom under Communist dictatorship or with its perennial undermining of U.S. strategic interests in the Western Hemisphere; it was solely about the fact that the deal we struck hadn't forbidden Cuba to file lawsuits for reparations claims against the

United States. Likewise, his views on Russia have (until his Syria reversal) focused entirely on a potential (many would argue imaginary) one-time cooperative effort against ISIS, ignoring Russia's long-running support for our strategic enemies in Syria and Iran (and even, as some recent reports indicate, the Taliban), its efforts to destabilize our alliances in democratic Europe, and its flagrant and continuing violations of international law in Ukraine.

It is striking that the president seems to spend almost as much time criticizing allies as adversaries. But this course of action makes sense if your paradigm for how the world works is a long series of discrete one-on-one deals, as it was for the president in his business career. Trump looks at each event in the international arena, seeks to immediately extract the maximum gain (generally monetary), and then moves on to the next. This is what constitutes "winning" for the president. This is what defines his "America First" nationalism. George Orwell described just this kind of thinking in his 1945 "Notes on Nationalism": "A nationalist is one who thinks solely, or mainly, in terms of competitive prestige . . . his thoughts always turn on victories, defeats, triumphs and humiliations."

The president celebrates strength—the ability to win—as the highest virtue. The rest is weakness; the rest is losing. This is not 'might makes right.' Right just isn't a factor. Might is the whole point. Thus the bizarre adulation of authoritarian leaders.

WINNING VS. LEADING

Leadership on the world stage requires taking on responsibilities. It requires enforcing the rules, playing by them, and expending a fair amount of resources to do so. It has great rewards. Part of it is material: Leadership allows you to define and set the rules of the game more than any other player, and to do so in a way that advances your interests and shapes the world to reflect your values. The other great reward is moral: If you believe your ideals are superior, even universal, then shaping the world to them is an act of profound good. All this, of course, describes exactly what America did in establishing and maintaining what is referred to as the postwar liberal order.

Conversely, a leader may suddenly start using his powers to extract riches and concessions from everyone else on the field solely for immediate benefit. In the short term, yes, he will "win" most fights he picks—often quite easily, by targeting the weakest teammates. But order will break down, and as people grow to distrust him, he will grow weaker vis-à-vis his true rivals. Soon he will no longer be the captain at all, just another player on the field scrounging to grab whatever can be had.

Which path sounds more like a match for the president's agenda? Trump's views are perfectly illustrated in his oft-repeated exhortation that "we should have kept the oil" in Iraq, an act that would have been justified, he contends, by the old expression "to the victor belong the spoils." That certainly is "winning" along the criteria he has laid out time and again. The fact that it undermines both the international laws of sovereignty and the principles of democratic self-determination we have fought for centuries to uphold does not enter into his calculation. We get material benefit from a one-off transaction. End of story. He doesn't seem to recognize a difference between making investments and sacrifices for long-term strategic goals, and being a sucker. True leadership, in other words, is for losers.

When winning is all that matters, questions of morality are superfluous. The president celebrates strength—the ability to win—as the highest virtue. The rest is weakness; the rest is losing. This is not "might makes right." Right just isn't a factor. Might is the whole point. From this worldview flowed the seemingly bizarre adulation of authoritarian leaders around the world. Vladimir Putin was only the most notable of the "strong leaders." Others Trump has complimented or noted for strength include Mussolini, Saddam Hussein, and the Chinese Communists who put down the Tiananmen Square protests.

Even looking to America's own, far less authoritarian history, the president speaks most admiringly of some of our most controversial leaders: presidents like Andrew Jackson, who defied the authority of the Supreme Court and consigned thousands of Native Americans to death, and generals like Douglas MacArthur, who had to be relieved of command for disobeying presidential orders and attempting to expand the Korean War into an all-out (potentially nuclear) conflict with China. They put the Constitution aside to do what they felt was necessary to "win" for the American people, as they defined it. It is the tendency of nations to give such wide discretion in times of emergency. The office of "dictator" was established in ancient Rome for exactly that purpose. But preventing a repeat of Rome's fate was exactly why the Founders wrote the Constitution as they did. A nationalist outlook that so readily discards the safeguards that both protect the rights of the citizenry and guide the legitimate exercise of political authority can make anyone nervous who thinks he might not be included in the definition of "real American," and should worry everyone who believes America's deeper interests lie beyond immediate "wins" against every other country on earth.

DEFINING GREATNESS

The president's worldview presents us with a profound question: Does America's greatness derive from "winning" or from its moral and strategic leadership? To choose the former is to reject much of our most hallowed history and traditions. Was America not great when we gave back all the lands we liberated in World War II? Was it not great when we spent billions on the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe and save it from destitution and the specter of Soviet communism? Could we have been a truly great nation before we became the richest and most powerful (discounting any time before the late-19th century)? Was America not great when, even though a poor and hopelessly outmatched colonial backwater, it declared the equality of all men in 1776? Was it not made greater by its moral strides to end slavery in 1865 and to guarantee full civil rights in the 1960s than by any accumulation of wealth during that time? Conversely, do we believe America would have been made greater if we had kept the Philippines under our control, or annexed the German coal regions we conquered in 1945, or the Kuwaiti oil fields we took in 1991?

Showing his dismissal of the idea of the moral leadership underlying "American exceptionalism," Trump said in 2015, "I don't like the term." Exceptionality, for him, is measured by the same things as greatness: wealth and power. Germany, he argued, was actually more exceptional because it was getting the better of us in trade deals. "I'd like to make us exceptional," he went on to say, by "[taking] back everything we've given the world." While we reclaimed our riches from other nations, though, he thought we should avoid the word "exceptional" so as not to "rub it in."

The point, however, is not some special label we give ourselves or anything to do with our GDP or trade balance; it is whether we believe our country has any moral mission to live up to. Without it, everything becomes relative, and every country's greatness becomes defined solely by its power, rather than the ends to which it puts that power. Many were shocked when the president excused Vladimir Putin's dictatorial actions by noting "we have a lot of killers. . . . You think our country is so innocent?" But the most disturbing aspect was not that he argued a moral equivalency between the two governments; it was that it didn't seem to bother him very much. If the American political system worked the way Russia's did, it would be the Founders' worst nightmare

of tyranny come true. But to the president's mind, it wouldn't stand in the way of American greatness.

"They say all men are created equal," said Trump in 2009. But "it's not true. Some people are born very smart, some people are born not so smart." The president has made such statements on many occasions, and in one sense—the material and tangible—he is obviously correct. But of course he misses the true meaning of the Declaration: that all persons are endowed with the same moral worth and the same natural rights and thus entitled to equal citizenship and treatment under the law. Trump's understanding of America's greatness is similarly stunted. There is no moral North Star, no greater national mission beyond the immediate and the material. This would be worrying in any nation, but is all the more heartbreaking in ours because we have such a contrasting tradition. The president's brand of nationalism may not be un-American, but there's nothing uniquely American about it either.

CHOOSING TO REMAIN EXCEPTIONAL

A favorite refrain of the New Nationalists is that the intellectual class—and conservative intellectuals in particular—is hopelessly out of touch. The 2016 election certainly showed that the pundits are stuck fighting the same old battles, ignorant of the changes in the country's political landscape and blind to the waves of populist revolt. But the New Nationalists scarcely break out of the echo chamber themselves in their attempts to square the circle of Trumpian nationalism and force-fit it into a conservative paradigm of what a "good nationalism" looks like. Their efforts are largely wishful thinking and, worse, grant intellectual cover to an ideology that can do serious damage to America's democracy and ideals.

They not only fail to understand the president's actions, but also to understand why he was victorious in the first place. As is the usual case with intellectuals, the focus is almost entirely on theory rather than execution. The central principle of the president's campaign was to get America "winning" again, and to do so for its own sake rather than for any long-term vision or idealistic goal. The New Nationalists are ignoring the first part—which, after all, is purely a matter of execution and results—and focusing entirely on the second—wherein the theoretical justification lies.

The American people likely had something very different in mind when they went to the polls last November. They elected a CEO. You hire a new CEO so that he'll get your company better results than the last guy; you don't hire him to give you a new theory of capitalism. If there was ever a presidential candidate to eschew theoretical coherence, it was Donald Trump. He was not running on Trumpism; he was running on being Donald Trump. "I alone can fix it" was the central pillar of his candidacy. To intellectualize his triumph may well be a far greater mistake than to have never seen it coming in the first place.

Americans were angry at the results of two decades of policies that have brought them failing wars and stagnating wages. And no other candidate (save perhaps Bernie Sanders) properly acknowledged just how profoundly America's leaders and its elites had failed the rest of the country and failed to pay a price for it. But there are two fundamental problems with President Trump's nationalist program. The first is that it simply will not achieve its promised results. The bulk of the agenda is a false promise, a shortcut of quick wins against easy scapegoats that won't address our true economic challenges and will undermine our long-term security. The second is that it abandons America's most cherished ideals in favor of an ideology of winning for its own sake. Such an ideology will necessarily collapse when the promised "greatness" and attendant riches do not materialize. But along the way it can do lasting damage to what has truly made America a great and exceptional nation in the world.

Building a new nationalist ideology around Trump's rhetoric not only grants intellectual cover to its most objectionable elements, it also makes it harder for conservatives to encourage a different side of President Trump that he put front and center in his campaign: the results-oriented businessman. That pragmatic, nonideological spirit should be embraced. The president has already signaled his openness to grand bargains across party lines on issues like health care and even immigration reform. Most stunning of all, his reversal on Syria shows just how unsettled his views are on America's foreign policy. Trump is right that Americans deserve a government that will deliver and make their lives materially better and safer. But that result cannot be achieved by blaming imagined foes or shirking our leadership of the free world. It will take leadership that is smart, realistic, and strategic in its choices abroad, as well as bold, forward-thinking, and inclusive in its policies at home.

The actual issues the New Nationalists highlight as being of greatest importance to them—state sovereignty, control of our borders, putting America's strategic interests first—are all perfectly consistent with and supported by our founding political ideals. To hold those ideals to be universal does not require us to adopt a globalist program or abandon the concept of nationhood. To the contrary, recognizing the central importance of those ideals to our identity allows Americans a national pride unique in the world. We should embrace our exceptionalist tradition and celebrate it as the source of our greatness, not reject it and insist on our utter ordinariness among the nations of the world. ♦

The Weekly Standard

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The Monumental Arch (2011)

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Goodbye, Palmyra

The destructive power of the Islamic State. BY BROOKE ALLEN

Paul Veyne, the great French historian of the ancient world and a professor at the Collège de France since 1975, has declared Palmyra, Pompeii, and Ephesus to be the three most extraordinary archaeological sites in the world. Among the three, though, the prize would probably have to go to Palmyra, due to the remarkable drama of its setting and its haunting and unique hybrid of the Greco-Roman and the Oriental.

Palmyra
An Irreplaceable Treasure
by Paul Veyne
translated by Teresa Lavender Fagan
Chicago, 128 pp., $22.50

On my first visit to Palmyra, in 2009, like countless visitors through the centuries, I retraced the ancient route established by trading caravans between the Mediterranean ports and points east: Persia, India, China. Palmyra, a major oasis rich in olive trees and date palms, lies midway between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates and saw a continual flow of merchants transporting goods in either direction. In the drive eastward from Damascus, the scenery becomes progressively bleaker and less fertile; as Veyne describes the experience in this lovely book, "at the end of those four hours traveling through a desert of dry and rocky land where sparse, short, and shriveled grass grows, the appearance of the green palm grove and the white colonnade, an immense vestige of a vanished world, is a surprise

Brooke Allen is the author of, most recently, Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers.

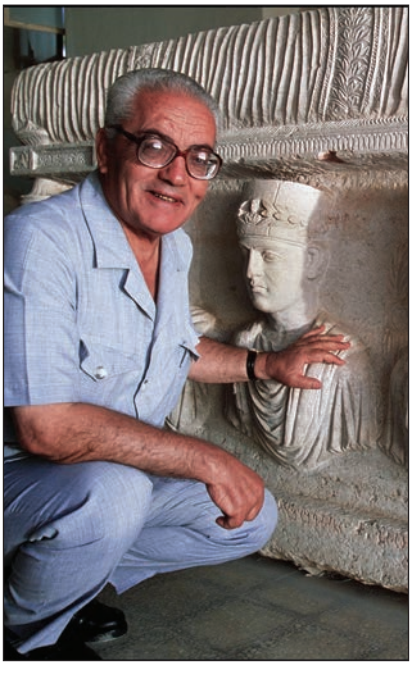
of which one never grows tired." The wide valley, "scattered with a great number of ostentatious monuments," gleaming with cubes and columns of white limestone (for there is no marble in Syria) and presided over by a starkly dramatic medieval citadel looming on a mountaintop over the city, is a sight I will never forget.

Why had no one ever advised me to visit this matchless place? I'd had people telling me to go to Baalbek and Petra, but never Palmyra. At that time, travel was easy and cheap throughout Syria, and the local people were extremely friendly, hospitable, and accommodating. Yet I only encountered one other American during my travels in Syria (a total of seven weeks) and very few Europeans. Why weren't the Palmyrene ruins flooded with international visitors?

It is too late now, of course; it will probably be many years before Palmyra again becomes a place of cultural pilgrimage, and much of the destruction that has taken place in the last couple of years will never be repaired. Paul Veyne's slim volume, written in the idiosyncratic, personal style for which he has long been famous in France, is in effect a love letter to the besieged, enchanted city. At the time Veyne finished his book, Palmyra had been retaken from ISIS and the damage seemed to have been stopped; since then, however, the Islamic State seized the city again and wreaked even more devastation during four additional months—December 2016 to March 2017—of misrule.

During their first occupation of the city, ISIS had targeted only religious structures, such as the Temple of Baalshamin and the great Temple dedicated to Bel, Palmyra's principal deity. This time, they went after secular sites, like the spectacular Tetrapylon—a sort of third-century traffic circle—and the lovely, well-preserved Roman theater. They held off on dynamiting the theater, however, until they had made effective use of it as a venue for show trials and public executions. The archaeological museum has recently served as a tribunal and prison; the medieval citadel, where I enjoyed a glass of champagne with some French travelers one idyllic evening, has returned to its original military function and has sustained considerable damage from gunfire and explosives. And as all the world knows, the venerable Khaled al-Asaad, for 40 years Palmyra's head of antiquities, was publicly beheaded.

What is the motivation behind such nihilism and ruin? The conventional explanation—given by the Islamic State itself, as by the Taliban before them—is formulated in the *New York Times*: The group "intends to impose its will by



Khaled al-Asaad (2002)

destroying monuments or artifacts that it says do not conform to its strict interpretation of Islam." Veyne, however, sees it slightly differently.

> [W]hy, in August 2015, did ISIS need to blow up and destroy that temple of Baalshamin? Because it was a temple where pagans before Islam came to adore mendacious idols? No, it was because that monument was venerated by contemporary Westerners, whose culture includes an educated love for "historical monuments" and a great curiosity for the beliefs of other people and other times. And Islamists want to show that Muslims have a culture that is different from ours, a culture that is unique to them. They blew up that temple in Palmyra and have pillaged several archaeological sites in the Near East to show that they are different from us and that they don't respect what Western culture admires.

Khaled al-Asaad, after all, was an archaeologist rather than a priest. And of course, even Palmyrene religious structures were not exactly dedicated to cults that threaten Islam: No one has worshipped Bel for a very long time. The priests of imperial Rome, which took control of the city during the reign of Tiberius, did not feel threatened; they allowed the local cults freedom of worship. Palmyra's Christian overlords during the Byzantine period did not feel threatened; the emperors had four churches erected and installed a bishop, but gave instructions that pagan shrines, here as elsewhere in the empire, should be preserved as ornaments of their conquered cities. The seventh-century Muslim conquerors of Syria did not feel threatened, either. Early Islam, the fastest-spreading religion in human history, was tolerant not only of Jews and Christians, the other "people of the book," but of adherents of pagan sects. Far from tearing down the Temple of Bel (which had already been rebuilt over Bronze Age and, then, Hellenistic sites), Muslim leaders restored it, both under the Arabs and the Ottomans.

It is probably Palmyra's status as a monument to multicultural tolerance, then, that has made it a target for the so-called Islamic State. "Palmyra," Veyne writes, "holds the record for the number of rich cultures that could be found in one place . . . ancient Mesopotamia, ancient Aramean Syria, Phoenicia, some of Persia, more of Arabia, and covering it all was Greek culture and the Roman political framework." As in other cultural centers of the Roman Empire, there was a live-and-let-live attitude to alien faiths and ways. "When Palmyrenes wrote in Greek," Veyne points out (and all educated Palmyrenes spoke and wrote Greek in addition to the Aramaic spoken by the population at large), "they rendered the name of their God Bel as 'Zeus.' This proves two things: that they saw themselves

GAMMARAPHO / GETTY IMAGES

from the exterior with Greco-Roman eyes, and wanted to be understood by the rest of the empire; and that they admitted, along with all of non-Christian antiquity, that the gods of other people existed."

Such easygoing syncretism, both religious and cultural, is anathema to 21st-century bigots, who can hardly conceive of such a worldview. Palmyrene civilization was distinctly hybrid; monuments carried inscriptions both in Greek and in Palmyrene, a local variant of Aramaic with a distinctive, curly script. Palmyrene dignitaries under the Roman Empire "proudly included their titles of duumvir, aedile, or advisor" along with their Aramaic names, and the decision by such men whether to wear Persian or Greek clothing "was a matter of personal choice, of wealth, or of whim, not of origin or profession." Ross Burns, the eminent archaeologist and historian of Syria, remarks that we are dealing not simply

> with a provincial Roman phenomenon but with a Greco-Persian-Parthian synthesis whose roots go back deep into the Hellenized traditions of the east, long before Roman influence became prominent in the first century AD. This semi-"orientalizing" or "other-worldly" element, common to several traditions, is marked by frontal representation; timeless rather than realistic expressions; oriental dress in a heavily stylized treatment; and restless, almost baroque, application of decoration.

This kind of stylization is very evident in Palmyrene art: a sharp upward sweep in sculpted draperies, for instance, or a "systematic frontality" in the subject's gaze. Palmyrene funerary busts are instantly recognizable in museums all over the world. Glimpsing one out of the corner of my eye at the Smith College Museum of Art recently, I felt as if I had spotted a long-lost friend.

There is a lesson in all this, Veyne indicates, not only for religious zealots like members of the Islamic State but also for misguided modern leftists who complain about "cultural appropriation." Cultures live and grow, after all, only by learning from neighbors, conquerors, subjects, and competitors, and no rich civilization has, or could ever, develop in isolation. "Since there is a lot of talk today about cultural imperialism and national identity," Veyne writes, "we forget that throughout history, modernization through the adaptation of foreign customs played a role far more important than nationalism; the culture of the other was adopted, not as something foreign, but as something considered to be the true way of living." Imitation, as ever, is flattery and should be recognized as such. ISIS and other such organizations have ignored the clearest lesson of history, which is (as Veyne concludes), "[C]ivilizations do not have a 'fatherland' and have always been without political, religious, or cultural borders to separate the human herds." ♦

B&A

A Guide to Discovery

Putting the man in Manifest Destiny.

BY AMY HENDERSON

On Christmas Day 1780, Virginia governor Thomas Jefferson instructed the head of his state's militia, George Rogers Clark, to fortify Virginia's western frontier against a British-Indian invasion. At the end of his instructions, Jefferson added his hope that the American "Empire of Liberty" would someday convert such dangerous enemies into "valuable friends."

Jefferson's dream of a western "Empire of Liberty" was threatened by European politics as soon as he became president in 1801. Spain had signed a secret treaty retroceding Louisiana to the expansionist plans of Napoleon, and Britain reportedly had staked a claim to the Columbia River, giving another continental antagonist a Pacific port with commercial access to the "wealth of the Orient." By the summer of 1802, Jefferson was in serious discussions with his secretary, Meriwether Lewis, about undertaking an expedition to discover a Pacific passage for the United States. Jefferson and Lewis both embraced the optimistic idea of "geographical symmetry," believing that the trans-Mississippi West would be the mirror image of the East's gentle Blue Ridge mountains and navigable rivers. While Jefferson never ventured west of the Shenandoah, Lewis would be stunned by the reality of western geography.

Amy Henderson is historian emerita of the National Portrait Gallery.

Mountain Man
John Colter, the Lewis & Clark Expedition, and the Call of the American West
by David Weston Marshall
Countryman, 256 pp., $24.95

On July 4, 1803, the *National Intelligencer* reported that President Jefferson had purchased Louisiana from Napoleon. For about $15 million, the United States instantly doubled its size, gaining an area of 825,000 square miles that encompassed not only New Orleans but all the western lands drained by the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. That very same day, Jefferson gave Meriwether Lewis a letter of credit to fund a transcontinental exploration to discover an all-water route to the Pacific Ocean "for the purposes of commerce." On July 5, Lewis set off to organize his expedition.

Lewis and his "Corps of Discovery" partner William Clark, younger brother of George Rogers Clark, forged a chapter in American history that has fascinated us ever since. Such colorful

figures as Sacagawea are familiar in this storytelling, but the expedition's success also depended on a cohort of "mountain men" who slogged a path through the wilderness, hunted and gathered food, and fought off grizzlies. David W. Marshall has now written a biography of one of these explorers, and *Mountain Man* is Marshall's chronicle of the expedition that has long captured his imagination. He selected John Colter because "Colter was the first of the mountain men, acclaimed by the frontiersmen of his time as a living hero. . . . He was the prototype of the ideal westerner—ruggedly independent, self-sufficient, and quietly confident in his own abilities."

Colter was exploring Kentucky along the Ohio River when he joined the expedition in October 1803. Known as a skilled woodsman and hardened frontiersman, Colter was assigned to the Corps of Discovery "as a lone scout and hunter providing game." He was one of the earliest recruits, and Lewis and Clark spent the next nine months filling the corps' ranks to 32 before the expedition was officially launched at St. Louis on May 14, 1804.

It was the first time Colter had crossed the Mississippi River, and he never returned East. He spent the next 28 months with the expedition, and was with Lewis and Clark when they reached the Pacific. But when the corps began its homeward trek, Colter remained in the West. On his own after mid-1806, he explored the northern plains, the Rockies, and regions that included the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone country.

Colter left no written records, so Marshall has reconstructed his narrative through such primary documents as the journals of Lewis and Clark. Maps were also useful, notably William Clark's 1810 map that marked Colter's post-expedition route in 1807-08. But Marshall has also retraced Colter's steps himself, attempting to experience first-hand what life in the wilderness was like: how Colter had pitched a shelter, built a fire, and forded a stream.

Unveiling a Park Service plaque in honor of John Colter (1957)

DENVER POST / GETTY IMAGES

Hunting was Colter's essential task, and he was proficient at procuring buffalo, deer, elk, turkeys, and geese. Bison was the favorite frontier meat, and each animal provided a thousand pounds of "the wholesomest and most palatable meat." Grizzly bears were a constant threat, and Colter was a risk-taker who notched some narrow escapes. Marshall explains that "his intrepid nature made him the consummate explorer—a fearless adventurer who reached his prime in the most daring venture of his time."

Marshall also believes that Colter's decision to remain in the wilderness was because the West offered "independence and freedom"—a place where the mountain man was "a sovereign among nature's loneliest works." He describes how Colter clothed himself in buckskin, leather moccasins, snowshoes, and relied on hooded wool and fur coverings for subzero temperatures. His vital supplies included a canteen, a tomahawk, a hunting knife, a rifle, flint and steel to start a fire, oilcloth, a comb, and tobacco.

John Colter was "the prototype of the western hero—of explorers, mountain men, cavalrymen, and cowboys," in Marshall's description. After he left Lewis and Clark, he traveled on foot instead of horseback. Colter explored the sites of today's Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park, and was the first white explorer to experience Yellowstone where "steaming geysers and sulfurous formations left strange specters on the landscape." He continued to lead western exploring parties and was an itinerant fur trapper, but the Blackfoot Indian tribe began to fight back against white exploration. Colter once barely escaped death only after he was "seized, disarmed, and stripped entirely naked." The Blackfoot allowed him to run for his life, and he managed to escape.

By 1810, Marshall writes, "Colter finally got his fill." He built a cabin near the village of La Charrette, which the Corps of Discovery had visited near the beginning of their expedition. The 75-year-old Daniel Boone, his wife Rebecca, and son Nathan lived nearby. The area was described as a hunter's paradise. It was also the place that provided a peaceful finale to Colter's intrepid life. He died on May 7, 1812—not, as Marshall writes, because of "a howling blizzard, a raging river, or a grizzly on the prowl." Rather, Colter likely died from jaundice. ♦

B&A

The Age of Anxiety

A Dutch classic speaks to modern sensibility.

BY BRUCE BAWER

The Evenings
A Winter's Tale
by Gerard Reve
translated by Sam Garrett
Pushkin Press, 352 pp., $22

Gerard Reve's 1947 debut novel, a Dutch classic that is only now being published in English translation, carries a blurb in which Herman Koch, author of the 2009 bestseller *The Dinner*, calls it the "funniest, most exhilarating novel about boredom ever written."

Is he correct? To be sure, Frits van Egters, Reve's 23-year-old protagonist, does lead a mundane existence: He has a mind-numbingly dull job as an office clerk, and his parents—with whom he still lives in his (unnamed) hometown—spend their days exchanging vapid remarks about the weather and what's for dinner and what happened to the keys to the attic. During the period covered by the novel (the last 10 days of 1946) Frits repeatedly looks forward to his evenings, but even these turn out to be nothing to crow about: Mostly he drops in on old school friends, and he has to struggle to find something to say to them.

But boredom? Yes, Frits has moments of boredom. *The Evenings*' first chapter recounts in detail a single day in his life—a day off from work, when he rises early, determined to make something meaningful out of it, only to see it unfold like any other, epic in its banality. As the seconds, minutes, and hours tick by, he deplores the waste of time. But the point isn't really that he's bored; it's that he's anxious. Here and throughout the novel, Reve, in his consistently simple, straightforward, pitch-perfect prose (translated splendidly by Sam Garrett), shares with us every last detail of Frits's experience: his actions, thoughts, memories, dreams, bodily sensations, and observations of other people's sartorial choices, anatomical anomalies, and behavioral tics. And what becomes increasingly clear is that he's not bored—he's a nervous wreck, riddled with self-doubt and self-scrutiny.

His mind never stops whirring. ("I am," he reflects, "all nerves.") At home with his parents, he compulsively studies, and deplores, their empty chatter, vulgar eating habits, and unsightly physical attributes. Out with his old school friends, desperate to fill the silence, he teases them for growing bald and rattles off jokes and stories and commentaries on their lives even as he's inwardly chastising himself for being tedious.

As the novel proceeds, moreover, his anxiety takes on added depth and dimension. Increasingly, he makes references to God, morality, and mortality that at first come off as jocular, but gradually feel more serious: "God sees all things. . . . God is the beginning and the end of all things." One soon becomes aware that this novel, while set in the aftermath of World War II and the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, contains virtually no references to that recent history. At one point we learn that someone was "stationed" in a certain place; a boy is identified as having eaten meals with Frits's family "for the duration." Not until page 208 is the war explicitly mentioned, when Frits cites recent headlines about exploding grenades and the like as examples of "[d]eferred suffering from the war."

And that's precisely what this novel is about: not boredom, but what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder. Frits isn't the only one in his circle suffering from it. He and an old classmate, Maurits, who's become a small-time crook, share a morbid taste for imagining aloud, in grisly detail, how they would carry out an act of torture and murder. Frits, who has horrifically detailed dreams about corpses and traffic accidents, talks with clinical specificity about mutilating bugs; one of his chums is cruelly abusive toward a dog. These young people's conversations consist largely of anecdotes, invariably shared with glee, about macabre events they've witnessed or heard about, and dark humor about such subjects as decapitation, the impending death of a neighbor, the possibility that someone's toddler son has a mental disability, and what it would be like to wake up inside a coffin underground.

When Frits and a group of buddies go out for the evening, he's surprised that one of them, Jaap, has left his infant child alone at home. "And what if there is a fire?" Frits asks. Jaap replies, "The child will suffocate before the fire reaches him. It is not such a big deal."

These are, in short, deeply wounded people. Their entire youth has been defined by war and occupation, and they all need professional help. But even in this crowd, Frits stands out. All his friendships are purely platonic; not once, even fleetingly, does he evince a romantic or sexual impulse. Sometimes he seems to be on the verge of a nervous breakdown, to be inhabiting a mental state just this side of pure madness. Incapable of tackling his trauma, of talking it out, of addressing it head-on, he leads a life of quiet desperation, often babbling aloud to himself and endlessly picking at his own emotional scabs.

In his single (plainly unconscious) effort at self-therapy, he borrows a toy rabbit from a female friend: "Sweet, isn't it?" he says. "Sweet little rabbit. He's sweet. It always brings tears to

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my eyes, every time I see it." Taking the stuffed animal home, he kisses it, talks to it, sheds a tear—then suddenly, savagely, bites out a chunk of wool: "Symbol of beneficence, beast of atonement," he pronounces, in the artificially heightened language he often affects, and indeed, the bunny is at once a token of his lost childhood, an emblem of prewar innocence, and a reminder (in the midst of the Christmas season, yet) of the sea of faith that within the lifetimes of Frits's own parents has receded from the naked shingles of the Netherlands shore.

In *The Evenings*, Gerard Reve (1923-2006)—a fervent anti-Communist and Roman Catholic convert who is often described as the first openly gay Dutch novelist—has left us a work that is, by turns, poignant, chilling, disquieting, and (yes, Herman Koch is right about this) laugh-out-loud funny. The novel's near-perverse blend of flavors and feelings, its unsettling admixture of the comic and tragic, and its laser focus on a hero who's alternately appealing and appalling, are typical of Reve, who's best known in America for his lurid 1981 thriller *The Fourth Man*—or more accurately, for Paul Verhoeven's much-admired 1983 film adaptation.

Named in an *NRC Handelsblad* poll as one of the top 10 Dutch-language novels of all time and by the Society for Dutch Literature as the best Dutch novel of the century, *The Evenings* should have found its way into English decades ago. Koch suggests in his blurb that if it had appeared in English in the 1950s, "it would have become every bit as much a classic as *On the Road* and *The Catcher in the Rye*."

Could be—although, despite the obvious common theme of alienated youth, *The Evenings* doesn't particularly recall either of those items from the midcentury canon. Other books come to mind, though: Frits's hilariously vacuous suppertime exchanges with his parents recall the inane blather around the dinner table in *Great Expectations*, when the visiting Uncle Pumblechook speaks of Pip as "improving himself with [the] conversation" of his "elders and betters." And for this reader, anyway, Reve's plotless, obsessively meticulous account of one neurotic soul's moment-to-moment existence brings to mind an international bestselling novel of very recent vintage—namely, Karl Ove Knausgaard's six-volume *My Struggle*, a favorite with many offbeat young readers.

Is it possible that Knausgaard enthusiasts will discover, and embrace, *The Evenings?* Let's hope so. With any luck, it may yet become the well-deserved classic in English that it already is in Dutch. ♦

B&A

Safe for Democracy

What is the price of liberal internationalism without power? BY GARY SCHMITT

Why Wilson Matters
The Origin of American Liberal Internationalism and Its Crisis Today
by Tony Smith
Princeton, 352 pp., $35

Tony Smith, political science professor at Tufts, is a man on a mission. His mission: save Wilsonianism from its perversions by post-Cold War social scientists, military strategists like General David Petraeus, the RAND Corporation—and especially the neocons and neoliberals of the Bush and Obama years. To do so, Smith spends half of *Why Wilson Matters* in "an effort to rescue" Wilson by giving his readers a more complete account of Woodrow Wilson's views of history and statecraft. The other half he devotes to an account of how this truer Wilsonianism has been left behind in favor of a more assertive, even imperialist, version reflected in the policies of the last two administrations.

As Smith somewhat backhandedly admits, his first task is complicated by the fact that "Wilson never spelled out" his grand strategy "in a fully coherent manner." And indeed, even in Smith's retelling of Wilson, one is struck by the tensions and contradictions in Wilson's own evolving understanding of both political life and international affairs. In short, Woodrow Wilson is a hard man to pin down.

Nevertheless, from the confusing mass of Wilson's writings, speeches, and policies as our 28th president, Smith argues that Wilsonianism can be seen as consisting of four interrelated elements: democracy promotion, open markets, collective security arrangements, and American leadership to push and pull the other three into some sort of consistent vision. But Smith also wants to qualify this far-reaching agenda with a significant addendum: Wilson possessed a Burkean and Darwinian sensibility that such matters can't be rushed. As he told a group of reporters in 1918, if a people "don't want" democracy, "that is none of my business. That was the principle I acted on in dealing with Mexico" after invading it in 1914.

Yet Wilson's evolutionary views were no less informed by his progressive sense of history: Monarchies, he believed, were increasingly a thing of the past, the spirit of the times was headed in democracy's direction, and equally important, "it is surely the manifest destiny of the United States to lead in the attempt to make this spirit prevail." Smith calls George W. Bush "far more assertive" in this regard—and surely Bush was assertive in setting an American goal of ending tyranny in the world—but it was Wilson who said that upon becoming

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a great power, the task of the United States would be "to teach the South American Republics to elect good men" and "to extend self-government to Puerto Rico and the Philippines," and asserted even more broadly, "when properly directed, there is no people not fitted for self-government." And it was Wilson who, with the conclusion of World War I in mind and the League of Nations to defend, asserted: The goal is not only "the destruction of every arbitrary power anywhere" but also "to redeem the world by giving it liberty and justice."

Putting aside the issue of how best to understand Woodrow Wilson for the moment, Tony Smith's real target, is his fellow academics who, through the promulgation of the "democratic peace theory" and "the democratic transition theory," have (to his mind) offered up a jiffy-quick formula justifying a more activist use of power to expand the liberal international order. It's these concepts, combined with an expanded notion of the right to intervene where gross violations of human rights are occurring, that have fueled, he believes, such disastrous overreaches as in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya.

Yet Smith's problem is that the democratic peace theory has proven to be quite strong: Liberal democracies don't go to war with each other. There might be some small exceptions that can be conjured up, but they are so much the exception to the rule that they actually confirm that it is in America's (and its democratic allies') interest to promote the establishment of democratic regimes when it can. In addition, the old development maxim that liberal democracy could only take root in countries with specific economic and cultural preconditions has been put into question by the huge expansion of democratic states over the past century—an expansion that has included countries of various economic levels, in every continent, and with diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, including Muslim. In short, politicians and policymakers looking at these trends had good reason to be optimistic.

Smith, whose *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggles for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (1994) was very much in sync with this optimism, is now driven by his desire to disassociate his version of Wilsonianism or liberal internationalism from the interventionist policies of the Bush and Obama administrations. The problem, however, is that in none of the three cases—Afghanistan, Iraq, or Libya—was military intervention done principally with an eye to democracy promotion. In the first two, regimes were toppled for reasons of national security and in the last, Libya, to prevent what was becoming a humanitarian disaster that (like the Balkans in the 1990s) held significant security implications for our European allies if not addressed.

Woodrow Wilson, Gen. John J. Pershing (1918)

Of course, in the case of Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States and the international community have been interested in helping establish a form of representative government in each. The question Smith never asks, and which policymakers must confront, is this: Once a decision was made to remove Saddam Hussein and the Taliban from power, what form of government should have been put in place? Individuals can certainly argue about the initial decision for regime change, but can any democratic leader in this day and age argue that the policy to follow should be "we'll replace that thug with our thug"?

Nor can it be assumed, as Smith and a host of others do, that the effort to build stable democracies in such states is an impossible task. The United States certainly didn't come prepared to deal with a post-Saddam Iraq, and when it finally did begin to provide the kind of stability necessary to start the process in a serious fashion, the Obama team pulled the plug on that effort. It's an open question what Iraq might look like today if Washington had stayed the course. And while post-Qaddafi Libya is a bloody mess—one hardly helped by Barack Obama's post-Iraq, hands-off approach to his military intervention—Libya's neighbor, Muslim Tunisia, continues to plug away at moving from autocratic rule to representative government.

If there is a central distinction to be made between Woodrow Wilson's vision of liberal internationalism and the views of those Smith takes aim at today, it lies in what place nation-state power—especially American power—plays in that order's promotion and sustainment. Wilson's postwar vision centered on a League of Nations in which collective security would be animated by "the common will of mankind [that] has been substituted for the particular purposes of individual states." But as internationalists like William Howard Taft and Elihu Root correctly complained, this left the league without an effective enforcement mechanism to address violations of the international order. It lacked the power that only states can bring.

In this respect, Smith is right to say that Wilson's Wilsonianism is different from that of many of the Wilsonians of today—but not for the reasons he puts forward. Liberal internationalism must rely on the very exercise of national power that it hopes to moderate and direct. In turn, this means living for the foreseeable future with presidents and administrations who understand that the United States remains "the indispensible nation," mistakes and all. ♦

ASSOCIATED PRESS

B&A

Out of the Warehouse

The brown suit as catalyst for a fashion revolution.

BY STEPHEN EIDE

Standards of men's dress in America are in a bad state, and the brown suit is just the thing to revive them.

It won't be easy, though. In order to win broad acceptance, brown suits must overcome longstanding prejudices against them that have persisted throughout several revolutions in men's style. A blazer-with-tie-and-khaki-pants is now seen as more appropriate than a brown suit in many professional settings. This would not be the case in a just world.

Brown has a spectrum as wide as gray's and wider than blue's. Pale blue, because of its association with 1970s proms in the New Jersey suburbs, will always hold a highly limited appeal for suits; tan, though, strikes the perfect balance between lightness and seriousness that one wants in a summer suit. Taupe, the prince of earth tones, is marvelous in the winter. Changing his wardrobe with the seasons is the first step a man should take in his ascent from schlubville, and brown has more potential on that score than gray and blue and, obviously, black.

In settling on appropriate standards of dress, each generation must reconcile the competing goods of comfort and elegance. At present, the pendulum has drifted far too far towards comfort. We need more structure and suavity in day-to-day menswear, and soon. More brown suits might promote formality because maybe more men would up their game if they felt like they had more options.

It is not a coincidence that with less formality, over time, has come more conformity: Bow ties, double-breasted and three-piece suits, pocket squares, fedoras—these once passed without notice. Now, however, they make many men feel self-conscious. On purely aesthetic grounds, there is nothing wrong with charcoal gray and navy blue, the standard palette of the vanishing race of male professionals who wear suits to work. But perhaps one reason why so many men stifle their inner peacock is because they feel uninspired by the choice between charcoal gray and navy blue.

The decline of the suit is reaching crisis proportions now that the baby boomers are beginning to retire. Most men over 60 in T-shirts and jeans look like old hippies. We need to quickly reverse course and reintegrate collared shirts, ties, and jackets into modes of work and play.

The main problem with "business casual"—and all informal dress, really—is that it's unbecoming unless you are an Adonis. Spectacularly handsome men look spectacularly handsome in a blue oxford and khakis, or T-shirts and flip-flops, but the rest of us benefit from a bit more effort. Just because Mark Zuckerberg became a billionaire after dropping out of college does not mean that you should, too. One could even argue that business casual widens nature's unequal distribution of physical beauty and is, therefore, undemocratic. More formal standards of dress give ordinary guys more of a fair shake in their romantic and professional pursuits.

Were the brown suit to revive men's style, this would not be tantamount to a revival of the brown suit itself because it has never truly had a golden age. It has *never* been accepted, and for two reasons that were once convincing but now are moot.

First, many 20th-century critics of men's dress believed that the main problem with modern men's style was a lack of color. (See, for example, Pearl Binder's 1958 polemic *The Peacock's Tail*.) From a number of perspectives, it is certainly interesting to ponder why American men cut such a drab figure in contrast to the splendidness found throughout history, and among so many other males in the animal kingdom. But if Brooks Brothers started stocking emerald green suits, no one would buy them. (Certain shades of green can work in slacks or odd jackets but it's generally inadvisable in the case of suits.) A return to the high-heeled buckled shoes, laces, bows, and wild colors of monarchical times is totally impractical.

That said, with respect to shirts and ties, brown might slightly broaden the color spectrum for men. Most bold ties, such as the aggressively monotone varieties favored by President Trump, look better set against the backdrop of a brown suit than a black one. Light yellow shirts, maybe paired with a tartan tie, look smart with darker shades of brown. Gold and rust work well with brown because they carry its undertones. Nothing will set off your favorite pair of gold cufflinks like a dark brown suit and white shirt. Or how about tan gabardine—"summer's most luxurious suit," according to the style sage Alan Flusser—married to a light pink shirt and navy blue (or black) club tie? Shades of light brown with black make a sharp combination. A gentle window-pane pattern on a brown suit is a nice touch, just as on a gray one—though be careful with bold stripes, which are too much, too soon.

The second reason is that in England, the source of virtually all American men's style, there was for a long time a rule called "no brown in town." Its premise was that country and urban living mutually benefited from different modes of dress. Accordingly, wearing a brown suit was associated with being a bit of a yokel, and someone who tried to push for broader acceptance of the brown suit would have been accused of lowering standards. But Michael Anton, in *The Suit*

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(2006), reports that the British clothing industry dropped "no brown in town" many years ago; and in America, for better or worse, the importation of country, or even outdoor-wear, into streetwear is a *fait accompli*.

Ronald Reagan was a strong proponent of the brown suit. Reagan wore brown like other men wore gray. His arsenal had great range, which gave him brown options for all manner of occasions: the campaign trail, signing ceremonies, weighty Situation Room meetings, the lighting of the National Christmas Tree, knocking off at his ranch in California, meeting with Michael Jackson and Mother Teresa (not at the same time), and when negotiating an end to the Cold War with Mikhail Gorbachev.

How did he get away with it? Certainly, Reagan benefited from former generations' greater tolerance for diversity in professional male attire. But, also, *all* his suits, from tuxedos on down, had the same cut (i.e., the shape of the shoulders, how the suit hangs from your frame). When he modulated from charcoal gray to chocolate, it didn't look like a whim—which is something we don't want to see in powerful politicians.

Reagan's sartorial diversity-within-consistency should stand as a lesson for all of us—as should, it goes without saying, the confidence he exuded in his personal sense of style. But Reagan was not the most famous case of a president wearing brown: For his first inauguration, George Washington eschewed military dress and selected an American manufacturer, the Hartford Woolen Manufactory, to make the brown coat and breeches he wore. Along with this proud association with republican simplicity, brown is a very masculine color. It evokes cigars and whiskey. Men look better in brown than women, though we should assume that were it to catch on, women would appropriate brown for professional uses just as they have gray, blue, and black.

However, we can't expect politicians to take the lead, as was made clear by Barack Obama's ill-fated encounter with a tan suit in the summer of 2014. Despite how everyone had raved for years about how cool President Obama was, and the still more intense popular adulation for his wife Michelle's fashion tastes, his choice was second-guessed. So Obama beat a rapid retreat back to blue and gray.

His failure was due, in part, to his not having prepared the public for such a dramatic departure. Obama prided himself in being a "no drama" dresser: While president, he deliberately limited his wardrobe in order to cut down on the number of choices he had to make every day. Another reason why politicians are so conformist in their clothes is because they sense that striking out with two-tone shoes or a flower in their buttonhole would suggest that their minds are distracted by matters other than their constituents' well-being.

Ronald Reagan (1983)

Nor can dandies take the lead, because the dandy does not really exist in modern American society. Dandies thrived in the 19th century, a sweet spot in history when aristocratic taste coincided with a radical openness towards changes in mores wrought by a series of political revolutions. Modern American society is not lacking for wealthy young men devoted to lives of pleasure, but they prefer to dress as if they're poor. One does sometimes see one of our few dandies wearing brown, but the effect is counterproductive. Again, we're trying to think seriously here about how to secure a beachhead for brown, and most men don't trust dandies.

Our only hope is for the tech industry to take the lead. True, tech has been the driving force behind business casual: When JPMorgan recently authorized "business casual" for regular workdays—a memo that sent shivers down Madison Avenue—a central motivation was to attract more recruits and clients from the tech industry. Apparently, the belief is pervasive throughout Silicon Valley that serious men don't care about clothes, but this is plainly false. The *New York Times* Style section has reported that many techies like to cut loose by wearing ornate socks. They're plainly not indifferent to elegance.

Indeed, the tech industry's success has as much to do with people like Steve Jobs's exacting aesthetic standards as anything to do with engineering. "Sleek" is, admittedly, not the first word that comes to mind when we think about the brown suit's virtues, but you do have the California connection. The Westernness of brown was surely one of its main attractions for Ronald Reagan. Tech titans who want to be sure they're never mistaken for members of the hidebound East Coast elite should go with brown *precisely* because brown has never been fashionable inside the Beltway, or on Wall Street, or among WASPs in general.

The fashion historian James Laver once argued that revolutions in modes of dress need 10 years to fully take effect. If we start now, we could expect the brown suit to have become a menswear staple by, say, 2027—in time for the 20th anniversary of the iPhone. There's no time to waste. ♦

DAVID HUME KENNERLY / GETTY IMAGES

B&A

Fix the Fixer

How odd of Hollywood not to choose the Jews.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

I was recently reading *The Whole Truth and Nothing But*, a 1963 memoir by the legendary gossip columnist Hedda Hopper, and I came across an interesting passage in which the producer Samuel Goldwyn (né Szmuel Gelbfisz) tells Hopper flatly, "You can't have a Jew playing a Jew. It wouldn't work on the screen."

She then goes on to report, using once-famous names you will need to Google to track down, that "in Hollywood only Christians are allowed to portray Jews. Gertrude Berg was thrown out of *A Majority of One* to make room for Rosalind Russell. . . . *Anne Frank* emerged as milk-and-watery Millie Perkins." She doesn't even mention the actor best-known for playing Jews, a Mr. Charlton Heston from No Man's Land, Illinois.

What was true in 1963 has remained mysteriously true half a century later; many of the most Jewish movies have often featured the least Jewish actors. In 1964, Rod Steiger (German-Scottish) was a Holocaust survivor in *The Pawnbroker*. In 1984, the very Italian Robert De Niro played the Jewish gangster David "Noodles" Aaronson in *Once Upon a Time in America*, with the very WASPy James Woods as his sidekick Max Berkovicz. In 1986, Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs* was filmed with Blythe Danner and Judith Ivey—genetically suited to play members of the German American Bund—as immigrant Jewish sisters in the 1930s. In 1989, Jessica Tandy, Dan Aykroyd, and Patti LuPone constituted a Southern Jewish family in *Driving Miss Daisy* without there being a drop of Jewish blood among the three of them. In this century, Australia's Eric Bana and James Bond's Daniel Craig were Israeli assassins in *Munich*; Craig was also a Jewish partisan in *Defiance*. And on it goes.

Norman
The Moderate Rise and Tragic Fall of a New York Fixer
Directed by Joseph Cedar

Why is it that moviemakers seem to revel in having non-Jews play Jews when there are so many Jewish actors and actresses who could fit the bill? The old answer was that Jewish producers wanted to universalize their people, to end the idea that a Jew constituted a recognizable "type." When Goldwyn said a Jew couldn't play a Jew, he really meant "shouldn't." It's a harder question in the decades since, when America has come to accept Jews almost completely.

The latest example of a non-Jew playing an ur-Jew is Richard Gere, who stars as the title character in a film called *Norman: The Moderate Rise and Tragic Fall of a New York Fixer*. It is the first movie made in English by a celebrated Israeli writer-director named Joseph Cedar. *Norman* is loosely based on the scandal involving former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, who was driven from office and eventually jailed for taking illicit gifts from an American businessman named Morris Talansky. Gere plays the Talansky character, an odd and desperate New York figure named Norman Oppenheimer.

Norman calls himself a consultant, but he seems to have no clients of his own. It is perpetual winter in Norman's New York, and he has no office, wandering instead around the public spaces of midtown and making calls in the office-furniture section of Staples. He risks and receives nearly constant humiliation at the hands of rich men with whom he is trying to curry favor, and about whom he lies constantly.

He does succeed in making one connection, to a second-tier Israeli politician named Micha Eshel, when he finds himself buying Eshel a pair of wildly expensive shoes he can so ill afford that he must sneak into the kitchen of his synagogue later that night and make a dinner out of pieces of herring and Ritz crackers. It turns out to be the best investment of his life, because three years later Eshel is the prime minister of Israel and suddenly Norman becomes known as a back-channel conduit to the leader of the Jewish state.

Norman is a brilliant piece of work, as sophisticated and knowing a satire of contemporary politics as I've seen. It is particularly impressive in its stunning final 20 minutes, in which Cedar takes every bit of plot we've seen, ties it all together, and reverses every expectation we've developed over the previous 90 minutes.

But there's something about *Norman* that doesn't work, and that something is Richard Gere. He tries. He tries very hard. He does his best to look Jewish and to sound Jewish and to act Jewish. But—and this is the tricky part—Norman is a complicated and devious character, and it is likely Gere did not feel comfortable making Norman as unattractive as he needs to be at certain points in the film. Cedar is open to playing on Jewish stereotypes throughout *Norman*, in part to undermine them. It's a very tricky business Cedar is up to in this picture, and there's just no way Gere could truly be in on it.

Joseph Cedar surely didn't cast Richard Gere because he wanted this nice Buddhist matinee idol to deracinate his movie's central character and distract from Norman's Jewishness. That Jewishness is central to Norman's character and to the movie itself. Cedar probably just thought he was getting a relatively big star for his relatively low-budget movie. But the effect is the same, and it robs the film of some of its power. For *Norman* to have been the movie it should have been, only a Jew could have played this Jew. ♦

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

"Forget Georgia. Virginia Democrats say victory in obscure local race signals end of Trump."
—Washington Post headline, April 19, 2017

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Trump suffers major rebuke in election for class president

DNC SPENT $54 MILLION

Dems call 5th grader's win 'titanic upset'

BY TRACY FLICK

FAIRFAX, Va. — The voters have sent a powerful message to Republicans: Change is coming. Fed up with the extremist policies and erratic behavior of the current administration, the 5th-grade class at Powhatan Elementary School elected a candidate whose parents opposed President Donald Trump. "My mom and dad call him a big fat liar," said Bryn Moore, who won the presidency after promising to extend recess and bathroom breaks.

By a whopping 58 percent to 41 percent, students in this 5th-grade class voted for Moore over her opponent, Dale Hills, who disliked transfer students and wanted increased spending for safety patrols. Hills was criticized for running a negative campaign—spreading a rumor that Moore was the source of a "lice alert" and falsely claiming she "had cooties." In a playground incident, he allegedly gave her the "cheese touch."

"This is nothing short of a political earthquake," said DNC chairperson Tom Perez, who also called Hills's proposed class budget "a [expletive] budget." Perez and the DNC spent $54 million on the race, which is estimated to be the most expensive class race in the country. (Hills spent $26.54 at Staples, mostly on poster board and colored markers.) But Perez insisted it was money well spent. "We are retaking America one election at a time."

Moore was able to secure crucial endorsements from Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and House minority leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), both of whom praised the candidate for her strength and courage. "We are so thankful for the outpouring of support," said Moore's campaign manager Robby Mook, who helped craft Moore's slogan: "Everyday Students."

Hollywood also took an interest in the race: Amy Schumer and Chelsea Handler went door-to-door, and Meryl Streep and George Clooney recorded robocalls. At a playground concert, singer Bruce

THE BOSS CONTINUED ON A6

CLINTON: WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Former president Bill Clinton tells surprised Powhatan Elementary student Evan Drake about candidate Dale Hills's bad smell.

the weekly Standard

MAY 8, 2017