the weekly Standard

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COULD TRUMP BE IMPEACHED?

BY TOD LINDBERG

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Better, Bigger, Beerier

Is the multinational behemoth that owns Budweiser—AB InBev—a threat to American beer? Democrats seem to think so. In their populist campaign manifesto for 2018, "A Better Deal," they warn, "In the last year, InBev which owns Anheuser-Busch and is the world's largest beer company, struck a deal to purchase SABMiller, the second largest. The companies have already announced that jobs will be cut as a result of the merger, and the resulting conglomerate will make it even harder for small, local breweries to compete."

And that's not all. Critics also mourn the loss of start-up breweries bought by the Lager Leviathan. Once an independent brewery knuckles under to InBev, you see, it ceases to be, strictly speaking, a craft beer—even if the product is exactly the same. And that's bad. One recent example is North Carolina's Wicked Weed, which InBev bought earlier this year.

All this handwringing strikes The Scrapbook—which marvels at the selection of good beers now available in even the most modest of bodegas—as strange. Big Beer has been consolidating for as long as we can remember, and it hasn't done them much good in their efforts to stop the little-guy upstarts. In 1980, there were fewer than

100 breweries in the United States, according to the Brewers Association. Now, after the decades-long explosion in craft beer, there are well over 5,000 American breweries, everything from brewpubs to microbreweries to the factories operated by the industrial big boys.

Since 2004, production of craft beers has nearly quintupled, driven mostly by microbreweries and regional brands. Overall beer consumption was stagnant last year, but craft beer sales grew by 6 percent, which means the dreaded Malt Monopolists, for all their market power, continue to lose ground to their small-scale competitors. Nor do they seem to be able to translate market dominance into inflated prices. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, since 1992 the price of beer has risen more slowly than overall inflation. By contrast, ground beef and bacon have climbed faster than overall inflation.

Despite conglomeration in the beer industry, we live in the golden age of American beer. Cheap beer keeps getting cheaper, and across the country, delicious, locally made craft beers proliferate for those who choose to enjoy artisanal alternatives. There are real choices for people of all tastes and budgets. It's hard to find a better deal than that. ♦

Bottom Story of the Day

Rocked by massive protests and violent skirmishes, Venezuela is on the brink of civil war and has been for some time now. It should come as no surprise, then, that the socialist regime of Nicolás Maduro is shoring up support with the country's military in every way it can. This includes rewarding loyal troops—no, not with medals, not with ribbons, not even with certificates citing their valor in cracking the skulls of unarmed civilians. No, soldiers are being ceremoniously presented with what may be the most precious commodity to be had in a failed state: toilet paper.

ABOVE: GARY LOCKE

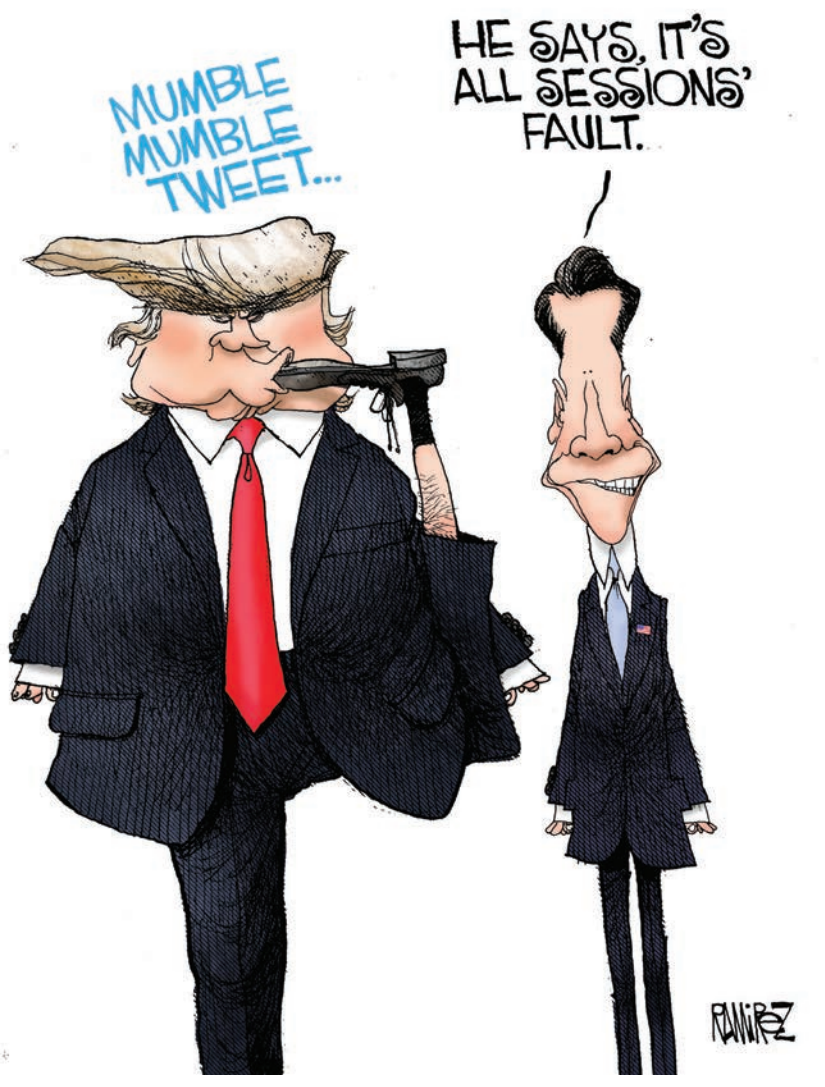
Opposition leaders acquired, and promptly tweeted out, photos of Venezuelan soldiers posing with a superior officer to be honored for their service to the regime. Each is being given a handshake and two—*count 'em, two!*—rolls of toilet paper. Thanks to socialist economic "reforms," these priceless symbols of privilege are nearly impossible to obtain in Venezuela right now. That may be a hardship for

the people of that benighted country, but it certainly makes things easier for the ruling *junta*: The rank and file can now be bought off, not with cash, or even groceries, but merely with bum-fodder.

The Scrapbook should be careful not to exaggerate, however. The soldiers don't come *that* cheap. For their loyalty they are also being presented with soap, toothpaste, and razors, other highly coveted objects of desire in workers' paradises.

Venezuela's toilet paper crisis has been going on for years now, a classic, even clichéd, outcome of socialist rule. And so it's worth remembering that Venezuelan socialism has long had its champions in the United States, most notably Bernie Sanders, who in 2011 said, "These days, the American dream is more apt to be realized in South America, in places such as Ecuador, Venezuela and Argentina." The Vermont senator concluded with this taunt: "Who's the banana republic now?" Good question, Bernie.

Alas, those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to wiping themselves with socialist newspapers. ♦

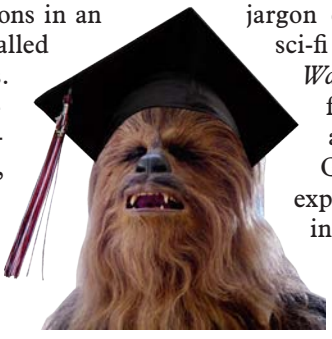


Fictive Science

These are not the journals you're looking for.

Obi-Wan Kenobi once observed, "The Force can have a strong influence on the weak-minded," and he was proven correct when three ostensibly peer-reviewed medical journals published a spoof *Star Wars*-themed article.

The author of *Discover* magazine's *Neuroskeptic* blog sent the bogus article to nine publications in an effort to expose so-called predatory journals. Such journals, exploiting academics' desperate need to publish, charge authors for the privilege (and pay little or no attention to whether the work is credible). Of course, even some academic journals not looking to be paid show few signs of exercising editorial review.



TWS PHOTO ILLUSTRATION; CHEWBACCA: DISNEY

The phony paper was presented as the work of professors "Lucas McGeorge" and "Annette Kin." It contained a dense mixture of medical jargon copied from Wikipedia, sci-fi pseudoscience, and *Star Wars* quotations. The paper focused on "midi-chlorians," fictional organisms George Lucas invented to explain the spiritual powers in the *Star Wars* universe.

"[W]ithout the midi-chlorians," the article reads, "life couldn't exist, and we'd have no knowledge of the force." Mutations in midi-chlorian DNA could result in such afflictions as the "Kyloren syndrome" or "Lightsaber's hereditary optic neuropathy," which "are usually handed down by a force-sensitive woman to her children." Be careful, or you could end up with "Yoda's ataxia" or "Wookie's disease."

Three journals published the paper, while a fourth accepted it but demanded a cash fee. To be fair, three journals rejected the manuscript. Peer reviewers at another journal, apparently getting the joke, returned the paper with the comment, "The authors have neglected to add the following references: Lucas

et al., 1977, Palpatine et al., 1980, and Calrissian et al., 1983."

Discover's spoof suggests that a problem with fake news science has.♦

Kicking the Big Bucket

Some people endeavor to live an eco-friendly life. But why should your environmental activism stop just because you die? California legislators are debating a bill that would give morticians permission to dispose of corpses in a relatively new way—one in harmony with nature—known as "water cremation."

Wait, is that some kind of weird dryer? Why, no: It's a water cremation machine.

Here's how San Francisco's NPR station, KQED, describes the green alternative to cremation or burial:

> The body is dissolved in a hot chemical bath, leaving a sterile solution that can be flushed down the drain. The carbon footprint of this process is just a quarter of traditional fire cremation because it uses so much less energy, and only a sixth of a burial because it doesn't require the materials for concrete headstones, mahogany caskets or the chemicals used in embalming.

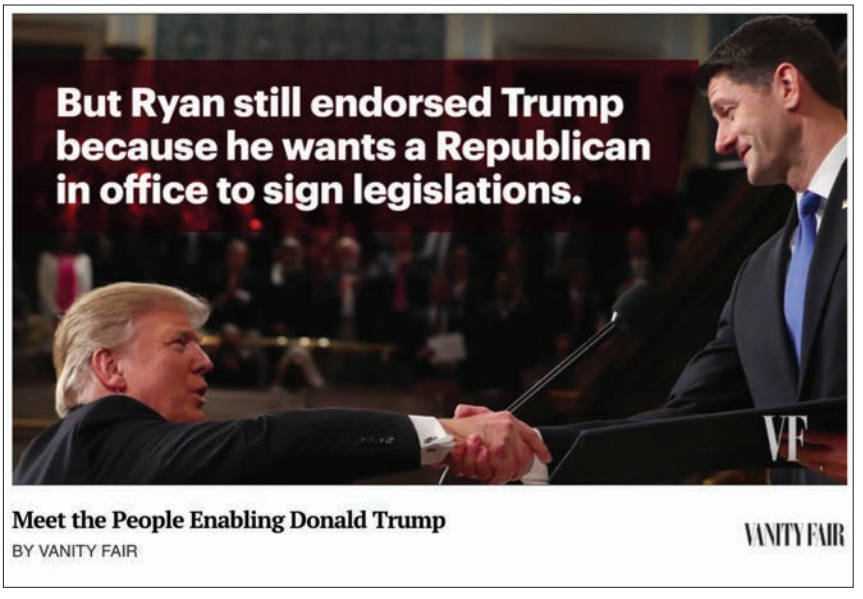
The process, known technically as alkaline hydrolysis, leaves behind bones, which can be crushed and put into urns. Oh yes, and a big batch of flesh soup. The process is already legal in more than a dozen states.

Of course, as with most efforts to preen green, this one will cost you (or your heirs, if you haven't made arrangements). Water cremation is some $150 to $500 more than traditional cremation.

Some religious groups are opposed to "biocremation," saying that liquidating grandma in a hot chemical brew fails to treat the dead with dignity. But other religious folks—those who worship Mother Earth—may see it as a viable and virtuous alternative to cremation emissions and energy use.

The water cremation bill passed California's assembly in June. If it passes the senate and is signed into law by the governor, according to KQED, "Californians could choose to dissolve loved ones by 2020." ♦

Great Momentses in Proofreadings



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BPA WORLDWIDE

The Meaning of Stupid

I once worked in a small state agency that, among other things, analyzed legislation. At one point the agency's head hired three new analysts. One of them was a woman in her early thirties—call her Leena. Her job was to brief other staffers on budget-related bills. When she first took the job, she seemed knowledgeable and reliable. She knew the names and general attitudes of lawmakers (a great advantage in that position), and she seemed to know a lot about the state budget. She was a tad abrasive, to be sure. At the first staff meeting Leena attended, she talked a great deal and at one point loudly used the word "tit." But apart from the loudness and occasional impropriety ("Do these loafers make me look like a lesbian?"), she was friendly and seemed capable.

Then the disappearances began. She would come in two hours late and say her power had gone out as a result of a storm no one else had been aware of (and anyhow, we wondered, why should a power outage make you that late?). There were endless excuses to leave work early. Once, she said she and her boyfriend had ridden on an amusement park ride and her tailbone was too sore to sit at her desk. One morning around 10 she said her cat had vomited and she needed to attend it; she didn't return that day. And then there were the funerals—for friends she'd known at school, for her parents' friends, for family members. You wondered how she could endure so much death.

Colleagues in her department began to complain of mistakes. Legislation is almost always complicated, and the agency depended on the analysts to know exactly what bills would and wouldn't accomplish if passed. Once, in an analysis of the budget bill, she stated it would increase spending on one state agency by 1,300 percent. Manifestly she was wrong, but she refused to admit any mistake. When a more experienced colleague explained why she was mistaken, she just said, "We'll have to agree to disagree." A few weeks later she made the same mistake and blamed it on another analyst, who called her "stupid" and a "liar" to her face. The two nearly came to blows.

BRITT SPENCER

At last I realized: Leena had no idea what she was talking about. She spoke fast and loudly and it was easy to miss what she was saying, but if you listened carefully, almost every work-related statement was wrong; she'd refer knowingly to a "$3 million unfunded liability" when the figure was $15 billion, or speak of a "bridge loan" as if it were a loan for the construction of a bridge. Eventually she stopped working altogether. She would go into her office and lock the door, or leave for the day without bothering to give a reason, or else say she was going to a "committee meeting" that, as we'd discover later, had been canceled. Occasionally she would submit work products, but these were incoherent.

The boss wanted to fire her but feared she'd take legal action. Some kind of documentation of deliberate wrongdoing was needed. Of course, there had been plenty of that, but it was hard to prove. Had she stolen money or defaced property? Well, no. One of the IT personnel hit on an idea. He could place a device on her computer that would "grab" images of her screen at pre-set intervals throughout the day; say, every five or ten minutes. These images would be sent via email to her supervisor and would document what we all knew.

The trouble was that Leena had put a password on her computer and made sure she was present any time IT personnel installed updates. So at an appointed time, the IT guy told her he needed to update her virus software, and when he began working on it—Leena watching over his shoulder—her supervisor buzzed and asked her to come to the conference room for some purpose. The deed was done. When the results came in, the images were peremptory. On a typical day, she watched YouTube videos and Hulu sitcoms, read blogs, fiddled with her Facebook account, researched area apartments, and played games. She almost never worked.

Leena was let go the next day. When the news came, she took it nonchalantly, as if she wondered why it had taken so long. By this time I had developed a reluctant admiration for her. It took some cleverness and ingenuity to land a job for which she had no aptitude, put forth no effort in it, and collect a paycheck for almost a year.

A liar, yes. But stupid? I'm not so sure.

Barton Swaim

the weekly Standard

Defining Trumpism Down

We're not fans of adding "ism" to the names of presidents—"Reaganism" and "Jeffersonianism" make sense to describe those men's political worldviews, but you wouldn't use the formulations "Fordism" or "Clintonism" and expect to be understood. Nonetheless, "Trumpism" meant something definable to a substantial proportion of the people who put Donald Trump over the top last November: vastly increased border security, protection of domestic industries, a simpler and less burdensome tax code, a foreign policy oriented exclusively toward national interests, a restrained judiciary.

A team of frenemies: Trump and Sessions

Many of Trump's voters—maybe a majority—embraced his candidacy not for any specific set of policy goals but as an expression of contempt for Washington's sundry dysfunctions and for the media mandarins' political correctness. And of course many also chose Trump because they could not abide the thought of another Clinton administration. But any number of articulate, intelligent, and highly visible advocates of the candidate—you saw them often on your favorite cable news shows—embraced Trump because they believed he was redefining conservatism in fundamental ways, and because they agreed with the redefinition. They concluded that Trump's combination of cultural and economic nationalism—which they dubbed "Trumpism"—was the future of conservatism and the Republican party, and some of them took personal and professional risks to align themselves with the change. We thought that conclusion was deeply misguided. But the hopes they invested in him would not have looked foolish or irrational were Trump to carry to completion the policy changes they desired.

The real trouble with their conclusion, however, is that President Trump is proving to have his own definition of "Trumpism," one very different from that of his most earnest advocates.

The case of Attorney General Jeff Sessions makes this sadly clear. Senator Jeff Sessions, as he then was, endorsed Trump on February 28, 2016—the first U.S. senator to do so; indeed almost the first high-level public official to do so. He staked his political credibility on Trump, not because he had no apprehensions about Trump's character or conduct, but because he believed in what he took to be Trump's ideas. On illegal immigration, on globalization and trade, on foreign policy, Sessions supported Trump's ideas with none of the squeamishness that characterized many other Republican politicians' support. "People don't have to endorse all of his rhetoric," he said in May 2016, "but he's correct on the issues, substantively, and he's where the American people want to be, and we as a party should celebrate this and join this movement." As attorney general, Sessions hasn't veered from his understanding of Trump's agenda in the slightest degree.

Yet now Trump is openly taunting Sessions in the most public way—and not for any failure or impropriety but simply because the attorney general recused himself from the Russian-meddling investigation. The president began with a swipe in his July 19 interview with the *New York Times*: "Jeff Sessions takes the job, gets into the job, recuses himself, which frankly I think is very unfair to the president. . . . If he would have recused himself before the job, I would have said, 'Thanks, Jeff, but I'm not going to take you.' It's extremely unfair—and that's a mild word—to the president." He continued his assault on Twitter in the days that followed: "So why aren't the Committees and investigators, and of course our beleaguered A.G., looking into Crooked Hillarys crimes & Russia relations?" Trump asked. And then: "Attorney General Jeff Sessions has taken a VERY weak position on Hillary Clinton crimes (where are E-mails & DNC server) & Intel leakers!"

What about Sessions's early and risky endorsement? When that question was put to the president in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, his answer was astonishing: "When they say he endorsed me, I went to Alabama. I had 40,000 people. He was a senator from Alabama. I won the state by a lot, massive numbers. A lot of the states I won by massive numbers. But he was a senator, he looks at 40,000 people and he probably says, 'What do I have to

REX FEATURES / AP

lose?' And he endorsed me. So it's not like a great loyal thing about the endorsement. But I'm very disappointed in Jeff Sessions."

There is no good reason for any president publicly to goad his own attorney general in this way. It is unpardonable and loony. Nor was Sessions wrong to recuse himself from the investigation: As he explained when he made the decision on March 2, the investigation concerned a campaign that Sessions had worked on and with, and current law prohibits someone with that conflict of interest from supervising such an investigation. The recusal took place four months ago. One wonders why the president is suddenly so upset that his erstwhile loyal attorney general isn't in charge of the Russia probe.

There is an important lesson to draw from all this. Sessions is the purest example of someone who ardently supported Trump because he believed in Trumpism as a set of ideas to which both he and the president were committed. There are many such people, within and without the administration. What the president has made clear in the past week is that he is not with them. The people working for this president may do so from a commitment to a set of policy views, but their boss assumes they're doing so from a commitment to him.

To put it another way: Trump's subordinates and allies may believe in Trumpism, but the president has a much different and much simpler definition. He equates Trumpism with whatever enhances the notoriety of Donald J. Trump and the well-being of the Trump family. As those subordinates and allies discover this regrettable truth—and as those millions who pulled the lever for him conclude that Trump and Trumpism are one and the same—the prospect of a move back to Trump Tower may look more appealing than ever. ♦

Dunkirk and Us

What is one to think as one watches the clown show in the White House, the train wreck in Congress, and the multi-vehicle accident that is conservatism today? We're inclined (as we so often are) simply to quote Winston Churchill, in this case speaking in 1931 about Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald:

"I remember, when I was a child, being taken to the celebrated Barnum's Circus, which contained an exhibition of freaks and monstrosities, but the exhibit on the programme which I most desired to see was the one described as 'The Boneless Wonder.' My parents judged that that spectacle would be too revolting and demoralising for my youthful eyes, and I have waited fifty years to see the Boneless Wonder sitting on the Treasury Bench."

Today's spectacle in Washington, D.C., is surely as revolting and demoralizing. And the contortions of the boneless wonders of the Republican party and the conservative movement have been especially depressing.

But let us avert our gaze from such matters. Let us take advantage of the release of the movie *Dunkirk* to elevate our vision from what is to what could be.

The deliverance at Dunkirk, remember, came not long after the disgrace of Munich. The Munich agreement was the culmination of what had been a decade of drift and appeasement. In February 1933, the Oxford Union had carried by 275 votes to 153 the motion "that this House will in no circumstances fight for its King and Country." Less than six years later, partly as a consequence of the dominance of the view endorsed by the Oxford students, Great Britain and its allies had, as Churchill put in the House of Commons on October 5, 1938, "sustained a total and unmitigated defeat," while deceiving themselves that it was a diplomatic achievement.

Listen to the man.

Churchill continued: "We have sustained a defeat without a war, the consequences of which will travel far with us along our road." And then: "The terrible words have for the time being been pronounced against the Western democracies: 'Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting.'"

And finally: "Do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time."

Munich was a grim moment, the nadir of what W. H. Auden would famously call "a low dishonest decade." But less than two years after Munich came Dunkirk—described by Churchill to the House of Commons on June 4, 1940, as "a miracle of deliverance, achieved by valour, by perseverance, by perfect discipline, by faultless service, by resource, by skill, by unconquerable fidelity."

So the crowds who had cheered Munich became the generation that achieved Dunkirk. It was what Churchill had hoped for against hope—an amazing "recovery of moral health and martial vigour" by the people of Great Britain.

Are we conservatives, we Republicans, we Americans not capable, in our very different and far less challenging circumstances, of such a recovery?

—William Kristol

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Wicked Ways

Tim Gill is best known as the Denver-based megadonor who bankrolled the successful national campaign to legalize same-sex marriage. In June, Gill sat down for an interview with *Rolling Stone*. He was asked about the future of the gay rights movement. If you had any doubt that Gill and other influential elements in the gay rights movement have come to embody the very traits they once claimed to oppose—intolerance, censoriousness, vengefulness—this is what he had to say: "'We're going into the hardest states in the country,' he says. 'We're going to punish the wicked.'"

The quotation raised enough eyebrows that on July 21, author Andy Kroll, who conducted the interview, fired off a defensive response, claiming the remark was being blown out of proportion by "rightwing media." Kroll added, "not once in my profile does Gill talk about 'targeting' Christians. Not once does Gill so much as hint at singling out Christians or adherents of any other religion."

The idea that the network of advocacy groups bankrolled by Gill would oppose punishing Christians might surprise Barronelle Stutzman, a florist in Washington state. After developing a friendship with and doing business with Robert Ingersoll for nine years, he asked her to provide and arrange flowers for his same-sex wedding. Stutzman declined, citing her "relationship with Jesus Christ."

Despite a constitutional promise of "absolute freedom of conscience in all matters of religious sentiment," Washington state rejected Stutzman's claim that arranging flowers is a creative, expressive profession and found her guilty of discrimination. The ACLU is currently suing the septuagenarian grandmother and will look to recover its legal fees, which could cause her to lose all her personal assets, including her home.

Then there's the case of Jack Phillips, who owns a bakery in the Denver area. Phillips has always been guided in his business practices by his Christian beliefs: He refuses to bake cakes with alcohol in them, for instance, or to decorate cakes celebrating Halloween. Phillips's specialties are elaborate cakes; on some he even paints original landscapes—so again, the issue of his free expression is front and center.

Phillips nonetheless was found guilty of violating the state's anti-discrimination statutes after he declined in 2012 to create a cake celebrating a same-sex marriage. Instead he offered to sell the men anything else in his store. Diann Rice, a member of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission that found Phillips in violation of the state's anti-discrimination law, brushed aside religious-liberty claims, saying that "freedom of religion . . . has been used to justify all kinds of discrimination throughout history, whether it be slavery, whether it be the Holocaust."

It should be abundantly clear that the elements of the gay rights movement wanting to punish "the wicked" stand in opposition to the First Amendment. A printer in Kentucky, Blaine Adamson, was prosecuted for declining to make T-shirts for a gay pride parade, never mind that the owner of a printing press clearly gets to decide what words he prints. Adamson won his case in state court, but it is still being appealed.

Jack Phillips, expressing himself

LINDSAY PIERCE / THE DENVER POST / GETTY IMAGES

There's also the question of whether the broader gay community supports this. Adamson has supportive gay employees and a lesbian print-shop owner has publicly ridden to his defense. Not even other gay people are safe from the crusade against free expression. In June, three lesbians were kicked out of a gay pride event in Chicago for waving rainbow flags with Stars of David on them, and the award-winning reporter for the local gay newspaper who chronicled their expulsion was removed from her reporting job after her publisher was pressured.

At this point it should be clear the religious right are not waging a sustained campaign to combat basic gay rights. The *Obergefell* decision is not destined to become another *Roe* v. *Wade*. There are precious few opportunities for détente in the culture wars, but this is one of them. There is no reason why tolerance shouldn't extend to Christian business owners who are happy to serve gay people in every context except, as they see it, participating in a ceremony that offends their conscience.

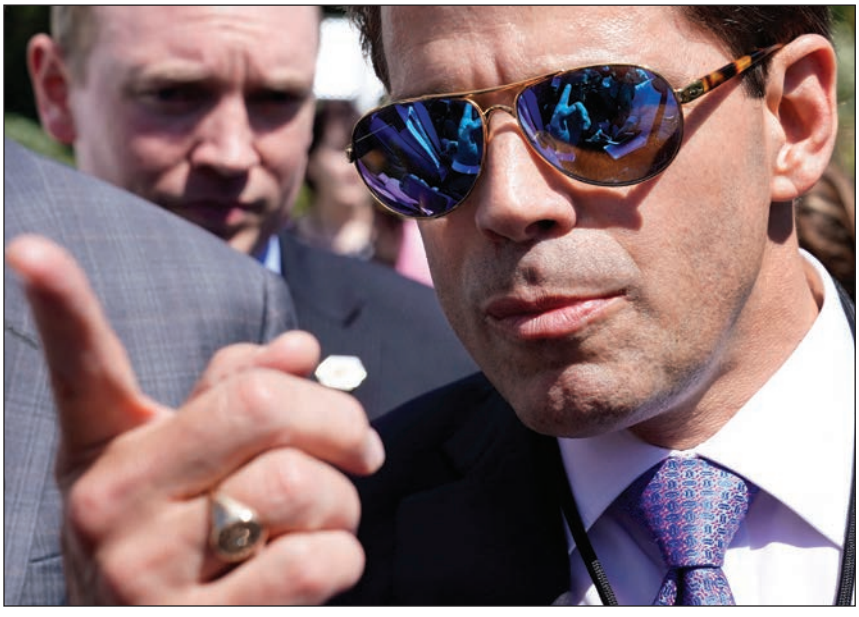
In the meantime, the Supreme Court has agreed to hear Jack Phillips's case in its upcoming session and is being petitioned to hear the case of Barronelle Stutzman. (There's a chance the two cases may get rolled into one.) So the Justices, too, have an opportunity to reaffirm the protections of the First Amendment and to halt in their tracks activists who want to kill free speech in the name of expanding gay rights. Let's hope they take it.

—Mark Hemingway

Situation Normal, All Trumped Up

One uproar after another.

BY FRED BARNES



Anthony Scaramucci: You looking at me? Huh? Huh?

Some years ago, a group of newspaper reporters came up with a headline that could work with almost any story. Here's what they agreed on: "They're at it again."

With that breakthrough in headline-writing in mind, creating the all-purpose headline for stories involving President Trump is pretty easy: "He's at it again."

Take any week, and this headline fits one way or another on story after story. For instance, let's check out a few news stories chosen at random from last week.

■ **Taxes: Playing games.** Steve Bannon, the White House counselor, let it be known that he favors raising income taxes on the rich. Those whose annual income exceeds $5 million would see the top tax rate rise from 39.6 percent to 44 percent. The revenue would be used to lower taxes on the middle class and below. And Democrats would be appeased.

Trump is adept at keeping the White House in a state of pandemonium. And Scaramucci, appointed as the new communications director, quickly delivered a lot of it. His job, it turned out, had little to do with communicating. He was hired to track down leakers and he's eager to fire as many as possible.

We could have ignored this except for what Trump then said in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*. "If there's upward revision it's going to be on high-income people," he said. "I have wealthy friends that say to me, 'I don't mind paying more tax.'" That prompted a wave of speculation. Trump loves to stir things up.

Two days later, we knew for sure Trump was playing games again. The White House and Republican leaders in Congress put out a statement on tax reform. There was nothing on raising taxes.

■ **Boy Scout speech: Inappropriate.** Trump specializes in being inappropriate. He does it all the time. He insults people. It sets him apart from practically every politician in the universe. Richard Nixon said a president should "never shoot down" and attack people below his rank. Trump shoots down all the time at lesser folks.

At the National Scout Jamboree in Mt. Hope, West Virginia, the appropriate remarks would consist of praise for the Scouts, their oath and ethos, and the famous people who once were Eagle Scouts. Trump did some of that. Then he turned political, as if he were addressing a rally of supporters. He criticized his political foes—his predecessor Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton included—talked about his experience on election night, defended his agenda, spoke about health care, and so on. He was booed by Scout parents who weren't pleased.

■ **Anthony Scaramucci: Chaos.** Trump is adept at keeping the White House in a state of pandemonium. And Scaramucci, appointed as the new communications director, quickly delivered a lot of it. His job, it turned out, had little to do with communicating. He was hired to track down leakers and he's eager to fire as many as possible. And he had direct access to the president.

For uproar purposes, Trump usually relies on a tweet in which he says something totally unexpected by the White House staff, the media, and the entire Washington community. Newt Gingrich told talk-radio host Laura Ingraham that Scaramucci is "full

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Fred Barnes is an executive editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

of himself. I think he got down here from New York and he is all excited. Frankly he is talking more than he is thinking." Gingrich was right. Scaramucci produces chaos.

■ **Transgenders in the military: Making life difficult for friends and allies.** Trump does this routinely. When he decided transgendered people don't belong in the armed forces, he immediately tweeted his decision to the world. The military brass, the White House staff, and organizers of visible support for his policies—they were no more ready to deal with this issue than the bloke on the street. But the LGBT lobby was ready, and their response and that of Democrats dominated the news.

Trump doesn't appear concerned about the difficulties he tosses in the laps of Republicans. The press demands that they respond to his tweets. When he adopts a new policy overnight, they have to explain it. He makes everything hard. Trump's enemies live far happier lives than his friends do.

■ **Health care: Trump's take.** The president isn't well versed on Republican bills to repeal and replace Obamacare. But that doesn't keep him from taking positions on what Republicans should do. His advice changes from day to day. The president is playing no role in the Senate's excruciating efforts to get a bill passed. Trump's lobbying has been feeble. Yet the press pretends that what's at stake is something called Trumpcare. Reporters surely know better.

Trump's negotiating skill didn't make the trip from New York. When Trump invites Senate Republicans to lunch at the White House and exhorts them to vote for a health-care bill, it has no effect on how they'll vote. Threatening doesn't work either. Another president might tell Dean Heller of Nevada how he'll be rewarded if he votes for cuts in Medicaid. Trump lacks the ability to make deals like that. He'd rather bluster.

It's pretty much like this every week. So whatever happens, far more often than not it's safe to say, "he's at it again." ♦

The Road to Statism . . .

. . . is paved with incompetence.

BY JAY COST

In a recent article for *Townhall*, columnist Kurt Schlichter wrote that the putative Senate candidacy in Michigan of "Kid Rock" (stage name of rocker/rapper Robert Ritchie) "should make every normal American smile" because "it will drive the liberals insane" and "make George Will [and other conservatives like him] soil themselves." Schlichter's paean to the downhome values of Kid Rock is typical of the populist right that has emerged in recent years, a movement that fueled the rise of Donald Trump from longshot candidate to president of the United States.

The basic grievance of the populist right is that politicians no longer represent the values and interests of ordinary people, so a radical change in personnel is necessary. This claim certainly has some merit. Our government seems unresponsive to and even uninterested in the citizenry. However, as its enthusiastic embrace of the likes of Trump and Kid Rock demonstrates, the populist right is a movement that thoughtful advocates of limited government should be wary of.

The Anglophone world has been trying to tame its rulers since rebel barons forced King John to sign the Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215. And the American Revolution was not really a fight against taxation, but about taxation *without representation*—the colonists were tired of being governed by a distant sovereign that did not reflect their interests.

In making their arguments against the British Crown, the revolutionary generation relied heavily on the British "opposition ideology" of the early 1700s. British polemicists like Lord Bolingbroke and "Cato" complained that the king's ministers were using patronage and emoluments to bribe members of Parliament to support the Crown's initiatives, against the interests of the people. What was needed, these "Country" Whigs argued, was a return to first principles—rooting out corruption and restoring the people (or at least, the landowning gentry) as the backbone of British liberty.

The colonists found this theory a helpful way to explain why the Crown's actions violated their rights as Englishmen. The Jeffersonian "revolution" of 1800 was built at least in part on this same opposition ideology. When James Madison and Thomas Jefferson resolved to fight the economic policies of Alexander Hamilton, they returned to the arguments of the Country Whigs. Andrew Jackson found this thinking useful as well. His veto of the Second Bank of the United States was heavily influenced by these ideas, and he justified the spoils system in part on the notion that it is bad for public administrators to be too distant from the people.

Though the names of Bolingbroke and Cato have mostly been forgotten, Americans are still suspicious that politicians in Washington are governing not for the general welfare but for themselves and their cronies. Most populist movements have been built on this idea, and insofar as Trumpism has any coherence, this is its main source.

Even if we admit that the political class has failed the people, it remains an open question what to do about it.

Jay Cost is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

There are good and bad solutions, and the populist right seems to be adopting bad ones, owing to two crucial errors in judgment.

The first is to presume that no experience in government is actually necessary to govern. This is simply not true, as President Trump is learning (or at least should be). Our system of government is extremely complicated. Public policy is even more so. And the byways of actual political authority in Washington are so circuitous that neophytes are bound to struggle to learn how to get around. As in any modern endeavor, expertise is rewarded in government.

Kid Rock at the ceremony marking the induction of Cheap Trick into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

The populist right has dismissed such practical considerations, and indeed many consider experience a mark against a candidate. Instead, they are in search of people with whom they identify on a personal level. Trump has a disarming, man-of-the-people way of communicating that endears him to many folks. But that mistakes a *style* of representation with its *substance*. Does it really matter if a representative uses the same diction as I do, or eats his steak well done as I do, so long as he is an able defender of my values and interests in government? That is the point of republican government—it is not to have representatives who are superficially like the people but who will actually do the people's business.

The second error is more subtle and more pernicious: Populism looks an awful lot like a twisted version of aristocracy. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams made this trenchant point:

> Now, my friend, who are the *aristoi*? Philosophers may answer, "the wise and good." But the world, mankind, have, by their practice, always answered, "the rich, the beautiful, and well-born." And philosophers themselves, in marrying their children, prefer the rich, the handsome, and the well-descended, to the wise and the good.

Adams was in many respects the odd man out among the founding generation. His philosophical chops were the equal of Jefferson's and Madison's, but he drew from them such wildly divergent conclusions that it is hard to situate him with his colleagues. Yet his analysis was penetrating, and in this passage he offers a dire warning for republican government—one that the populist right has ignored.

Adams might ask, why Trump? Is it because he reflects the values and interests of the common man, or is it because he has projected the image of a "winner" for more than a quarter-century? It is the latter, obviously. He lives in a 11,000-square-foot penthouse high above Fifth Avenue in New York City, not a two-bedroom apartment on Main Street in Uniontown. His populist shtick notwithstanding, people are drawn to him for exactly the reason that Adams suggested: The social and economic elite exert a natural power over the rest of mankind. That this has been wedded to an everyman routine does not alter the reality that Trump is fabulously wealthy, and people are drawn to that.

The same goes for Kid Rock. Why is the populist right interested in him? At first blush, it may seem that he is just an average fellow. But there are *plenty* of average fellows in Michigan who are available to run—that is what makes them average! The underlying appeal is that he is famous, a member of what Adams called the *aristoi*, and such people are alluring.

Adams was fearful of this attraction and thought it had to be quarantined. This is why his system of government seemed so aristocratic to the other Founders. He feared that unless the wealthy and well-born were placed somewhere in government, like the Senate, they would eventually spread everywhere and undermine the republican quality of the new government.

Similarly, those of us who desire a return to founding principles—namely, a republic of limited authority that governs honestly for the people—should be wary of populism, even if we share the critique that our representatives in government have badly misbehaved. Elevating inexperienced celebrities who have manners similar to our own is no solution. It is, rather, a pathway to a twisted version of aristocracy.

And it will ultimately redound to the benefit of the progressive left. Inexperience is the handmaid of mismanagement, after all, and if the Republican party is seen as incapable of managing the basic functions of government, power will swing back to the Democrats. Rest assured, they will use the occasion to expand the authority of the state even more. ♦

NEWSCOM

Trump Got This One Right

Shutting down the CIA's ghost war in Syria.

BY THOMAS JOSCELYN

An anti-Assad militia member loads an American-made TOW anti-tank missile southeast of the city of Tal Afar.

AHMAD AL-RUBAYE / AFP / GETTY

Earlier this year, President Donald Trump was shown a disturbing video of Syrian rebels beheading a child near the city of Aleppo. It had caused a minor stir in the press as the fighters belonged to the Nour al-Din al-Zenki Movement, a group that had been supported by the CIA as part of its rebel aid program.

The footage is haunting. Five bearded men smirk as they surround a boy in the back of a pickup truck. One of them holds the boy's head with a tight grip on his hair while another mockingly slaps his face. Then, one of them uses a knife to saw the child's head off and holds it up in the air like a trophy. It is a scene reminiscent of the Islamic State's snuff videos, except this wasn't the work of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's men. The murderers were supposed to be the good guys: our allies.

Trump wanted to know why the United States had backed Zenki if its members are extremists. The issue was discussed at length with senior intelligence officials, and no good answers were forthcoming, according to people familiar with the conversations. After learning more worrisome details about the CIA's ghost war in Syria—including that U.S.-backed rebels had often fought alongside extremists, among them al Qaeda's arm in the country—the president decided to end the program altogether.

On July 19, the *Washington Post* broke the news of Trump's decision: "a move long sought by Russia," the paper's headline blared. Politicians from both sides of the aisle quickly howled in protest, claiming that Trump's decision was a surrender to Vladimir Putin.

There is no doubt that Putin, who has the blood of many Syrian civilians on his hands, was pleased by the move. But that doesn't mean the rebel aid program was effective or served American interests.

The defenders of the CIA program argue that the Free Syrian Army (FSA) remains our best hope for a moderate opposition to Assad. But the FSA is not the single, unified organization its name implies. It is, rather, a loose collection of groups that have adopted the FSA brand, often in addition to their own names and branding. Although "Free Syrian Army" sounds secular and moderate, its constituents are ideologically diverse and include numerous extremists. Zenki, for example, was referred to as an FSA group well after its hardline beliefs were evident, and few FSA groups could be considered truly secular. Several prominent FSA organizations advocate Islamist ideas, meaning they believe that some version of *sharia* law should rule Syrian society.

To make matters worse: FSA-affiliated rebels have often been allied with Jabhat al-Nusra, al Qaeda's branch in Syria. Some of the most prominent FSA groups, indeed, objected to the U.S. government's decision to designate Nusra as a terrorist organization in December 2012. Al Qaeda's Syrian arm was even then strong enough to command loyalty in the face of American sanctions. There have been episodic clashes between Nusra and America's FSA allies, but more often than not FSA-branded rebels have been in the trenches alongside Nusra's jihadists.

Jabhat al-Nusra, publicly an arm of al Qaeda until July 2016, has been the single strongest organization within the insurgency for some time. Well before President Trump was inaugurated, Nusra had grown into a menace. And America's provision of arms to FSA-branded rebels worked to Nusra's advantage—an inconvenient fact for those criticizing the president's decision.

Thomas Joscelyn, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

Russia intervened in Syria in September 2015, and the timing was not accidental. Just months earlier, in March, the "Army of Conquest" took over the northwestern province of Idlib. This rebel coalition was no band of moderates. It was led by Nusra and included its closest Islamist and jihadist partners. The Army of Conquest was on the march, threatening the Assad family's stronghold of Latakia on the coast. Had the insurgents progressed much further south, Bashar al-Assad's regime would have been in serious jeopardy, perhaps would even have fallen. With the backing of Russia and Iran, Assad's forces rallied and stopped the Nusra-led coalition from taking even more ground. Russia saved Assad, but its efforts also stymied the jihadists' offensive—a important fact that is often left out of Syria policy debates.

Since July 2016, Jabhat al-Nusra has changed its name twice and merged with other organizations to form a group known as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham ("Assembly for the Liberation of Syria," or HTS). The group is riven by internal rivalries, with some members even arguing that its leadership is no longer beholden to al Qaeda. But the jihadists are consolidating their control over Idlib as part of a totalitarian drive to dominate governance in the province.

HTS's top-dog status within Idlib is no accident. Al Qaeda's leadership and Jabhat al-Nusra have been laying the groundwork for an Islamic emirate, based on radical *sharia* law, in Syria since 2012. And their plan has called for exploiting Free Syrian Army groups and their CIA support.

Nusra has been happy to take advantage of the support FSA groups received from the United States and other nations supporting the multi-sided proxy war against Assad. There are dozens of videos online showing Syrian rebels firing the American-made, anti-tank BGM-71 TOW missile. The TOW is distinctive in appearance and relatively easy to identify, making it a rather public announcement of the groups involved in the CIA's "clandestine" program. If one wants to know which FSA-branded groups have been approved by Langley, just look for TOW missiles.

Defenders of the program argue that only a small number of TOWs have been fired by al Qaeda's men or other non-vetted rebels. Maybe. But at least some of the "vetted" groups shouldn't have been deemed acceptable partners in the first place. Zenki received TOWs even though its extremism is obvious. Other Islamist groups within the loose-knit FSA coalition received TOWs as well.

And Nusra used such organizations to further its own designs. Abu Kumayt, who served as a fighter in the Western-backed Syrian Revolutionaries Front (SRF), explained to the *New York Times* in December 2014 that Nusra "lets groups vetted by the United States keep the appearance of independence, so that they will continue to receive American supplies." Another "commander" in a group that received TOWs told the *Times* that FSA "fighters were forced to operate them . . . on behalf of" Nusra during a battle with Assad's forces. American-made weapons were fueling the jihadists' gains and when Nusra finally grew tired of the SRF and Harakat Hazm, another American-supported group based in Idlib province, it quickly dispatched them, taking their weapons in the process.

American-made arms helped fuel the insurgents' gains in Idlib province in 2015. Today, that same province is home to a nascent Taliban-style state.

Advocates for the Syrian opposition point to areas of the country outside of Idlib province where FSA-branded groups seem to hold more sway. But the story is almost always complicated by a jihadist presence. Take Aleppo, for instance, where in August 2016, insurgents temporarily broke the regime's brutal siege. The Army of Conquest coalition—the same Nusra-led alliance that took over Idlib—played a key role in the fighting, as they would in a second attempt to break the siege later in 2016.

In October 2016, the U.N.'s special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, told reporters that Nusra accounted for

only 900 to 1,000 of the 8,000 opposition fighters in Aleppo. After objections that this modest figure was too high, the U.N. revised its estimate downward, claiming Nusra had just 150 to 200 members within the Aleppo opposition. Advocates then seized on this low figure to argue that the insurgents inside the city deserved the full backing of the West. They ignored the fact that the other, non-Nusra rebels included many extremists—such as Zenki.

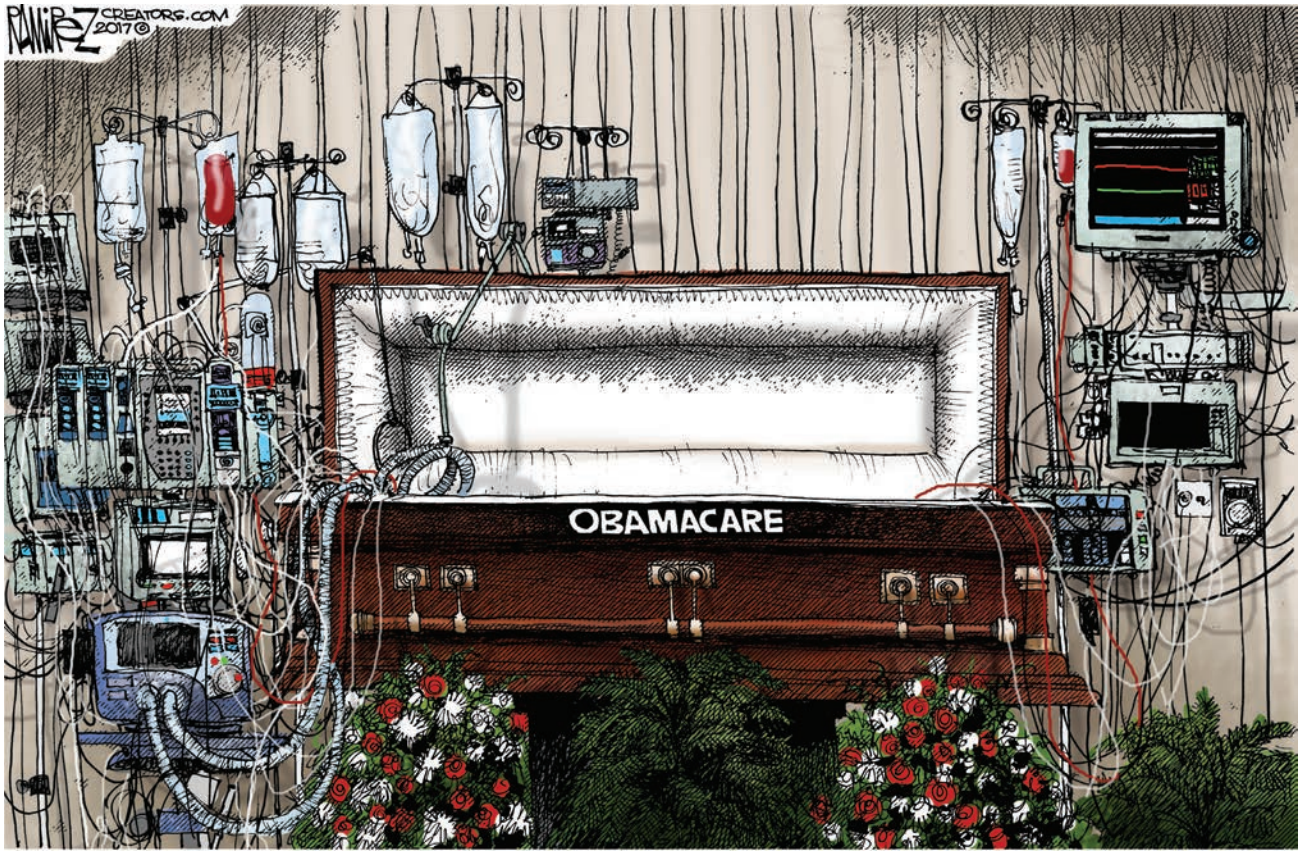
It is doubtful that the U.N.'s lowball estimate for Nusra's presence in Aleppo was accurate; Nusra produced videos showing large convoys making their way to the city, which suggested a much bigger force. But even the U.N. conceded that Nusra's "influence" was greater than its numbers implied, because of the jihadists' "operational capacity coupled with the fear that they engendered from other groups." Part of the reason Nusra is so operationally effective is its use of suicide bombers, and a series of these "martyrs" were deployed by Nusra and its allies during key points in the battle for Aleppo. Without Nusra's Army of Conquest, the insurgents would have had little hope of breaking Assad's grip on the city, and TOW-armed FSA groups, some of them Islamist, fought right alongside Nusra's men.

The bottom line: Sunni jihadists and extremists are laced throughout the Syrian rebellion and have been for years. While pockets of acceptable allies remain, there is no evidence that any truly moderate force is effectively fighting Assad, and President Trump was right to end the program of CIA support for the Syrian opposition.

It is a dire situation, and one might easily conclude that a full alliance with Russia in Syria makes some sense. That is clearly the president's thinking. His administration has already explored ways to cooperate with Putin against the Islamic State, including brokering a ceasefire in southern Syria. But a partnership with Russia has its own downsides.

Russian and Syrian jets have indiscriminately and repeatedly bombed civilian targets. The Assad regime has used chemical weapons, which Trump himself objected to, bombing a Syrian airfield in response. The United States cannot endorse these war crimes by allying itself with the perpetrators of mass murder in Syria. The president has loudly denounced Iran and its sponsorship of terrorism throughout the world. But Russia and the Syrian government have sponsored Iran's growing footprint in the country. A recent State Department report said that as many 7,000 fighters from Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed terror group that is opposed to both the United States and Israel, are now located in Syria. These same Hezbollah fighters, along with Shiite militiamen sponsored by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), are Russia's and Assad's key on-the-ground allies.

All of which is to say that there are no easy answers in Syria. But that doesn't mean the United States should keep playing a losing hand. And that's exactly what the program to support Syria's rebels was—a bad deal. ♦



The Little College That Couldn't

The debate over Jane Sanders's legacy in Burlington. BY ALICE B. LLOYD

Jane Sanders in the soon-to-be-headquarters of Burlington College, June 1, 2010

Burlington, Vt.

"Free Books at Former Burlington College," the Craigslist ad read. "Many psychology texts and health texts, gender identity, some art, some literature, history, etc. Please bring boxes and bags for carrying your new treasures home with you!"

So ended a 44-year experiment in liberal education, with angry students and alumni filling message boards with blame and a library of books for the taking.

Burlington College closed in 2016, crushed under the weight of debt it took on in a 2010 real estate deal. In its last five years, this tiny liberal arts school of fewer than 200 students occupied the former St. Joseph's Orphanage (and its 33 acres, including the last virgin lakefront in town) overlooking Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks. A $10 million acquisition from the cash-strapped Catholic diocese was made while Jane Sanders, the wife of Vermont's most famous socialist, was president of the college.

The site offered just what Sanders needed to fulfill the promise she made in 2004 to be a "transformative president." The college's operating budget at the time was just $3.6 million, and it had no endowment. The deal was made with a mortgage from the diocese, tax-exempt bonds, and a bridge loan from a 99-year-old philanthropist. Twelve years and three administrations later, the last president penned a letter blaming Sanders, whom the board dismissed in 2011, for sealing the college's fate with an "appallingly inappropriate business deal."

The FBI is investigating—both the loan application, which listed donations that never materialized, and allegations of political pressure applied by Sanders's husband. The senator calls it a "witch hunt," but the last chairman of the college's board of trustees, local real estate executive Yves Bradley, affirms the scandal has sullied the Sanders name. "She did significant damage in the public eye." The couple recently retained counsel, signaling the seriousness of the charges.

But here in Burlington, "People are doing everything they can to protect Bernie," one former professor told me. Even those who recognize Jane Sanders's wrongdoing—trustees who witnessed weak leadership and faculty members she fired—remain wary of Brady Toensing, the lawyer and Vermont Republican party vice chairman who alerted the state's U.S. attorney in early 2016 to the possible bank fraud underlying Sanders's deal.

What ended in accusations began in idealism.

Steward LaCasce, an English professor, abandoned Boston University after discovering through a bout of instructional experimentation that students put too much stock in their grades. He set out north with a grand idea for a new sort of school, one acronymically named at a Boston dinner party: the Vermont Institute of Community Involvement (VICI, as in *veni, vidi*). This was 1972. LaCasce would lead the college for 22 years, from a frugal start in rented rooms to the boxy old frame building—what had been Colodny's grocery store—it bought in the early 1980s. Returning Vietnam veterans and single mothers were the first students. (Surprisingly, this demographic formula did not double as a countercultural matchmaking agency so far as LaCasce recalls.)

There were no grades, and students chose courses of study based on their intellectual and professional leanings and the expertise of a small faculty and a growing constellation of adjuncts plucked from the Burlington community. LaCasce, now

BURLINGTON FREE PRESS / USA TODAY NETWORK

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82, paused to tell me twice when we talked, "You've got to remember: It was the 1970s."

Isis Erb, 45, has fond memories of the college's anachronistic radical chic in the 1990s. Her favorite professor was activist and lawyer Sandy Baird. "In one of her classes we got to go through reams and reams of redacted FBI files on the Black Panthers," Erb gushes, remembering when Baird brought in Roz Payne, a Panther ally turned archivist, as a guest lecturer. Will Nottingham, 27, also mentions Baird fondly: When an employer folded without paying him, she wrote a letter delineating Nottingham's legal rights against his boss and won him his lost pay. Nottingham, who never finished his film degree, credits the costs of college for his inspiration to pursue a career as a loan officer.

Baird—something of a celebrity in the Burlington College world—believes capitalism killed the college. The school LaCasce founded "was sustainable and cooperative," she says. "The people who came after were convinced that you either had to grow or you died—that is a capitalist model. If it had stayed in the old building it probably could have sustained itself."

It was Baird, though, who'd called Sanders and encouraged her to take the job, trusting her at the time to preserve the institution. Sanders had been her husband's chief of staff in the House of Representatives and his closest political ally. "She allowed Bernie to implement some of his ideas," says Baird. "He's a dreamer, and she helped him put those dreams into policies. I don't know where he'd be without her." Trustees hired her to do a similar job: midwife to a scrappy sixties-radical school.

The two women only really got to know each other when they went to Cuba together in May 2007 to kick off a cultural exchange program between Burlington College and the University of Havana. "She's ambitious," Baird learned about her new boss, and she wanted to be more than Bernie Sanders's wife: "She's a woman who wants to be recognized for her own achievements, just like we all do."

Once a Roman Catholic orphanage and later the main entrance of Burlington College, the wing above is being prepared for renovation; below, a college poster.

"The decision to borrow the money and to buy that land was a gutsy move," says Burlington College board member Jane Knodell, who's president of the city council and an economics professor at the University of Vermont. "She wanted a beautiful campus to attract students," Baird says, remembering Sanders's last months at the college.

"Jane believed, and we believed her, that if it looked like a regular college, more students would come. But it never did get beyond the 160 or so that remained," says longtime trustee Carolyn Elliott, who left the board at the time of Sanders's removal. (When the college closed in 2016, there were only 70 students enrolled.) In the months after the bold acquisition, Sanders's target slipped further from reach as the trustees began to worry about her failure to raise money. They whispered amongst themselves that she hid in her office, avoiding subordinates. "It's a failure of leadership, for sure. It sputtered along afterwards, but Jane was the big failure." The board dismissed Sanders in October 2011, just eight months after the deal closed.

The investigation, sparked by Toensing's January 2016 letter to the U.S. attorney, brings the college's loan application to the fore: "The loan transaction involved the overstatement and misrepresentation of nearly $2 million in what were purported to be confirmed contributions and grants to the college," he wrote. Subsequent reporting ties the discrepancy Toensing noted to a listed million-dollar bequest from a woman not yet dead and another donor's pledge to match it. Neither of these gifts would come to the college in the timeline Sanders reported, "unless [the first donor] were assassinated," Yves Bradley darkly jokes.

ALICE B. LLOYD / THE WEEKLY STANDARD

A second letter from Toensing, dated May 25, suggests the bank yielded to improper pressure from the senator in approving the college's loan application: "Ms. Sanders' loan application did not receive the sort of scrutiny and basic underwriting to which those of us who are not married to a powerful United States Senator would have been subjected." Jane Sanders, for her part, dismissed this charge in an interview with Laura Krantz of the *Boston Globe* as a "sexist" assumption that she couldn't have closed the deal without her husband's help.

After Sanders's dismissal, the debts piled up: The diocese declared the college in default on its loan, and yearly taxes on the new property clocked in at $250,000. Sanders's successor, Christine Plunkett, resigned unexpectedly in 2014 when a mob of students confronted her over controversial staffing decisions. "Okay, I resign. Happy?" she announced from her car. Founder Steward LaCasce calls Burlington College students and faculty an "ungovernable" group. Although he cast it as a compliment: "Graduate school professors were afraid of our students, which made me quite proud."

The president who followed Plunkett, Carol Moore, managed to sell 27.5 acres of the orphanage land to a local developer for just north of $7.5 million in 2014. It wasn't enough to save Burlington College: The bank pulled its line of credit, and the accrediting agency LaCasce had won over more than 30 years before turned it down for reaccreditation. The day before the 2016 commencement, the board learned the college would close—but decided not to announce the decision until after the ceremony.

"I wrote the commencement address to welcome a new graduating class—or to be the final address to any class," says LaCasce, who knew of the college's struggles but not of the closure when he composed his remarks. "I said the legacy of the college was not in its buildings, nor in the history of its organization. Its legacy is in its students." For now, the legacy of Burlington College remains clouded by scandal.

The old diocesan orphanage that the college bought has become an apartment building, a promising development for Burlington.

Larry Tatro, 44, a workman at the site, tells me it's mostly couples and people with pets who are moving in. He's lived in Burlington all his life and talks of a hotel slated to go in behind the building, too. It is down the slope toward the lakefront, where guests can enjoy the beach Sanders hoped to feature in Burlington College admissions materials. Now that the apartments are done, renovations have moved to the modern wing, which the school inhabited in its final years, and to the library: It's going to be a rec room, Tatro tells me.

What's the word on Jane Sanders? "Bernie's wife?" he says. "She really put the screws to this place." ♦

The Impeachment Fantasy

Donald Trump was voted into office. If you want to get rid of him, you'll probably have to vote him out.

By Tod Lindberg

These are perilous times for understatement and modest expectations. In the age of Trump, even the smallest of things are transmogrified into epoch-defining events. These are the days of mountains out of molehills, "a new low" almost daily, and more proof (as if more were needed) that your political opponents are every bit as debased as—no, even more debased than—you rightly concluded long ago.

In keeping with the times, many now detect a strong whiff of impeachment in the fetid Washington air. And it is here that I would like to apply a little critical political realism to the question, to set aside personal views and analyze it as coolly and dispassionately as possible. I'm sure there's still an audience for that sort of thing. But just in case there isn't, let me begin by saying that the idea Donald Trump is going to be removed from office is about the most farfetched fantasy in the rich history of Washington partisan delusion.

To return to measured understatement, the likelihood of such an outcome is not zero. But if you examine the hypothetical chain of events that would produce Trump's removal, you will find not a president barely maintaining his balance atop a house of cards sure to collapse at any moment, but rather a confluence of constitutional procedures and political calculations that will work to keep him in the office to which he was elected certainly for the next two years, and very likely for the rest of his term.

Most Democrats and their boosters, as well as the more ideologically diverse Never-Trumpers, regard the 45th president as singularly unqualified and unsuited for the office, if not worse. This has been true since he emerged as the likely GOP nominee for president, and indeed, as Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes's *Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton's Doomed Campaign* makes abundantly clear, this judgment about his unacceptability led to the conclusion that he was therefore unelectable, which in turn drove the Clinton campaign's message to voters. This might have been a perfectly good strategy in an election set to produce a 60-40 landslide à la LBJ-Goldwater, but anti-Trump fantasies to the contrary notwithstanding, 2016 was never that election. Democrats assumed their conclusion—unacceptable equals unelectable—in the most disastrous political wishcasting in living memory.

Trump won, but Democrats and Never-Trumpers have not changed their view: He remains every bit as unqualified and unsuited to office as he has always been. Besides which, they rationalize, he did not win the popular vote, and his margin of victory in the three states that put him over the top in the Electoral College was minuscule, and the Russians interfered to help him and discredit Clinton, and FBI director James Comey unfairly announced the reopening of the probe into Clinton's emails two Fridays before the election, and so on. The conclusion of unfairness and therefore of illegitimacy was an understandable response to the dislocation caused by Trump's victory in the face of the certain conviction of his opponents that he would lose.

When Trump took office and continued tweeting and being, in general, himself, taking presidential politics into a new era, he gave his opposition no reason to view him any differently—not that they were at all inclined to in their own new era of "Resistance." And Trump's decision to fire Comey, the appointment of Robert Mueller as special counsel investigating the Russia connection in the election, and a steady drip of leaks and revelations have combined to create, in the minds of many Democrats, a uniquely vulnerable occupant of the Oval Office. One more *something*, they believe—Trump firing Mueller? an indictment of family members or friends and associates?—and he's a goner.

But how, exactly, is that supposed to happen? I have seen no plausible scenario put forth in answer to that question. Even if Democrats are correct in every judgment they make about Trump's unsuitability for the office he won,

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they seem stuck in the "Have you no honor, sir?" phase of opposition. They are calling on Republicans to denounce Trump and all his works, and when Republicans decline to do so, Democrats lambaste them for "normalizing" or enabling Trump or worse. Democrats have also been warning Republicans that standing by or at least in proximity to Trump will be political suicide, as soon as 2018. Numerous articles, meanwhile, have pondered at length the supposed delicacy of the position of Vice President Mike Pence, whose fate, in this vision, is to become the 46th president of the United States under the worst possible circumstances. With the release of the "I love it" Donald Trump Jr. email in response to an offer of Russian dirt on Hillary, Democrats have also been able to recruit a few more GOP-leaning commentators to the condemnation.

All of this, however, is sound and fury signifying not very much. Democrats are having a conversation with themselves, mutually reinforcing the conclusions they have already reached and validating their far-flung speculation by repetition. What really matters is where the power to affect events lies and the likely calculations of those wielding that power. So we need to be thinking not so much about what Democrats are saying, but about what Republicans are likely to do—specifically the elected Republican officials who control the White House, the House of Representatives, and the Senate.

THOMAS FLUHARTY

There are five ways a president can manage not to finish a term: death; resignation; uncontested removal by the vice president and the majority of the cabinet for the inability "to discharge the powers and duties of . . . office" (the 25th Amendment); presidentially contested removal by the vice president and cabinet majority under the 25th Amendment, which then goes to Congress and requires agreement by two-thirds majorities in both the House and Senate; and Congress's impeachment process, which entails House majority approval of one or more articles of impeachment, a trial in the Senate over which Chief Justice John Roberts would preside, and a two-thirds Senate verdict in favor of removal.

I will leave consideration of death in office to the Kathy Griffins of the Resistance. The 25th Amendment scenarios require wholesale mutiny of a cabinet the president himself appointed, which is unlikely, to put it mildly, at least in the absence of some wildly mad act, such as attempted misuse of a nuclear weapon. In any case, the relevant 25th Amendment scenario is the one in which the president contests the decision of his cabinet. That yields an even higher threshold for removal than the impeachment process requires: two-thirds of *both* legislative chambers. If impeachment and removal is highly implausible, removal via the 25th Amendment is more so. In the only case of presidential resignation in U.S. history, that of Richard Nixon, his decision was intimately connected to the impeachment proceedings underway in Congress in 1974. So to impeachment we shall go.

Why would the GOP majority in the House vote to impeach Trump? The constitutional standard is "high crimes and misdemeanors," and while there may be little doubt in the minds of many Democrats that Trump is guilty of conduct that could be so classified, no GOP member of the House of whom I am aware has taken that view. Moreover, while in a functional sense "high crimes and misdemeanors" means whatever the House decides it means, in the two previous impeachments, those of Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998, the House acted on the basis of presidential conduct that a majority believed was actually illegal. In the Johnson case, it was the president's violation of the Tenure of Office Act by removing Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton without the consent of the Senate (a power the Supreme Court would later rule was indeed the president's alone). A previous attempt to impeach Johnson, in December 1867, failed by a vote of 57 in favor, 108 against, with 66 Johnson-hating Republicans refraining from voting to impeach him because no genuine violation of the law was at issue. For Clinton, the crimes alleged were "process" crimes: perjury and obstruction. But criminal acts they were and are.

Now, even top House Democrat Nancy Pelosi has said that she has not yet seen enough evidence to warrant Trump's impeachment (though she seems to be hoping). But let us recall that she is the *minority* leader. The majorities in the House voting to impeach Johnson and Clinton were of the opposition party. So was the House majority when its Judiciary Committee voted to approve articles of impeachment against Nixon. Why would anyone think a Republican House majority would vote to impeach a Republican president because Democrats have been leading the charge on his unfitness for office for more than a year? It would likely take

more, even, than a "process" crime such as obstruction of justice for the House GOP to turn against him. The threshold for action is simply higher when it's R on R.

But perhaps enough GOP defectors could join Democrats to produce a majority for impeachment. Here, however, we have to consider the course impeachment proceedings would take in the House. They would start in the Judiciary Committee, which would have to decide to begin an investigation, conduct it, and then approve articles of impeachment to send to the House floor. The Judiciary Committee has 24 Republican members and 17 Democrats. Again, it's a bit of a mystery why Republicans on the committee would agree to begin an inquiry. Chairman Bob Goodlatte has been staunchly opposed to having the Judiciary Committee look into the Comey firing (the committee has oversight jurisdiction for the FBI). He has cited the ongoing special counsel investigation as reason not to proceed with a committee "fishing expedition," as he called it. Given the quite conservative composition of the Judiciary Committee, it's also difficult to imagine Democrats recruiting four Republicans to the cause for a majority, to say nothing of the formidable procedural hurdles of moving against the wishes of the chairman.

No Judiciary Committee investigation, no impeachment. But suppose Special Counsel Mueller concludes his investigation by dropping a bombshell report on the committee, as Whitewater independent counsel Kenneth Starr did on Bill Clinton in 1998. Well, first of all, we are assuming Mueller finds criminal activity on the part of the president, which is a tall assumption. Clinton got snared when the Supreme Court ruled he had to testify in Paula Jones's civil suit against him alleging sexual harassment; he lied under oath denying a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky. Trump can avoid that snare either by answering questions truthfully or (probably a safer legal strategy) declining to answer at all.

And about that report: Note that Starr was appointed pursuant to the now-defunct Independent Counsel Act, which explicitly charged him to provide the House with any "substantial and credible information . . . that may constitute grounds for an impeachment." Mueller has no such authority under his appointment. His investigation must comport with the standards applicable to all U.S. attorneys, which don't allow for public reports. The provisions of his appointment also hold: "At the conclusion of the Special Counsel's work, he or she shall provide the Attorney General with a confidential report explaining the prosecution or declination decisions reached by the Special Counsel."

If Mueller concludes that Trump himself has committed a crime (for example, obstruction of justice), what will he do? The view of most legal scholars and of the Office of Legal Counsel in the Justice Department is that he would not have the constitutional authority to indict a sitting president, which would be without precedent and a proposition the Supreme Court has never directly considered. Starr's office, however, concluded differently, on the basis of a lengthy if tendentious memorandum by legal scholar Ronald Rotunda, which recently became public through a *New York Times* Freedom of Information Act request. Nevertheless, Starr declined to pursue this avenue, opting to provide Congress with his report on impeachable offenses instead. The Watergate special counsel had similarly asserted his office's authority to indict Nixon, but declined to do so.

Because in these hyperpartisan times, restraint is outré and bad behavior tends to beget worse behavior, I wouldn't rule out a Mueller decision to go where no prosecutor has gone before, in which case we will have an interesting matter for the Supreme Court, which will not welcome the opportunity to clarify matters. But Mueller might also conclude (in a genuine or tactical show of restraint) that he doesn't have the authority to indict, and explain as much in his confidential memo on prosecution decisions. He would do so in the knowledge that the odds of his report remaining confidential are, what? Zero percent? Zero point one? So when it leaks, a report explaining that he has declined to prosecute the president only because Trump is president would surely be explosively received. Wouldn't that likely galvanize the same sort of response as the Starr report?

Close, but no cigar. The House Judiciary Committee of 1998 had no stomach for its own impeachment investigation of Clinton, but it was a willing and even eager recipient of Starr's report. The committee in 2017 or 2018 would be neither an official recipient nor eager. Goodlatte and Republicans would face tremendous pressure, but not in response to an official act of the special counsel. And it's still entirely in the GOP-controlled committee's power not to proceed.

There would also likely be strong skepticism should the special counsel choose to prosecute others on conspiracy charges and name the president "an unindicted co-conspirator," as Nixon was in Watergate criminal proceedings. The U.S. Attorneys' Manual advises against the practice: "In the absence of some significant justification, federal prosecutors generally should not identify unindicted co-conspirators in conspiracy indictments," preferring reference to them as "person or persons known." The Supreme Court hasn't spoken on the question, but a 1975 Fifth Circuit ruling, *U.S.* v. *Briggs*, severely criticized the practice as a violation of due process and ordered that the names be struck from the indictment at issue. Once again, I find it hard to imagine a special counsel exercising restraint: Viewed a certain way, the "public interest" would provide "significant justification" in a case involving the president. But again, his defenders would have a plausible complaint to press about an abusive process.

So it is that from an institutional and constitutional perspective, the route to the floor of the House for impeachment charges is a very difficult one. Now let's add the GOP political perspective.

Democrats seem to have in mind the bottom falling out from Trump's political support. If rank-and-file Republicans turn on him, that will enable, even encourage, defections on a potentially large scale among elected Republican leaders. In the Democrats' perfect world, congressional Republicans will conclude that continued support for Trump, or even a studied neutrality, will drag them under, and so they will cut the president loose.

The model is more or less Nixon: As the Judiciary Committee voted articles of impeachment in 1974, with full House approval a foregone conclusion, GOP emissaries advised Nixon that he would lose in the Senate. He resigned. That was a happy ending for Democrats.

The difficulties here start with the hypothesized collapse in GOP support for Trump. So far, he has maintained a strong base of Republican support, and it is not for want of efforts by Democrats and their allies to undo it over the past year or more. The partisan environment and the media environment are very different from those of 1974. Political scientists say the parties have now fully "sorted" themselves ideologically; liberal Republicans have all but ceased to exist, and "conservative," even "moderate" (as opposed to "liberal" or "progressive") Democrats are a species spotted only during campaign season. And I think there is a wee twinge of nostalgia at the major mainstream news outlets these days for the time when they could gang up on a president and bring him down (with plenty of help from Nixon himself, to be sure). They don't seem to be able to do that now (one of the major lessons of 2016, as it happens), notwithstanding the view of some commentators that Trump has already proved himself to be worse than Nixon. For a significant segment of the Trump-supporting population, Democratic (and media) opposition to Trump is all that's necessary to kindle reinvigorated support for their man. I would only add that by now, politicians have had ample experience operating in an environment of abysmal approval for themselves and the institutions in which they serve.

Perhaps we are only one more bombshell revelation away from a collapse. Or one more seemingly suicidal move by the president—a decision, say, to defenestrate Mueller and along with him the leadership of the Justice Department. But would it be a permanent collapse, or would Trump think he could rally his base back? Things looked surpassingly bleak for Bill Clinton the day the Monica Lewinsky story appeared on the front page of the *Washington Post*. Clinton kept his focus, however. He told his staff in no uncertain terms that there was no possibility of resignation. He denied the story, lying first to his staff, then the American people, then under oath. He deployed the women in his cabinet to vouch for him. And by the time the DNA evidence on the blue dress (whoops) proved conclusively he was lying, he had prepared an effective counterattack on the investigators' abusive process. Let's just say there is a precedent for toughing it out.

And about those Republicans on Capitol Hill: They're supposed to be worried about their continued support for Trump dragging them to oblivion. But compared to what? They will surely weigh the risks of dumping Trump as well, something Democrats tend to forget. And here Nixon looms large once again, though to quite opposite effect.

Republicans lost 48 seats in the House and 5 in the Senate in the congressional elections of 1974, three months after Nixon's resignation. This is a data point of some importance. Could it have been worse if they stuck by him? Who knows? But the point is that a 48-seat loss is no advertisement for the advantage of turning against your president; doing so might just produce the result you seek to avert.

Ultimately, to remove the president, you need two-thirds of the Senate. For all the reasons above, I don't think the question comes up. But this is the bedrock reason for predicting that Trump remains in office: You need 67 votes in the Senate to remove him. Democrats have 48 votes, and let's make the assumption they are unanimously in favor of removal—in other words, that the 10 Democratic senators up for reelection in 2018 in states Trump won don't think they have anything serious to worry about in voting to oust him or are prepared to do so anyway. So you need 19 Republicans, a little more than a third of the caucus, to defect. Voting to remove a president of your own party is a grave act. And it bears noting that 49 of the 52 GOP senators are from states Trump carried. Clinton the Democrat was never in danger of removal in a Senate in which Republicans held 55 seats. All Senate Democrats voted against removing him.

In the case of Clinton, however, the certainty of the outcome in the Senate could not derail the impeachment process in a GOP-controlled House that had whipped itself up into a moral fury. With a Republican president and House majority, the unlikelihood of getting that two-thirds majority in the Senate surely would give pause. The circumstances favor inaction.

I have tried to show why the impeachment and removal from office of Donald Trump is better described as a Democratic political fantasy than a plausible sequence of events. But, you say, what if Democrats win the House next year? I'm afraid I have reached my limit for speculating about unknowns. If Democrats win, we can talk about it on November 7, 2018. ♦

Shipping News

How China acquired a major port in Europe

By John Psaropoulos

Athens

In the Salamis strait, where an Athenian-led fleet of 380 ships once sank a Persian fleet of more than 1,000 and altered the history of the Western world, the China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO) is redrawing global trade routes. The strait, just outside the port of Piraeus, is the heart of its cargo business. Container ships arrive around the clock to be loaded or unloaded with pinpoint precision, with whirring motors the quay's only sounds.

Since 2008, when it signed a 35-year lease with the Piraeus Port Authority to operate two container piers, COSCO has increased throughput from 700,000 twenty-foot-equivalent units (teu, roughly the volume of one 20-foot shipping container) to what it estimates will be over 4 million this year. Within the next five years, Piraeus is scheduled to handle 7.2 million teu annually, which would make it the Mediterranean's biggest cargo hub and behind only Rotterdam, Antwerp, and Hamburg in Europe. COSCO has sunk 600 million euros into shoring up the strength of the piers to shoulder the weight of containers stacked six stories high, doubling the size of the second pier, and installing 33 of the tallest gantry cranes in the world, capable of loading and unloading container ships so large, they have not yet been built. By the time COSCO completes renovations, Piraeus will be the only Mediterranean port capable of harboring five giga-container vessels simultaneously.

In 2013, Chinese president Xi Jinping announced the One Belt One Road initiative, a dual strategy of developing an overland trade route across Asia and a maritime trade route around the subcontinent to facilitate the export of Chinese goods. China says it will spend almost a trillion dollars on roads, ports, and other infrastructure, mostly built by state-operated companies. Piraeus has become a critical link in the OBOR, acting as the main European import and transshipment terminal.

Although it is the Chinese who are accomplishing this transformation, Greeks helped provide the vision, and they view it as a patriotic endeavor. "Piraeus's strategic position is clear. It's the first harbor as you steam north from Suez that provides inland access to Europe, which means that apart from using it as a transit point to other European ports, you can also use it as an import point. No other regional hub provides this," says Tasos Vamvakidis, commercial director of COSCO subsidiary Piraeus Container Terminal (PCT). Offloading at Piraeus saves a week's sailing to the ports of northern Europe—and at least $2 million per trip.

Using Piraeus as an import point provides perquisites to Greek rail. PCT has bought a contract for up to 10 freight trains a day to southeast Europe and has plans for more. This is transforming how freight moves across Europe, explains Stratos Papadimitriou of Piraeus University. "What happened in the past, because Mediterranean ports were useless," the professor says, "was that cargos sailed across the Mediterranean to deliver in Rotterdam, and the cargo would come south by road again to be delivered south of the Alps." Vamvakidis envisions a future in which southern European ports rival those of the north: "We will be what in previous decades the large ports of northern Europe were when transatlantic trade was the rule. Now the Asia-Europe route through Suez is our great opportunity for the next eight years." After that, he believes, the export-driven

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economies of Asia will "reach the point where they consume what they now export," and trade volumes from east to west may diminish.

On April 8, 2016, the Greek government announced the sale of PCT's landlord, the Piraeus Port Authority itself, to COSCO. PPA is the body in charge of operating and developing the entire port, including passenger and cruise shipping, freight operations, ship repair, and vast property holdings. COSCO has announced investments of 294 million euros in the first five years. Among other things, it plans to build new cruise ship berths outside the harbor mouth. By the time the work is finished, Piraeus will be able to host 14 cruise ships simultaneously, including 4 behemoths, and become a home port for much of the Eastern Mediterranean cruising industry. This means that passengers will fly into Athens International Airport, eat, shop, and stay in hotels there before and after their cruises. Much of COSCO's development budget is for hotels and shopping malls within the port.

COSCO promises to use its dominant position in China to help bring Chinese cruise passengers. One company, Celestyal Cruises, has signed up to deliver 2,000 Chinese cruise passengers this year. "We believe that this will increase astronomically," says Theodora Riga, PPA's head of marketing and strategic planning. The number of cruise passengers landing at Athens airport already increased by 86 percent last year to 123,000. So far this year the increase has been more than 100 percent. "We consider this a very dynamic niche market," says the airport's marketing and communications director, Ioanna Papadopoulou. What will turbocharge this increase is an imminent direct flight from China. Air China has had a flight from Beijing to Athens via Munich since 2011. "The information we have is that very soon, perhaps this winter, it will establish a direct flight," Papadopoulou says. "This is very important for the arrivals of Chinese tourists in general."

Increasing the number of container, freight, and cruise ships visiting Piraeus also means more ship repair business at PPA-owned shipyards. Cruise ships in particular, says Riga, "can't be based here eight months a year and then be obliged to go abroad for repairs. It's not cost-effective for them." COSCO is restoring drydocks to working order, building two floating docks to repair ships of 80,000 deadweight tonnes, and advertising the comeback of shipbuilding and repair to Piraeus.

The Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research, a think tank, estimated last year that COSCO's buyout and investments in the PPA deal, along with the secondary economic activity those will create, have the potential to create 31,000 new jobs, increase GDP by 0.8 percent, and reduce Greek debt by 2.3 percent of GDP.

THE BEST POSSIBLE DEAL?

Despite the fact that COSCO's two deals in Piraeus are putting the port on the global map and contributing much to the beleaguered Greek economy, some people harbor serious doubts about whether Greece got the best possible bargain.

COSCO's original lease of two container piers was the result of 18 months of intensive negotiations. Its value to the Greek economy in rent, dividends, taxes, salaries, and investment was estimated at 4.93 billion euros over 35 years—seven times the market capitalization of PPA. PPA's share price shot up 14 percent on the day of the announcement and 10 percent the following day. The deal

A COSCO-owned dock and yard in Piraeus

increased in value through two revisions, in 2011 and 2014, to reach a net present value of 1.08 billion euros. This meant that PPA could have floated a bond worth at least a billion dollars on the strength of that one contract alone. Many politicians therefore questioned the wisdom of selling the government's two-thirds stake in PPA to COSCO less than two years later for a mere 368 million euros.

"When China finally bought the 67 percent, the money it spent was particularly good for the Greek economy at that time, but generally for the location of the Piraeus port it could have spent more," says Yiorgos Tzogopoulos, a close observer of Greece-China relations. "Greece should have combined the privatization with an increase of Greek exports to China but it did not do so."

Foremost among the critics has been Yiorgos Anomeritis, the merchant marine minister who at the turn of the millennium did much to engineer COSCO's involvement in Piraeus and was responsible for the original lease. "Ports are not privatized through the wholesale disposal of shares," he says. "Ports are privatized section by section, infrastructure by infrastructure, service by service, to a multitude of buyers. To turn a state monopoly into a

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private one, which is what's happened here, is not reform."

He is incensed that by acquiring PPA, COSCO became the beneficiary of what it committed to spend as a tenant. "PPA's income after 2019, when the infrastructure was complete, would be 110 million euros a year. So the Chinese will make their money back for the purchase of the PPA shares in three years," he notes. He worries that COSCO's ramping up of container traffic is not the result of its superior management of the cargo business but rather its ability to divert cargo streams from its vast global business. "Do you know how much the cost of shipping containers has risen between 2010 and 2014 for importers and exporters? 28.4 percent," he fumes. "The private monopoly behaved like a highway robber, which the state monopoly never did."

As if to preempt further criticism, the government recently announced that it would end the practice of selling the stock of port authorities for 10 ports still under privatization. "We will no longer do sales; we will subcontract operations," said a government official.

Why did the Greek state sell PPA for as little as it did? Indeed, why did it sell it at all? And why did it sell to a Chinese state-owned company?

THE RIGHT PRICE?

The price was the product of share performance in a volatile political climate. The conservative government of Antonis Samaras first announced an open tender process for the privatization of PPA in March 2014. But before it could be completed, the government lost the January 2015 election to the radical left-wing Syriza. Syriza attempted a confrontation with the country's creditors, the eurozone and the International Monetary Fund, which ended in disaster. Greece defaulted on a loan to the IMF in late June and days later signed onto its third bailout loan under humiliating terms. From May 2014, when the conservatives' poor showing in European parliament elections made a general election seem inevitable, to July 2015, when the Syriza government signed the third bailout, the interest rate international markets demanded to buy a 10-year Greek government bond rose from 6 to 15 percent, and the Athens Stock Exchange plummeted from over 1,300 points to 460 as institutional investors pulled out. When the original tender process for PPA was announced in 2014, there were six interested bidders. By the time Syriza relaunched the sale, only three were left, and only one, COSCO, eventually submitted a binding offer. Under pressure to make 6.4 billion euros from privatization over three years, Syriza accepted.

Touting the deal a month before it was finalized, Stergios Pitsiorlas, head of the government privatization body, called the 22 euros per share COSCO was paying very satisfactory. Four valuators had set PPA's share value between 18.4 and 21.2 euros. COSCO's offer "puts PPA's total value at 550 million euros, which I think exceptional," said Pitsiorlas. The state was tired of earning meager profits from its companies, he said. "The COSCO rent was financing the PPA's deficits, and the state was earning peanuts. At this rate, it would take the state 300 years to earn what it will earn in 40," Pitsiorlas told the newspaper *Avgi*.

Anomeritis pish-poshes this line of thinking. "What is stock value anyway?" he asks. "A load of hot air. Ports have docks, piers, buildings, an enormous electrical infrastructure. How can you match that with stock value when the Athens stock market is nosediving? We're talking about 550 hectares of storage space and 40 kilometers of docks."

WHY SELL?

Greece's three memoranda of understanding with creditors (2010, 2012, and 2015) listed Piraeus Port Authority as a privatization target but did not specify selling its fixed assets, only its voting shares. Though recognition of the Greek state's crippling inefficiency has become almost universal over the last quarter-century, the sale of infrastructure remains anathema to the Greeks.

Privatization was unheard of in the statist Greek economy of the 1980s. While Margaret Thatcher was divesting the British state of carmakers, utilities, and infrastructure, Greece was nationalizing bankrupt industries to save jobs. That changed after the fall of communism in Europe. The conservative government of Konstantinos Mitsotakis in 1990 embarked on an ambitious program of rolling back state monopolies or dominance in the banking, telecommunications, broadcast, and airline industries. But the infrastructure underpinning network industries such as ports, airports, rail, and copper wire networks was kept under strict state ownership and control. A quarter of PPA was eventually floated in 2003, but the government held absolute control through the remainder.

The second great impetus for privatization came with Greece's bankruptcy in 2008. Wall Street's financial crisis led bankers to price risk into eurozone sovereign bonds that had previously been treated as failsafe. Greece was forced out of markets and in May 2010 signed its first memorandum of understanding with its fellow eurozone countries, whereby they would bankroll the Greek state to the tune of 110 billion euros while Greece would balance its budget and reform its economy to make it more competitive. Unnoticed in the reams of the loan's terms and conditions was an undertaking to sell 50 billion euros in state assets. While this unrealistic target was eventually revised to 6.4 billion euros in the third bailout loan signed by Syriza, the memoranda annexes contained lists of every major state company or entity, including PPA, and irreversibly placed their development by private entities in the political vocabulary.

Still, no other sale of Greek infrastructure has transpired. The telecommunications network, electrical grid, and railway system remain under state ownership as their operations are privatized. PPA stands as the sole example of a buyer assuming control of state assets—assets whose value the buyer had previously increased as a licensee. "The Chinese would not have made the deal if they didn't have total control of the infrastructure," says a source with knowledge of negotiations between the Greek government and creditors. "They could see how policy was prone to change with every new government."

WHY SELL TO CHINA?

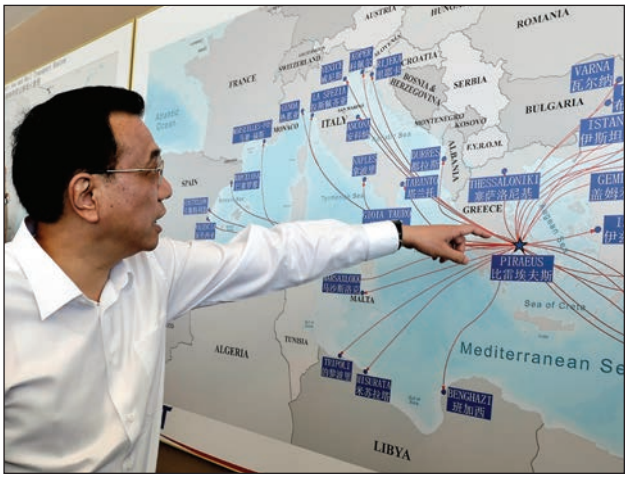
Under pressure to attract investment, Greece has looked both for government-to-government deals in the east and private-sector deals in the west. Neither exercise has been particularly successful, because the Greek state, jealous of monopolies and natural resources, has earned a name for obstruction and obfuscation.

Through Greece's tribulations with creditors and investors, COSCO has spoken softly and carried a big stick. It complained publicly only twice: in January 2016, when refugees shut down the main rail link north into the Balkans for several weeks, and in June that year, when the government tried surreptitiously to change the agreed terms of sale in parliament. When crane operators went on strike for 53 days in 2006-7 over the imminent lease of the container piers, diverting dozens of ships to other ports and costing PPA at least $12 million in lost business, COSCO waited patiently. Hostile electoral rhetoric left it unimpressed. Socialist leader George Papandreou came to power in October 2009, after COSCO leased the container piers, vowing to throw the Chinese back into the sea. By the end of the following year, he had received Chinese premier Wen Jiabao in Athens and signed 10 agreements to strengthen maritime cooperation.

COSCO's strategic patience has obviously been easier with the deep pockets and political backing of a state-owned company than it would be for a free-market corporation answerable to shareholders for quarterly results. This became clear in January 2016. Under pressure from key investors, Canada's Eldorado Gold announced it was suspending what was going to be Europe's biggest gold-mining operation, in the northern regions of Halkidiki and Thrace, after its painstakingly won environmental permits were revoked. The investment was worth almost US$3.5 billion over 30 years, and $700 million had already been spent. "Since 2012, we have experienced the Ministry of Energy and Environment and other agencies failing to fulfill their permitting and licensing obligations," said CEO Paul Wright in Athens. "These investments are seen a litmus test by all potential large investors—both domestic and international. They should serve as an advertisement for investing in Greece. It is personally very disappointing to be here today telling you otherwise." Eldorado Gold has since relaunched its plans in Halkidiki, but the investment was shelved for three years critical to the Greek economy, and the damage to Greece's image was done.

Other signature investments have also languished, such as a 600-hectare redevelopment of the old Athens airport on prime city real estate, private electricity generation, and the sale of billions of dollars' worth of public real estate. Yet COSCO has quietly executed its timetable of investments, demonstrating that it is a dependable stakeholder.

In pure revenue terms, the Greek state might indeed have done better with COSCO as client rather than owner of Piraeus Port Authority, but the state was unlikely ever



Chinese prime minister Li Keqiang points to a shipping map of the Mediterranean in Piraeus, Greece, June 20, 2014.

LOUISA GOULIAMAKI / AP

to streamline PPA and develop the port. As COSCO invests, the results speak for themselves. PPA's revenue rose by 3.6 percent in 2016, to 103.5 million euros. Anyone who bought PPA stock in the last year saw its value rise by 20 percent. The *Financial Times* forecasts the stock will outperform the market and come close to realizing the 22 euro value COSCO paid for it within the next year.

The fact remains, however, that Greece's deal with COSCO is statist in nature. COSCO assures the success of its investments as much through its ability to contract with other Chinese companies like Huawei, ZTE, and the Shanghai International Ports Group, all of which it has signed deals with to ship goods through Piraeus, as by attracting clients competitively. The impending Athens-Beijing direct connection through Air China, the flag carrier of the People's Republic of China, also suggests Beijing's nod. Piraeus is therefore more than a business deal. It presumes a new political understanding between Greece and China. This has not gone unnoticed in Brussels. "European institutions wanted the privatization but

would have been happier if the buyer was someone other than COSCO," admits the source with knowledge of government talks with creditors.

THE CHINA PIVOT

Greece faces a broader difficulty in its relations with the West. It has been shut out of capital markets for most of the past decade. The glaring contradiction between creditors' exhortations to grow through reform and the recessionary effect of government spending cuts has convinced many Greeks that the medicine was intended to weaken the Greek state and open it up as a bargain basement for capitalist interests. The balance of power in the European Union has shifted, too, with the looming departure of Greek ally Britain and Germany's sudden rise to undisputable hegemony over the European project through its control of the eurozone. Germany has persistently refused to countenance a rescheduling of Greek debt along the lines proposed by the IMF to make it sustainable. Absent that restructuring, the Greek state remains too predatory and arbitrary to attract private investors. Divesting itself of key public assets with no prospect of a growing free-market economy seems to many a game leading to Greece's expulsion from the eurozone. The United States, Greece's Cold War protector and key ally, seems unable to influence eurozone policy towards it. Furthermore, U.S. interests in the Middle East dictate a continued close relationship with Greece's adversary Turkey. Greece thus lacks confidence in the alliances it has known since 1945 and feels increasingly alone in a shifting world. Its difficulties and disappointments have dramatically altered Greeks' perceptions of traditional allies.

Chinese and Greek flags on a lamppost in Beijing's Tiananmen Square

Defending COSCO's buyout of PPA in parliament, merchant marine minister Thodoris Dritsas described the disillusionment in Greece with what the free-market economy has become: "Current conditions, and the days through which Europe and other parts of the planet are living, are tragic. There is the deconstruction of the rule of law, the deconstruction of the welfare state, the deconstruction of the principles of public interest, and venal policy as a desperate way out for certain powerful economic interests from the crisis." Dritsas was directly implying that the state was being sold piecemeal to private interests, which have no other way to grow.

While disillusionment with the West has increased, Greece and China have discovered they have the makings of a strategic relationship. Greeks own one in five merchant ships plying the oceans today. That fleet is gainfully employed ferrying raw materials to China and finished goods from China. Greeks are doing much of their shipbuilding and repair in China and look favourably on the prospect of repatriating that activity under Chinese management. Through the stellar performance of its subsidiaries in Greece, China is keen to demonstrate the alleged superiority of its model of state capitalism. Greece's geopolitical position is good for Chinese interests in the EU even as it has become less interesting to the United States. And a close relationship with China seems to hold none of the risks of a shift towards Russia, with its brash and confrontational style towards both Europe and the United States.

"Everything starts from economics and trade, but China is certainly looking for a more important geopolitical role, a more important international role, and Greece is a country where this can start from," says Tzogopoulos. Greece is a key member of China's so-called 16+1 discussion and investment forum linking the countries of Eastern Europe. In April, Greece and China further tightened their relations by inaugurating the Ancient Civilisations Forum. The forum's declaration recognizes "civilisation and cultural diplomacy as a soft and smart power" and hails the preservation of cultural heritage as a defense against "terrorism, radicalisation, extremism . . . and other forms of related intolerance." It is a signal that Greece and China intend to use what they have in common to cultivate a closer political bond.

The Truman Doctrine was inspired by the need to prevent Greece (and, by extension, Turkey) from falling into the Communist bloc in 1947. It led to the Marshall Plan, which saw the United States spend $13 billion on the devastated economies of Europe and was key to lifting Greece out of postwar poverty. It is no coincidence that the only statue of a foreign leader in downtown Athens is a giant bronze of Harry Truman. Just as his legacy will never be forgotten here, today's want of American cash and lack of American political reach are palpable. In announcing a trillion dollars in overseas investment, China is consciously echoing the Marshall Plan. It is a choice partly dictated by necessity. The post-2008 recession has left the developed world with little money for investment, and the Chinese government is looking for a return on its stockpile of three trillion dollars. But just as the Marshall Plan cultivated political loyalties and favorable markets for the United States, so surely will Xi Jinping's Belt and Road initiative do so for China. ♦

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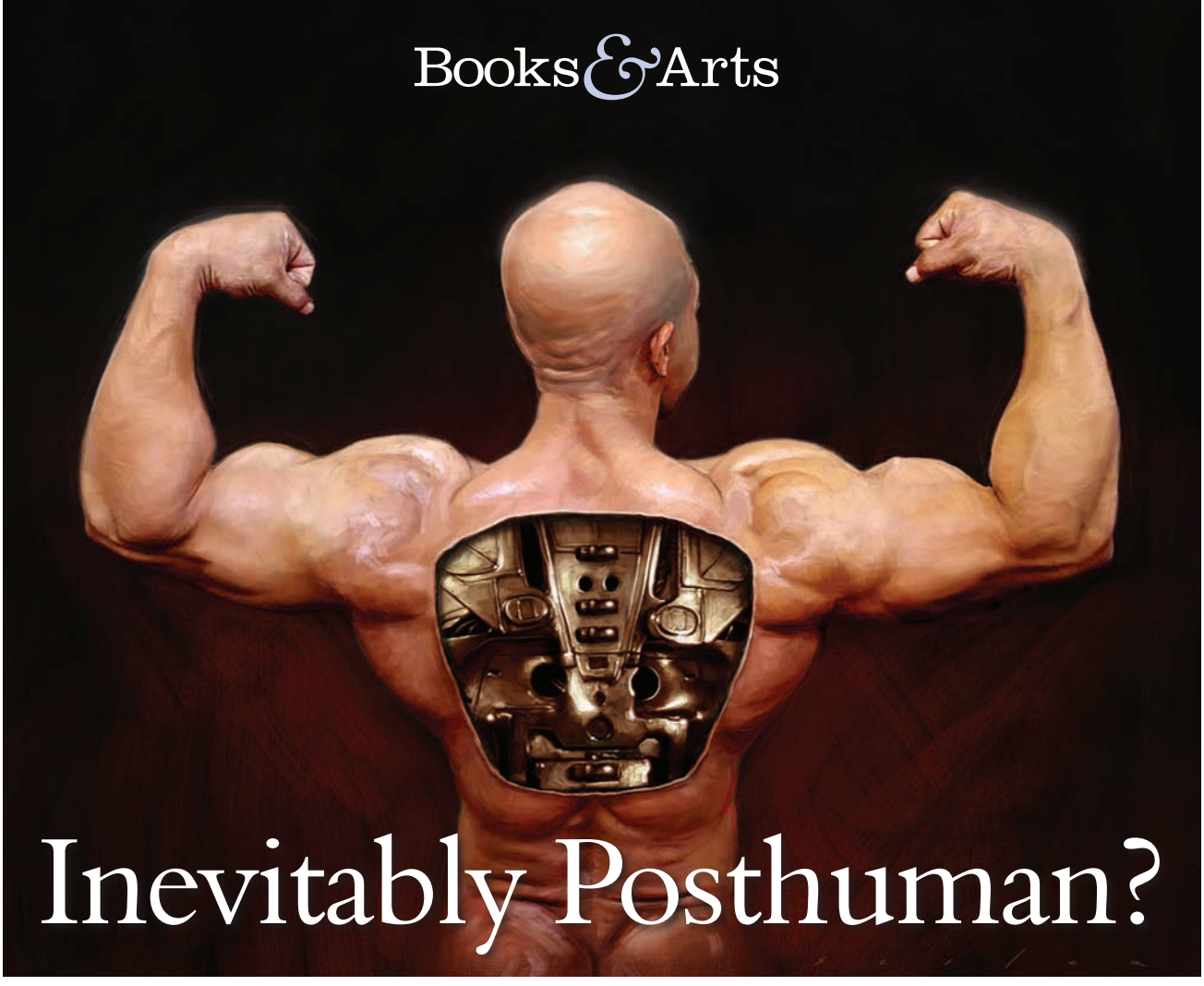

Inevitably Posthuman?

Predicting ourselves out of the future. BY LAWRENCE KLEPP

There are, broadly speaking, two kinds of futurology, the utopian and the apocalyptic. In *Homo Deus*, Yuval Noah Harari, like the Book of Revelation, offers a bit of both. And why not? The function of imaginary futures is to deliver us from banality. The present, like the past, may be a disappointing muddle, but the future had better be very good or very bad, or it won't sell.

Harari, an Oxford-educated Israeli historian who teaches in Jerusalem, is the author of *Sapiens* (2015), a provocative, panoramic view of human evolution and history upward from apedom. It became an international bestseller, recommended by the likes of Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, and Barack Obama. Harari's style is breezy and accessible, sprinkled with allusions to pop culture and everyday life, but his perspective is coolly detached and almost Machiavellian in its unflinching realism about power, the role of elites, and the absence of justice in history. He is an unapologetic oracle of Darwin and data. And he is clearly a religious skeptic, but he practices a form of Buddhist meditation, and among the best things in his new book, like his previous one, are his observations on the varieties of religious experience.

Homo Deus
A Brief History of Tomorrow
by Yuval Noah Harari
Harper, 464 pp., $35

Harari begins by assuring us that humanity is on a winning streak. Famine and plague, two historical scourges, are disappearing, and a third, war, is no longer routine statecraft. For the first time in history, more people die of eating too much than eating too little. More people succumb to ailments related to old age than to infectious diseases. Victims of all kinds of violence are, as percentages of the population, at historical lows in most places. The next stop, presumably, is Utopia.

But if it's the best of times, it's also the worst of times—at least for other species. In the present era, which Harari follows other writers in calling the Anthropocene epoch, a dominant, overbreeding humanity is playing the role of the dinosaur-dooming asteroid 65 million years ago. We're transforming the planet. Many species of larger wild animals are reaching the vanishing point, while the now far more numerous domesticated animals raised for food have been bred into miserable, bloated, immobilized travesties of their

JASON SEILER

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wild ancestors. We live in an age of mass extinctions. The question Harari raises is whether we are going to be the next victims of our own success.

In a few decades, we might have a new caste society that, in Harari's account, looks something like the Egypt of the pharaohs. Most of humanity, made redundant by artificial intelligence and robots, will be ushered into subservience or virtual-reality obliviousness. But there will be a rich elite whose technical mastery will bring them something approaching omniscience. They will periodically arrange complete biochemical makeovers, giving themselves perpetual youth, and they will have assorted injections and brain prosthetics to bestow unflagging confidence and intelligence and bliss. They will be beings apart, experiencing mental states unknown to all previous merely human beings. It will make them, in effect, a new species, *Homo deus*—just as the cognitive revolution 70,000 years ago gave rise to our own human species, *Homo sapiens*, with unheard-of powers of abstraction and imagination, "thereby turning an insignificant African ape into the ruler of the world."

On the other hand, this god-incubating project might just be a mad-scientist experiment that blows up in our genetically enhanced faces. Harari concedes that "revamping the human mind is an extremely complex and dangerous undertaking" since "we don't really understand the mind." He would seem to agree with critics who think that any such transhumanist or posthumanist enterprise should proceed with caution and be carefully considered and debated in advance. His book is only meant, he says, to "enable us to think in far more imaginative ways about the future," and it is "a historical prediction, not a political manifesto." But he isn't optimistic about halting the project of redesigning humanity and merging it with machines, even if it turns out to be a big mistake. After all, "history is full of big mistakes. Given our past record and our current values, we are likely to reach out for bliss, divinity and immortality—even if it kills us."

As for the other, more conventionally apocalyptic ways of killing us, Harari's book is remarkable for tiptoeing past the usual suspects, like climate catastrophe and nuclear war. He does bring up something he calls the "logic bomb"—embedded malicious software that could be activated during a geopolitical crisis, producing power blackouts, plane and train crashes, and the obliteration of financial records (in other words, all the money you thought you had squirreled away in a safe place).

Harari has nothing to say about how today's technology seems to be aiding and abetting our descent into an increasingly crude, inarticulate, and barbaric society—online bullying and abuse, livestreamed suicides and rapes and murders, terrorist recruitment and incitement, and so on—and thus fails to project those trends into the future. In fact, he downplays terrorism as a desperate measure adopted by history's losers.

So much for the good news. Harari describes several other current technological fads and intellectual trends that might remake the world. The "Quantified Self movement" involves monitoring and measuring human activities; for many people, using a Fitbit can bring about improvements in physical health. But what Harari describes is more like an obsession or an ideology, reducing the self to "nothing but mathematical patterns." Then there is "Dataism," which he rightly calls a "current scientific dogma." It holds that all life is basically just hardware and software: Organisms are "algorithms" and "giraffes, tomatoes and human beings are just different methods for processing data." Harari seems to suggest that if these ideas prevail, humanity may drown in a biblical-caliber flood of numbers, with no ark of autonomy in sight.

In 1888, Edward Bellamy, an American socialist, published his immensely popular novel *Looking Backward*, which envisioned a happy future in the year 2000: We would have no wars, no banks, no money to put in them, no poverty, no wealth, no prisons, no politicians to put in them, no advertisements, no professional sports, no bad manners, and (now comes the good part) no lawyers—just a rather genteel Industrial Army receiving equal rations of modest middle-class amenities. No mention of computers and the Internet, nor even radios, but there would be telephone connections in every home to a symphony orchestra playing live music.

In the quarter-century after Bellamy, more than 200 futurist tracts and novels appeared in English, almost all optimistic, though a few grim futures began raining on the utopian parade—the first drops of the later dystopian deluge that included *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Some were memorable; all were wrong.

Except for a few remarks about Marxist mistakes, Harari doesn't deal with the picturesque ruins of the bright futures of the past. And he confesses, reassuringly, that he does not know what the future will be like. Nobody does. He is, he claims, only sketching a few indistinct possibilities and not endorsing any of them. But like Bellamy and other past futurologists, he is extrapolating current technological and social tendencies and cutting and pasting them onto the blank slate of the future, and his chances of being right are not any greater than theirs were. What makes his book readable—his sweeping, high-altitude style of analysis—also makes it somewhat facile.

Harari does acknowledge a few cracks in his own tentative utopian façade. We've managed to achieve unprecedented levels of prosperity, comfort, safety, and choice, but these things do not always translate into true happiness or full human flourishing. Indeed, we find ourselves living distracted, disconnected lives. "We have more choice than ever before," Harari writes, but "we have lost the ability to really pay attention to whatever we choose." Rates of depression, drug use, and suicide are, Harari notes, higher in some affluent, high-tech societies than in some indigent but tradition-rich places.

Modernity, he says, came to us as a "deal" in which "humans agree to give up meaning in exchange for power." Until recently, "most cultures believed that humans play a part in some great cosmic plan" that gave meaning and

purpose to their lives but also limited their power, since ultimate power always resided with the gods or the natural order. Human hubris of the Tower of Babel or Greek tragedy varieties earned quick retribution. But modern humanity has developed powers of its own that match the awe-inspiring powers once attributed to the gods—miracle-working medicines, instant global communication, nuclear bombs, and so forth. Power, however, tends not only to corrupt, it makes the absence of meaning more glaring. "On the practical level," Harari writes, "modern life consists of a constant pursuit of power within a universe devoid of meaning."

It's not that modernity completely gave up on meaning. It just withdrew it from the cosmos and reinvested it in humanity, creating humanism, which is, Harari says, the real religion of the modern world. Liberal humanism, allied with democracy and consumerist capitalism, has prevailed over its totalitarian rivals by anchoring meaning to the autonomous individual self. Since Rousseau, we've been looking inward and consulting our feelings to find meaning and purpose in life. Life thus becomes, as far as possible, a series of freely chosen, emotionally gratifying, significant experiences; whole industries, like the travel industry, have sprung up to provide them.

Trying to build a humanist church on the shifting sands of feeling has had some unintended consequences—a sentimental, subjective morality; politics in a feel-good or touchy, outrage-driven key; and a self-absorbed therapeutic culture in which everyone is healing and no one is well. Harari gives almost no attention to these. But he demonstrates throughout the book that history has always been a record of unintended consequences, and he offers no reasons for thinking that will change.

The one thing we can be reasonably sure of about the future is that the best-laid plans of mice and men and computerized societies will, as is the custom, go awry. Amid his *Homo deus* conjectures, Harari remarks that by achieving immunity to disease and aging, the new technocratic elite will be potentially immortal, but they would still be vulnerable to death by accident (or assassination, I would add). In other words, the supergeeks of tomorrow may have godlike aspirations, but they will be extremely nervous little gods. They may never get out of the house.

In Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*, his ranting antihero predicts that people will sabotage the precisely calculated, number-ruled technological utopias of the future by doing self-destructive things and committing random acts of violence just to assert their freedom. You might argue that this is already happening.

Maybe computers will take over the world. But, as Harari admits, scientists have so far failed to come up with an explanation for human consciousness and subjectivity, let alone replicate them in computers. Computers lack not only consciousness but the self-doubt, inner ambivalence and conflict, and sheer self-loathing that are its faithful companions and the source of all our trouble and creativity. Harari says that they may not need consciousness, doubt, and creativity to replace us. But I suppose if they begin saying, like St. Paul, "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate," or, like Montaigne, "what we believe we do not believe, and we cannot disengage ourselves from what we condemn," we should start to worry.

Subverting the prospective techno-apotheosis Harari describes may not require drastic Dostoyevskian measures—maybe just imagination, which, for Harari, echoing a famous remark by Napoleon, is what rules human life. Lives of artificial bliss handed to us on a platter of biochemical and neuro-electronic manipulation may well turn out to be stifling, unchallenging lives, and the human imagination, if it is not stunted and stupefied by virtual reality and other illusions, is likely to find unpredictable ways to subvert them. We will have found out that gods are never happy. ♦

B&A

Respecting Religion

What we risk losing when we fail to protect religious liberty. **BY ANDREW T. WALKER**

No contemporary political issue is more emotionally fraught: The LGBT lobby, enjoying its new political ascendancy, worries that religious conservatives wish to diminish the self-definition and harm the dignity of the wider LGBT community; meanwhile, religious conservatives, feeling beleaguered, find their deeply held beliefs marginalized and scorned, and stand accused of using religious liberty as a pretense for discrimination against sexual minorities.

Andrew T. Walker is director of policy studies at the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and author of God and the Transgender Debate.

Debating Religious Liberty and Discrimination
by John Corvino, Ryan T. Anderson, and Sherif Girgis
Oxford, 352 pp., $21.95

Debating Religious Liberty and Discrimination is a new point-counterpoint volume coauthored by John Corvino (on one side) and Ryan T. Anderson and Sherif Girgis (on the other). The book explores the philosophical, historical, and policy dimensions of religious liberty, helping us to better understand what it is, why it matters, and how it ought to be protected. And, in turn, the book's discussion of discrimination helps us

to better understand what it is, when it's unjust, and when it should be lawful. Policy analysts, ethicists, philosophers, and lawyers will all benefit from this book—as will anyone who wants to think more clearly about the pressing issues of the day.

Corvino, a professor of philosophy at Wayne State University, argues that religious liberty has morphed into religious privilege. Caution is called for when considering religious exemptions from generally applicable laws, Corvino writes, especially when those exemptions could burden "already vulnerable minorities." Wishing that the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act relied on "intermediate scrutiny" rather than "strict scrutiny" since the latter level of protection lends itself to potential abuse, Corvino argues for a form of religious liberty that prohibits overt attempts by law to single out religion. Expressing concern about the implications of the Supreme Court's 2014 *Hobby Lobby* decision, he argues that "the laws in question" in that case, which required companies providing health insurance to their employees to offer plans covering contraceptives, "don't directly target fundamental freedoms; instead, they incidentally burden them in pursuit of other, constitutionally legitimate aims." Elsewhere he writes that "it is by no means clear that the free exercise clause should be interpreted as granting religious exemptions from otherwise neutral laws, rather than merely as prohibiting Congress from passing laws aimed directly at suppressing religious practice."

Corvino's arguments are rhetorically powerful, but one comes away desiring more evidence for and specificity about why and when religious liberty *ought* to give way to claims of nondiscrimination. The reader is left wondering what Corvino would do with religious schools' tax exemption or whether he believes that Catholic hospitals *must* perform sex-reassignment surgeries. Many of his arguments hinge upon judgments about "dignitary harm"—that is, "the harm involved in treating people with less than equal moral standing"—which seems unavoidably subjective. Throughout, the reader will observe an appreciable libertarianism in Corvino's tone, except when it comes to those who disagree with his sexual ethics. And most concerning, Corvino would have us remove the presumption of liberty that religion has historically enjoyed.

Anderson, a policy expert at the Heritage Foundation, and Girgis, a legal scholar now studying philosophy at Princeton, argue on the basis of natural law theory that religious conviction is a "basic good" and therefore demands a robust conception of religious liberty on the grounds that personal integrity with one's beliefs is central to human flourishing. The state ought not to arbitrarily restrict such a basic good without immense justification for fear of disrupting the "basic ingredients of human thriving."

In their view, LGBT claims of discrimination fail to meet the necessary thresholds that merit government interventions restricting religious freedom. Anderson and Girgis offer a helpful analysis of discrimination, arguing that what matters is establishing the relevant factors behind it. Not all discrimination is equal. Is it reasonable to require people to see in order to drive a vehicle? Yes. Relevant factors establish that vision is necessary for driving, which discriminates against blind persons. Is it reasonable to deny a transgender person access to a laundromat? No. The need to clean one's clothes is in no way constitutive of one's gender identity. "In general, how we define concrete instances of discrimination," Anderson and Girgis write, "depends on our underlying moral judgments about particular cases"—which is why refusing to perform sex-reassignment surgery is different from refusing to give chemotherapy to a transgender patient, and why declining to arrange flowers for a same-sex wedding is different from declining to arrange "Get Well Soon" flowers for a gay customer. Anderson and Girgis highlight the importance of these distinctions, but Corvino rejects them, and the law generally ignores them—to the peril of civil liberty and the common good.

To Anderson and Girgis, there is "no freestanding right not to be offended." Responding to the dignitary harm aspect of Corvino's argument, Anderson and Girgis write that an essential purpose of religious freedom is to offer challenging truths to society—truths that society may not want to hear but may nonetheless need:

> Religious freedom includes nothing if not the rights to worship, proselytize, and convert—forms of conduct (and speech) that can express the conviction that outsiders are wrong. Perhaps not just wrong, but deluded about matters of cosmic importance around which they have ordered their lives—even *damnably* wrong.

Free societies require the possibility of persons being offended, not needlessly, but for the betterment of society or individual human flourishing. But efforts to restrict religious dissent, Anderson and Girgis fear, "will always mute the voice for tomorrow's reform." Such an outcome would amount to "backsliding into Puritanism"—a progressive Puritanism, that is, in which dissent from the new orthodoxy is zealously quashed. Anderson and Girgis observe a double standard in our public discourse whereby progressives allow for free speech that inflicts dignitary harm but are unwilling to extend that same allowance to religious practice.

Anderson and Girgis end up showing convincingly why the new wave of laws seeking to codify protections for sexual orientation and gender identity at the local, state, and federal levels amounts to an encroaching threat to religious freedom.

Although Anderson and Girgis make a more comprehensive, philosophical case for defending religious liberty, and so overall have the upper hand in the debate, all three authors deserve praise for tackling this subject in this way. They disagree civilly and engage with one another substantively and thoughtfully. In an age when discussions of religious liberty often devolve into cheap political point-scoring, the fact that elevated debate occurred with both charity and clarity is perhaps the ultimate value of this book. May it be a model to disputants on this and other heated subjects, for years to come. ♦

A bull jumps over revelers in the ring during the San Fermín festival in Pamplona, Spain, July 8, 2014.

B&A

Chicken Among Bulls

Taking life—but hopefully not death—by the horns.

BY TONY MECIA

Pamplona, Spain

Calle Santo Domingo, near this small city's old town, is lined with spectators dressed in white with red handkerchiefs tied around their necks. They peer down from the balconies, sit atop the old walls, and press against the wooden barricades. They are awaiting a glimpse of Pamplona's signature event—one that has taken place for centuries.

It's a lot less crowded where I'm standing. But even here in the middle of Calle Santo Domingo there are dozens of people, almost all of them men in their 20s and 30s. I'm nervous. My repeated looks over my shoulder reassure me of one important fact: When the first flare goes off, signaling the bulls' release from their pen, I should have enough room to run. And run with the bulls I will.

Friends told me I'd be stupid to do this. One remembered an acquaintance who shattered a bone in his arm and had to fly back to the United States loaded up on painkillers. Another texted me an article from the festival's first day, which described two Americans and a Spaniard being gored—one took a horn to the scrotum.

"You doing this?" he wrote.

"Game-time decision," I replied.

Now, a few minutes before 8 A.M. on the festival's eighth day, the metaphorical whistle is about to blow. I briefly consider retreating to the safety of the spectator area, but decide against it. I'd have to live with the cowardice. Besides, I have a solid strategy devised by my Spanish friend Ramón. He has run with the bulls more than 80 times—every morning of the festival for the last 11 years. He runs for the thrill of it. While there are other festivals in northern Spain that celebrate by running different bovine animals through the streets, Pamplona, he says, is the "Super Bowl." Plus, he adds, "there is no glory in running with cows."

Pamplona is a pleasant city (population 200,000) at the base of the Pyrenees, about an hour from the French border. It has a beautiful 15th-century cathedral and the world-famous Festival of San Fermín, which most Americans know as the "Running of the Bulls." But these morning rituals are just a small part of the celebration. There are parades, outdoor concerts, nightly fireworks, food sellers on every street, and, of course, bullfights each evening. That's how the tradition started: The bulls needed to be moved from one side of town to the bullring a half-mile away on the other.

The festival has grown substantially since Ernest Hemingway put Pamplona on the map in his 1926 novel *The Sun Also Rises*. As in Hemingway's

ALVARO BARRIENTOS / AP

Tony Mecia is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

Above, runners fill a Pamplona street, waiting for the sound of a flare to signal the release of the bulls; below, festival-goers fall, scatter, and outpace the bulls, July 11, 2017.

ABOVE, TONY MECIA / TWS; BELOW, ALVARO BARRIENTOS / AP

time, there's plenty of drinking and occasional fistfights. News stories on sexual assaults at last year's festival seem to have depressed attendance this year. Locals grouse that it is as safe as ever and that reports of the attacks were overblown.

It's an open question how much longer festivals like these will last. Bullfighting in Spain is under attack from animal-rights activists, who have succeeded in having it banned in some areas—most notably in all of Catalonia in 2010. A Spanish court overturned the Catalonian ruling that bullfighting is "one more expression of a cultural nature that forms part of the common cultural heritage." And around Pamplona, it remains popular. Thousands turn out for the early-morning runnings, and they pack the bullring each evening. The anti-bullfighting crowd has begun a tradition of its own: protesting the whole spectacle a day before the festival by parading naked through the town streets—an event known as the "Running of the Nudes."

The obvious downside to running with bulls, of course, is the chance of injury or death. Having a 1,200-pound bull bear down on you at full speed and impale you with his horn seems a gruesome way to die. There hasn't been a death since 2009. But runners are gored each year, and dozens more wind up in local hospitals with concussions, broken bones, scrapes, and bruises. The local paper runs short stories each day on the injured. A sampling of the headlines: "I was trying to get off the street when the bull threw me" (46-year-old Spaniard, broken arm); "There were a lot of people at the entrance to the side street" (26-year-old Spaniard, head injury); "I didn't see that there was still one bull left" (48-year-old Spaniard, head injury); and, my favorite, "I've been to six runnings of the bulls and have enjoyed them, except for today" (55-year-old Frenchman, bruised neck and shoulder).

I'm generally not what you would call a risk-taker. I head to bed early. My wife chides me for driving too close to the speed limit on the freeway. I have three kids and a lot to live for.

This is the part where I should wax philosophical about confronting one's fears and how running down Pamplona's cobblestone streets would make me a part of something bigger than myself, enveloping me in a centuries-old tradition that captures the complex dance of life and death.

But my reason to run is far simpler. Family rivalry. I have roots in Pamplona: My great-grandmother left the region for America in 1913, and Ramón is the husband of my second cousin, once removed. My dad ran with the bulls, and I have always expected this day would come, like a bizarre rendezvous with destiny. "It's in your blood," Ramón tells me. If I could keep that blood from spilling onto the streets, much the better. The odds are in my favor: An estimated 1,500 or more people run each day, but only around a dozen typically end up in hospitals.

Another factor is that my cousin, a San Francisco dentist, ran three years ago to great family acclaim. A photo of him with a bull's horn just inches from his back made the front page of the local paper. "Incredibly lucky," Ramón says. My daughters point out that this sounds a lot like peer pressure—something they are always being urged to

avoid by their parents. I start to explain the difference and then realize, well, there really isn't one.

A lot of runners figure they will be fine if they elude the bulls. What they fail to consider, Ramón says, is that because of the crowd in the street, they will not necessarily be free to get away. The other runners are as dangerous as the bulls: They block escape routes, push you down, and run you over before the bulls even arrive. This is why we chose Thursday instead of Friday, the last day of the festival, for my run. Friday happens to be Bastille Day, which means a further influx of French runners from across the border.

Only the bulls run the entire way to the ring, and runners can begin anywhere on the course. Most start in the middle, close to the town's center, Ramón notes. At the beginning stretch, where I am starting, there tend to be fewer runners, and they are more experienced.

Ramón's instructions are simple: Stand in the center of the street. When people start running, run. Keep looking back as you go, and bail out when the bulls approach, hopping onto the sidewalk to the right to let them pass. If you fall down, stay down: The worst injuries happen when fallen runners try to stand up and are struck by a bull closing at full speed.

Police walk through the crowd of runners, removing water bottles and bags and looking for those obviously drunk or under 18. An official approaches me and asks increasingly ominous questions: "Did you go to sleep last night? Do you know the risks of running? Do you know that you could die?" As a helicopter hovers overhead, runners sing to a statuette of Fermín, the city's patron saint. I pace, stretch a little, and size up those around me.

Then, promptly at 8 A.M., the first flare flies overhead. BOOM! The bulls are loose. The runners closer to the front of the course start jumping, then jogging, then sprinting. I start, too, at an easy pace that quickly turns to a sprint. As I run, I keep looking over my shoulder and see a bull in the distance, maybe 50 yards away. That's good enough. I veer to the right and onto the sidewalk. Maybe 10 to 12 people have beaten me there. I press against them, and another dozen or more press onto the sidewalk behind me. "Ahh," I think, "human shields."

In an instant, the pack of bulls has raced by. I've accomplished my goal: survival.

Behind me, medics rush into the street. They tend to two men lying on the ground. I learn later that one was gored in the leg, and the other was struck in the stomach. Both are expected to recover. Despite cameras everywhere, I'm never able to find any images of myself running with the bulls. To me, that means I wasn't really that close to danger. All I can find is footage of me on local TV pacing, arms behind my back, a few minutes before the bulls were released.

Ramón, who began his run closer to the start, comes and finds me, and we exchange thumbs-ups. He has fallen and scraped his elbow but is otherwise fine, as usual. He calls his wife and mother. I text my wife and go find my family, who are sitting too far down the street to have seen me and are relieved I'm okay.

Ramón asks if I want to run again tomorrow. "I think I'm good," I reply. I tracked my run on a GPS watch. It reads: 0.0 miles, 19 seconds, 3 calories burned. I'll take it. ♦

B&A

Ever Green

A marvelous new translation of a Middle English masterpiece. BY JAMES MATTHEW WILSON

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
A New Verse Translation in Modern English
translated by John Ridland
Able Muse, 116 pp., $19.95

When *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* first appeared in print, in 1839, its wintry world of Christian revelry, chivalric honor, and Arthurian romance had long since vanished. Indeed, that world, or rather, medieval romantic literature as a whole, was antiquated even at the time the poem was written, somewhere in northwest England, in the late 14th century. In that same period, Geoffrey Chaucer was scribbling away down south, inventing the principles of modern English versecraft and casting a comic and condescending eye back on the old tales of Arthur. The age of chivalry was dead.

And yet, *Gawain* is not just a belated instance of medieval romance. Although the anonymous poet begins by insisting he shall tell the tale "to you right away, as I heard it in the court / Being told," and closes by claiming that "the books of British history bear witness to" what he has reported, in story and form, *Gawain* is a thing of striking originality and poetic genius. Although it seems to have had a small and isolated audience at the time of its writing, it has long since come to be recognized as the crown jewel of medieval romance and, second only perhaps to Chaucer, the polished masterpiece of Middle English. As is the case with Chaucer's poetry, *Gawain* at once looks back to an age that appears at times enchanted, at others merely strange, and ahead to the English poetic tradition as it came to maturity.

From the manuscript: the Green Knight's decapitation

For those interested chiefly in the exoticism of the poem's world and style, Simon Armitage (in 2007) and others have provided translations of its obscure, brute, snarling, and monosyllabic dialect into modern English. For those who wish to get a sense of the poem as standing in continuity with our intellectual and linguistic world, however, John Ridland's new translation will become the standard. I have never before seen the journeyman work of close translation pay such great artistic dividends. Ridland has pulled off a startling success that brings new life to an old poem; like the poem in its original context, Ridland's translation offers significant lessons for us, now, about both poetic form and the moral form of our lives.

The *Gawain* poet gathered elements from a number of earlier legends in order to craft a finely wrought story of magic, charm, and wit that is also rife with moral gravitas. After a portentous preface that sets the poem's action in the context of the history of the Roman and Christian West, the tale begins during the Yuletide festivals in King Arthur's court. Amid the revels comes a giant but handsome man, green-clad and green of skin, carrying a large green axe. He challenges the court to play "a little Christmas game": Someone may chop his head off with the axe, so long as, a year and a day from that night, he may return the favor.

Amid a shocked but intrigued court, young Gawain takes the bet. He swings, the head rolls, blood spews. But that is not the end. The knight's body picks up the head and leaves, calling as it goes a reminder to Gawain to meet him in a year at "the Green Chapel." This is all the best Christmas present King Arthur could imagine!

The year passes; the poet depicts the cycle of seasons with vivid beauty. (See excerpt.) When Christmas comes, Gawain sets off and fights innumerable monsters before arriving—cold, alone, and longing to hear Mass—at the castle of a mysterious lord. He is welcomed warmly. The lord's beautiful wife and a squat, hideous old hag join him at prayer. In the hall, Gawain and the lord and his company make Christmas merry.

Then comes another Christmas "game" of sorts. The lord goes hunting each of the next three days, promising to give all he catches to his guest, while Gawain is left abed to recover from his journey. Gawain promises, in return, to give to the lord whatever he "catches" at home. The poem's most

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brilliant achievement of narration then unfolds as the hunting party's pursuits of female deer, a prickly and armored wild boar, and at last a fox are paralleled with the lady of the castle's pursuit of Gawain.

Each morning, the lady crawls into Gawain's bed, offering him her playful love talk and, soon, her body. All Gawain will accept, initially, is a kiss; each night, he gives the kisses to the lord, in accord with their bargain. The visceral realism of detail regarding the hunt and the playful courtly banter of the flirtation conjure up the precisions of a world while also conveying a sense of life as having a sacramental and symbolic form, wherein martial courage and masculine courtesy mirror and interpret one another for our benefit.

But on the third day, the lady offers Gawain not only kisses but a green sash. He accepts it, not because it is valuable, but because she has said it will protect him from bodily harm. When the lord returns that night, Gawain gives the kiss but keeps the sash tucked away.

He leaves the castle on the cold morning of his fate and arrives at the Green Chapel. The knight appears. Gawain bows and the axe is raised. The green knight brings it down once, twice, without contact. Gawain flinches but swears in anger he will not again and that the knight should get this over with. At last, the blade falls—but delivers just a cut across the back of the neck.

Gawain has been spared. Why? The green knight, we now learn, is the lord of the castle, transformed by King Arthur's wicked half-sister, the enchantress Morgan le Fay—who, we now also learn, is the old hag in the castle. The whole "game" has been a plot by vengeful Morgan to "startle" Queen Guinevere to death.

That cannot be the meaning of the story, however. You endured the trials of chastity and honor with my wife, the lord tells Gawain, except in your keeping back the sash. For this alone he has been cut. Gawain wears a "pentangle" on his shield, an emblem of integrity and courage without end. Living under the promise of certain death and through the temptations of the "green" yearnings of the flesh, he has proven himself a knight indeed—except for one act of cowardice that, like original sin itself, may be forgiven but never forgotten. Gawain's trial is that of every Christian soul, where joy and fear, heroic virtue and creaturely fallibility mingle in unexpected ways.

The poem was originally composed in loose alliterative lines, the number of stresses per line and number of lines per stanza varying considerably. In this, the poem drew on the fading traditional practices of Old English. Each stanza culminates, however, in a five-line "bob-and-wheel" whose use of meter and rhyme anticipates the emergence of the iambic line and the rhymed stanza that would soon become the essential form of English verse.

Most translators have either abandoned the form altogether or tried to replicate its alliterative movement in hopes of conveying its harsh, Germanic energy. Ridland, in contrast, renders the poem in loose iambic heptameter, thereby giving us a form that sounds both native and natural to our ear. He also introduces sporadic and spritely alliteration to preserve a hint of the poem's exotic roughness.

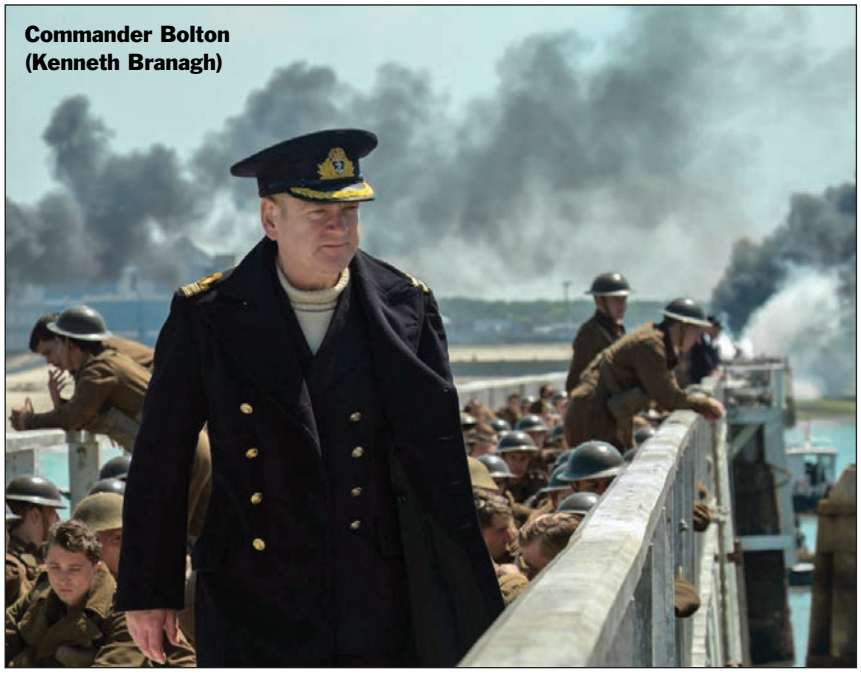
Gawain's Middle English dialect is not only rough but dense. Ridland set himself the goal of accounting for every word of the original and keeping his translation accurate, line for line. Although I found a handful of what are either liberties or errors, on the whole he succeeds. His meter is looser and more irregular than I would have it, and yet he has given us the first translation of the poem that achieves close literalness of meaning, colloquial clarity, and rich prosodic beauty.

Without collapsing its historical distance from our age, Ridland has brought the poem fully into our literary tradition. The *Gawain* poet himself, who so ingeniously wove the Christmas and chastity challenge narratives into a sinuous and significant whole; who captured a world rich and orderly with sacramental symbols and peppered with a thrilling realism of detail; and who, even so, introduced, quite incoherently and at the last moment, the plotting of Morgan le Fay could hardly have achieved a more perfect success. ♦

POETRY

The changing seasons are described in this excerpt from John Ridland's translation of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. *Note the concluding five-line "bob-and-wheel," rhyming A-B-A-B-A.*

A year rushes by so rapidly, and never brings back its like;
The setting-out and the finishing-off seldom resemble each other.
And so this Yule passed over them, and the rest of the year followed,
And each of the seasons in its turn pursued the one before:
After the richness of Christmas come the crabbed weeks of Lent,
That make a trial of our flesh with fish and plainer food.
But then the weathers of the world battle it out with winter,
The cold shrinks back down into the earth and the clouds lift to the loft,
Brightness is shed as the shining rain in warm and warmer showers
Falls on the fair flatlands below, where now the flowers are showing;
Both open ground and groves of trees are clad in their green garments,
Birds are abustle building their nests, and burst out boisterously
For the solace of the softening summer that will be following after
On the banks;
Blossoms break from their buds
By hedgerows rich and rank,
Then noble notes in the woods
Are heard as the birds give thanks.



Commander Bolton (Kenneth Branagh)

B&A

Undone Dunkirk

The stories and civilizational stakes that don't make it onto the screen. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Dunkirk
directed by Christopher Nolan

There are few events in the history of war comparable to the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from the French beach at Dunkirk in the late spring of 1940. It is an episode that repays close attention to its every aspect—the terrifying Nazi triumphs in combat that led to it, the halting and contradictory behavior of both the Allies and the Nazis during the week when 400,000 British and French soldiers had retreated to the sands by the English Channel, and the awe-inspiring improvisatory response by the British both on the beach and on the home front that turned the tide.

You would know none of this from Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk*, which is both an astonishing filmmaking achievement and an epic narrative failure. Nolan, who wrote and directed *Dunkirk*, made a deliberate choice to tell the story almost exclusively from the close-up perspective of individual sailors, soldiers, and pilots. This relatively short, blindingly sharp, and painfully vivid feat of impressionistic moviemaking gives one a rare sense of the horrors of war as experienced by those whose country is losing the fight. Nolan is a great director. What he is not, in this picture, is a great storyteller. His view of the events at Dunkirk is nearsighted. He misses the forest for the trees.

The men he shows us are, as they were in real life, almost entirely unprotected. They are sitting ducks on the beach, on the piers, and on the rescue boats they board. We watch them get strafed, bombed, shot through boat hulls, crushed and drowned as ships topple into the brine. And we live through their anxiety before, during, and after; the movie is, at times, almost unbearably tense.

And yet oddly, for a movie about the sufferings of ordinary people, we are told nothing about any of the uniformed soldiers and sailors we see—not their names, not where they're from. They have no recognizable or interesting personality quirks. They are just bodies moving through Nolan's space, from beach to water to boat or in the air. They are practically interchangeable.

I found myself straining at several points to figure out just who that guy is in the Channel on whom the camera is focusing: Is he the kid from the first scene we see running down a street avoiding German bullets or the kid we see burying a dead man and stealing his boot in the second? Nolan wants us to view the war from the perspective of characters he doesn't bother to characterize.

By making his dramatis personae so generic, Nolan's *Dunkirk* becomes the story of any battle and every battle—or rather, of any and every retreat from battle with the enemy in pursuit. But the real Dunkirk was anything but generic. Walter Lord's 1982 account, *The Miracle of Dunkirk*, is loaded from first page to last with colorful anecdotes of ordinary seamen and soldiers improvising to keep themselves alive, often in the most comically British of ways. Every bit of human eccentricity in the face of unimaginable peril Lord recounts in his wonderful book actually occurred. Nolan would have you believe the hundreds of thousands of men on that beach were as silent and well behaved as, well, extras in a war movie.

Indeed, if what happened during those days had been a classic retreat with disastrous consequences, the French placename of Dunkerque would not have been supplanted by its English spelling in the history books, Dunkirk would not have become one of the most written-about moments of the Second World War, and the word

SYNCOPY / WARNER BROS.

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Dunkirk would not have been memorable enough to serve as the name of a $150 million major studio release 77 years after the fact.

No, Dunkirk was a singular and strange event. It was at once a horrendous disaster and a breathtaking triumph, a wonder and a tragedy. And the only way to show this to audiences would be to tell it from a more Olympian perspective. Kenneth Branagh plays a British leader on the beach whom the credits name as Commander Bolton. He corresponds to no real-life figure and seems to be in the movie only to provide a few pieces of explanatory detail—so, in the manner of Michael York's *Austin Powers* character, Nolan really ought to have called him Commander Exposition. Branagh practically turns and looks into the camera and tells the audience that 400,000 men are trapped defenseless on the beach. But the occasional shots Nolan provides of the beach from above simply do not capture the astounding masses of men that were actually assembled there—which would have given the viewer a powerful sense of the holocaustal slaughter the Germans might have visited upon them.

That wider storytelling lens would have allowed for depictions of the British and French troops nearby desperately holding the line so that the advancing Germans didn't swamp the beach and massacre the trapped men. It would have taken in the shifting views of the British High Command, which was loath to commit all its resources to save the men at Dunkirk because it needed to preserve the nation's strength for the coming German assault on England. And it would have devoted some time to the perplexing question of why the Germans didn't move heaven and earth to destroy the British Army when they had the chance.

To say the stakes could not have been higher is to understate the case. Western civilization arguably hung in the balance on that beach. The decimation of the first British effort to fight the Germans on the European mainland would have made a second effort unlikely if not impossible—and it was that second effort, after D-Day, that ensured the destruction of the Third Reich.

In *Their Finest Hour*, the 1949 second volume of his war memoir, Churchill recounts the meeting he held in Paris during the Dunkirk crisis with, among others, Marshal Pétain (who would soon surrender France to Germany and serve as Hitler's political lickspittle). Churchill spoke with total seriousness that day of England being overrun by Germany—of being "prepared to wage war from the New World, if through some disaster England herself were laid waste." He went on to envision a similar disaster being visited upon America and—in words that reveal the existential desperation of the time—told the French that "it would be better far that the civilization of Western Europe with all its achievements should come to a tragic but splendid end than that the two great democracies should linger on, stripped of all that made life worth living."

What we cannot fathom today about World War II is that it was a conflict Germany truly could have won. That is why Dunkirk was such a horror. The destruction Germany might have visited upon the British would have knocked them out of the war entirely. In his Periclean speech after the evacuation was completed, Churchill told his nation that it had suffered "a colossal military disaster," and it had—but in experiencing 40,000 casualties instead of 10 times that many, a nation and a civilization had been spared the hangman's noose. It was a national humiliation to have to abandon the continent to Nazi rule, but the process of the British Expeditionary Force's escape demonstrated national reserves of pluck (the "Dunkirk spirit") that gave heart and strength to the five-year effort ahead. Had the worst happened, the words Churchill spoke that will live as long as our English tongue is spoken—"we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender"—could never have been uttered.

It is this, all of this, that Nolan's *Dunkirk* leaves entirely to the side. Instead, it concentrates on only one of the many gobsmacking aspects of the week of May 25, 1940: the participation in the evacuation of hundreds of small boats from all over England summoned into service to help ferry men to larger craft that could not make it near the shallow waters and long sand shelf of the beach.

It was a singular glory of the saga of Dunkirk, to be sure. But even here, by zooming in on one boat (skippered by the glorious Mark Rylance in the movie's only notable performance), Nolan's epic once again fails to capture the sheer scale of the makeshift armada of deliverance—with some 700 watercraft of every size and shape joining 300 Navy vessels, putt-putting their way across the Channel and into the line of fire and then back again.

We do see Branagh smile delightedly as the civilian craft appear, but that is not enough. Since Nolan doesn't show us the mass mobilization of these nonmilitary boats back in England and the stalwart response to the call for aid of those who owned and crewed them, the scene depicting their arrival doesn't have the force it should. In this way, as in others, the intimacy and immediacy Nolan seeks is damaging to his movie's intentions and purposes.

It is difficult to make a great war movie. The larger context I'm talking about here has all too often been reduced on screen to ludicrous scenes between famous actors playing famous generals using pointers to show army movements on wall maps so that we can follow the battle. I sympathize with Nolan's effort to do it all differently and in a new way—it is not as if this very thoughtful and literate filmmaker is unaware of the larger geopolitical issues at play. Several snatches of dialogue (often hard to hear, alas) do suggest he has a true understanding of the civilizational stakes that were on the line at Dunkirk. But in his effort to do justice to the suffering and sacrifice of those men on the beach, Christopher Nolan proved himself unable to do justice to the cause for which they suffered so greatly and for which so many were forced to sacrifice all. ♦

"Drain the Swamp should be changed to Drain the Sewer – it's actually much worse than anyone ever thought, and it begins with the Fake News!"
—Donald Trump via Twitter, July 24

PARODY