

**NORTH KOREA'S
OTHER CHEERLEADERS**
ETHAN EPSTEIN

the weekly

Standard

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How Trump Is Changing the GOP

BY DAVID BYLER

Contents

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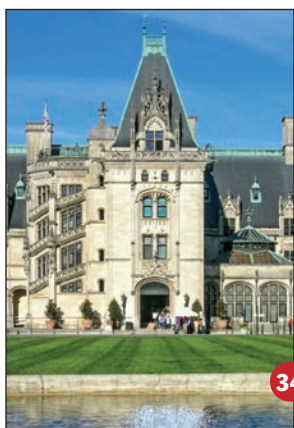
- 2 The Scrapbook *Anglo-American confusion, el Tigre Tony, & more*
- 5 Casual *Andrew Ferguson, feline skeptic*
- 6 Editorials *The Reason Why • Pay Them Less*
- 9 Comment
- The Influencer: Jeff Bell, 1943-2018* BY FRED BARNES
- A retiring senator ponders unretiring* BY STEPHEN F. HAYES
- Prize fight: the Powerball winner's discontent* BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL
- A parade of horrors* BY PHILIP TERZIAN



- ## Articles
- 14 RIP, Fiscal Conservatism BY MICHAEL WARREN & HALEY BYRD
Nobody wants to go after mandatory spending
- 15 Tied Up in Chain Migration BY JOHN MCCORMACK
Trump and Democrats are willing to compromise, so why isn't there a deal?
- 17 The Media Swoon BY ETHAN EPSTEIN
North Korea's other cheerleaders
- 18 Unexpected Dividend BY JAY COST
Workers get more than anticipated from the GOP tax cut



- ## Features
- 20 An Opportunity Lost BY DAVID BYLER
Trump has changed the GOP—but Republicans have also changed Trump
- 26 Not So Fast BY THOMAS JOSCELYN
The danger from ISIS and al Qaeda is still present



- ## Books & Arts
- 30 The Apotheosis of Donald J. Trump BY ERICK W. ERICKSON
What evangelicals gain and lose by doing business with the president
- 34 Building Biltmore BY AMY HENDERSON
The public goods and great beauty that flowed from private fortune
- 36 Marshall Law BY GERALD J. RUSSELLO
The chief justice was a lifelong antagonist of Jefferson
- 38 The Divine (Situational) Comedy BY ALEXI SARGEANT
Ethics in the afterlife on NBC's The Good Place
- 40 Parody *Snowflake jihadists*

Chile Cracks Down on Tony the Tiger

Readers will be aware of the war on junk food. We think, for instance, of former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg’s unsuccessful attempt to ban large soft drinks from the city, the FDA’s ban on trans fats, and the Affordable Care Act’s requirement that fast food chains prominently display calorie information.

THE SCRAPBOOK regards these and related efforts with slight distaste, feeling as we do that government fails to meet so many of its most basic responsibilities that it forfeits the right to tell citizens what they can eat. But it could be worse. Compared to what the Chilean government is doing, as we learned recently from the *New York Times*, the United States is a libertarian paradise. “The Chilean government, facing skyrocketing rates of obesity, is waging war on unhealthy foods with a phalanx of marketing restrictions, mandatory packaging, redesigns and labeling rules aimed at transforming the eating habits of 18 million people.”

Since the law went into effect in 2016, companies like Kellogg have had to remove cartoon characters from cereal boxes, and candy companies have been forbidden from including trinkets with their products. No more Tony the Tiger or Cracker Jack prizes. The law prohibits the sale of “junk food like ice cream,

chocolate and potato chips in Chilean schools.” (THE SCRAPBOOK, incidentally, strongly objects to ice cream being termed “junk food.”) Beginning in 2019, ads for these and simi-



Salvanos, senadores, from these evil cartoon endorsements!

lar items “will be scrubbed entirely from TV, radio, and movie theaters between 6 A.M. and 10 P.M.” Packaged food items now display “black warning logos in the shape of a stop sign” if the items are high in sugar, salt, calories, or saturated fat. Kellogg, PepsiCo, and other companies have raised objections to the law, but lawmakers like Senator Guido Girardi, who calls big food companies “21st-century pedophiles,” aren’t inclined to listen.

The *Times* report, not surprisingly, casts the whole story as a simple case of good versus evil—of earnest and public-spirited public officials “encountering ferocious resistance from food companies eager to protect their profits.”

We don’t pretend to know how serious the Chilean obesity epidemic really is, or whether the animus of Senator Girardi and his allies may be motivated in part by old-fashioned anti-gringoism. Maybe in a decade or so, we’ll discover that Chile’s national congress has helped the country’s people slim down and lead healthier lives. We do wonder, though—whereas the *Times* reporter does not—where it all leads. Once government officials seize authority to tell free citizens what they can and can’t do in matters of strictly individual choice, they’ll be just a little more emboldened to do so again in some other area.

Elsewhere we recently learned that Chile, where consumption of cannabis is illegal, has the highest per capita marijuana use in all of Latin America, and that the national congress is considering a bill that would legalize the use of marijuana for “medical, recreational, or spiritual reasons.” We defer to the wisdom of the Chilean people on this point. We would only say this: You enjoy your pot, and we’ll enjoy our Frosted Flakes. ♦

An Anglo-American Outrage

Our collective descent into ignorance is alarming enough on its own, but when you combine it with a reinvigorated sense of political correctness, the result is a level of outrage that seems to neatly correlate with general stupidity. And so it was when

Jeff Sessions spoke to the National Sheriffs’ Association in Washington on February 12 and said the following: “The office of sheriff is a critical part of the Anglo-American heritage of law enforcement.”

For people with room-temperature IQs, this was the damning proof they had been waiting for. Sessions either outed himself as a racist by using the

term “Anglo-American” or was cynically appealing to racists and white supremacists who keep their dental fillings tuned to the frequency he was broadcasting on.

As it happens, the American legal system is directly descended from the English common law. THE SCRAPBOOK is old enough to remember being taught in junior high that the book

JEFFREY GREENBERG / UIG / GETTY

young Abe Lincoln stayed up late reading by candlelight was William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. This was not mere self-improvement; it was an indispensable part of his legal education—on the American frontier. And Sessions is indisputably correct that the office of sheriff is part of this inheritance as well. (“Sheriff of Nottingham” ring any bells?)

While many of these p.c. controversies are tempests in a social media teapot, this one spilled over into politics in astonishing ways. Here is what Senator Brian Schatz, Hawaii Democrat, had to say about Sessions's remark: “Do you know anyone who says ‘Anglo-American heritage’ in a sentence? What could possibly be the purpose of saying that other than to pit Americans against each other? For the chief law enforcement officer to use a dog whistle like that is appalling.”

What's really appalling here is that Schatz, who is one of only a hundred citizens in this country with the awesome responsibility of confirming federal judges, is wholly ignorant of the most basic terminology and facts underpinning our legal system. The ACLU's Twitter account similarly expressed alarm: “Yes, our Attorney General just said this. Out loud.”

Oddly enough, when another prominent and well-known politician referred to habeas corpus as a “writ that has been in place in the Anglo-American legal system for over 700 years” there was no such outrage. We can safely assume that former constitutional law professor Barack



WHAT HAPPENED to the DINOSAURS...

Obama knows how to use the phrase correctly—he did so multiple times, out loud, over the course of his political career—and no one said boo. And when Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall referred to our “Anglo-American heritage” in the concurring opinion of *Thompson v. Oklahoma*, an important death penalty case, we can safely assume this was not a racist dog whistle.

At the risk of being

Senator Schatz outs himself as a clown.

accused of pitting Americans against each other, we would observe that America is increasingly divided, though not necessarily along moral or class or racial lines. There are those who are literate enough to responsibly discuss politics and those who aren't. And it seems the latter group is getting bigger and louder all the time. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

In this article we locate, interpret, and critique the figure of the “bad” white mother, focusing on the critically acclaimed AMC drama, *Mad Men*. Advancing feminist and



postcolonial approaches to myth, we uncover a prevailing ‘white consciousness’ that relies on racializing logics in, first of all, *Mad Men’s* representations of (white) motherhood through the character of Betty Draper, and second, public discussions of the show in academic and media outlets. Drawing on Black feminist thought, we propose . . .” (“‘Am I a good [white] mother?’ *Mad men*, bad mothers, and post(racial)feminism,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, published online January 30, 2018.) ♦

‘Where Bull— Goes to Die’

THE SCRAPBOOK is pleased to announce that, after a brief hiatus, the Daily Standard Podcast has returned to the digital airwaves at WeeklyStandard.com with a new host, Charlie Sykes. A longtime journalist, author, commentator, and radio host, Charlie will bring decades of experience and insight to our daily podcast.

His goal for the show, he tells us,

is for it to be smart, conservative, and non-tribal. The show, he promises, is where “bull— will go to die.” Each weekday, Charlie will interview WEEKLY STANDARD writers and editors on the constantly changing news of the day as well as leading discussion of the top stories and articles in our magazine and online. Charlie plans as well to interview top newsmakers and lawmakers about the happenings in Congress and the White House.

Go to weeklystandard.com/podcasts to listen to the latest, and subscribe (for free) to the podcast feed on iTunes or Stitcher.

The Outlook for 2018—and Beyond

In between episodes of our podcasts, you will want to tune in to the latest of the Conversations with Bill Kristol (conversationswithbillkristol.org), this one featuring veteran Republican political strategist and commentator Mike Murphy. The main topic is the outlook for the midterm elections and 2020. THE SCRAPBOOK has been a denizen of the D.C. swamp for longer than we care to admit and can vouch for Murphy as one of the greatest talkers and raconteurs we’ve met in politics.

Here’s a sample:

Republicans have done well in the off-year [elections] because our grumpy old retired Army colonels all vote. And the Democrats do well in the presidential years because they get their millennials and poorer voters to show up, etc., etc. So the Democrats have spent fortunes trying to get those presidential-year voters to show up in the off year, and it has almost always failed, despite the mythology of Eric Schmidt and all the magic.

This year, if you look at the special elections, which are a fairly good canary-in-the-cage test, you had that massive turnout. So we got a pile of dead canaries from the first couple of elections. So it is likely that some of these presidential-year Democrats will get engaged and show up, which is a thumb on the scale against us that could be part of the formula to cause us to lose the House.

There’s a lot more in that vein. Do give a listen. ♦

Can’t tell your fake news from your covfeffe?



Keep up! Subscribe today to Michael Warren’s **White House Watch** via the Newsletters page at WeeklyStandard.com!

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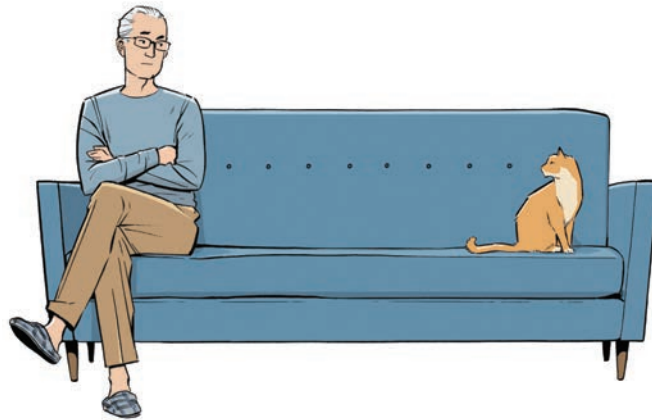
Reigning Cats and Dogs

I write of cats as a dog person. For most of my life, an extreme allergy fueled my aversion to cats in general, but the individuals I got to know didn't help their cause. In college, thanks to a roommate who owned her, I lived with a cat named Sophie. I appreciated Sophie as an aesthetic object: the almond eye, the rounded paw. Her hair was snow-white and chestnut-brown and everywhere—coating the couches, matted deep into the carpeting in clumps, floating as aimless as motes from one piece of clothing to another. She was very elegant and very cunning. She knew I was avoiding her, and she mistook my physical allergy as a sign I didn't like her, which, after she made several public displays of snubbing me, I didn't. I don't like domestic animals who give the high hat.

An air of mutual hostility descended on our house like a fog. Sophie's response was to forgo her litter box and deposit cat-dainty turds in the toes of my house slippers. (She knew, from careful observation, that the first thing I did when I fell out of bed every day was slide into my slippers.) After three or four of these deposits I took evasive action: I hid my slippers. The next day I awoke to find Sophie at my bedroom door, looking nonplussed. With a blissful surge of self-congratulation, I got down my slippers and lumbered into the bathroom to take a shower, as was my morning habit. I removed the slippers and stepped into the tub. My toes sank into another one of Sophie's depos-

its. She knew where I'd been heading and got there first.

My notion of cats was thus fixed for the next 30 years. Then, a few weeks ago, Blossom came to stay—for keeps, it appears, since she hasn't touched off any violent allergic reactions, depriving me of the one excuse I could use to kick her out. It's no advantage to Blossom that I can't



help but compare her to Buster, the dog she has replaced. Buster's dead—dammit—but here in our house he hovers and obtrudes. Though no more than a foot high, he was, in life, a towering figure, setting an example of generosity and enthusiasm that Blossom has completely ignored.

Buster had no elegance; he was pure effusion. He loped and leaped, he panted and pawed, and when you walked in the door after a day at work he reacted as though creation itself had started afresh, opening boundless possibilities for pleasure. Blossom is pure elegance: cool, detached, above passion, proportioned in body and spirit according to some feline ideal. I come home from work and she shows herself, or allows herself to be seen, on her own schedule. If pets consumed tobacco, Buster would be a Swisher Sweets

man. Blossom would smoke Nat Shermans through a diamond-studded cigarette holder, held at an angle, Tallulah Bankhead-style. If they thought of God, Buster would be a Pentecostal. Blossom is a Buddhist.

That air of Eastern mysticism disquiets me; it gives me the creeps. She shimmers about the house in utter silence. I never know where she is. I'll be emptying the dishwasher, say, or plumping an untidy couch pillow, when without a whisper she is suddenly at my elbow. "*And what's that you're doing?*" she asks. "*Not that I care.*" Moving around the house on

one errand or another, I might take a thoughtless step backward, only to bump against her and have to struggle to regain my balance, arms swinging wildly, while she floats away, mission accomplished. It is a typical encounter for us: I look clownish and risk sciatic injury and she escapes wearing her icy dignity like a tiara. Under the same circumstance, Buster would scarcely be

able to contain his mortification.

Blossom shows no signs of wanting to escalate our differences into fully armed conflict, as Sophie did. My hunch is that she doesn't think I'm worth the trouble—so far, anyway. To her rightful owner, a young woman with a generous character, she discloses aspects of herself that have so far been kept from me. I catch them playing, racing around, batting wads of paper back and forth, until Blossom pauses and turns to look at me: "*Is there something I can help you with?*" It may be that sooner or later we will reach an accommodation, so that friendship, or even something more, might take root and flourish. Until then I'm not taking any chances. I look twice when I draw back the shower curtain.

ANDREW FERGUSON

The Reason Why

Electing a billionaire agitator to the presidency may have its advantages. Such a man can break conventions that should long ago have been broken and advance policies that more established politicians might believe in but fear to execute.

But there are prices to pay for electing such a man, too, and one of those is that he will surround himself with people of limited experience and competence. Donald Trump has made some superb appointments to his cabinet—James Mattis at Defense, Scott Pruitt at the EPA—but far too many of his top-ranking staffers are bumbling and incompetents: well-meaning sycophants elevated to positions for which they were ill-prepared. They generate the sort of absurdities and scandals that distract an administration and threaten to wreck it.

Consider the case of Rob Porter. Last week, the directors of the CIA, the FBI, and National Intelligence publicly briefed the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence about global threats to the country—Russian maneuvers against Ukraine and our elections, Chinese intelligence targeting the United States. The national media, though, confined its coverage mostly to a few questions the senators posed to FBI director Christopher Wray about this man Porter and his personal behavior.

Porter was staff secretary to the president, responsible for managing the flow of documents shown to our head of state and to senior White House staff. Many of these documents are classified and contain highly sensitive data; they include, among other things, presidential schedules for the daily security briefings. Those who handle these documents must have virtually unblemished reputations, for the simple reason that they cannot be subject to blackmail. Hence the importance of FBI background checks. Porter's security clearance was a problem for nearly a year. Wray told the Senate committee that his agency had briefed the White House on Porter's background in March, in July, and again last November.

On February 6, the *Daily Mail* published on-the-record allegations from both of Porter's ex-wives that he'd been physically abusive to them. It also reported the open secret that Porter was in a romantic relationship with Hope Hicks, the White House communications director.

The fact that a senior White House staffer was evi-

dently guilty of beating two women would embarrass any president, but it is not the sort of association likely to roil an entire administration and dominate news coverage for a week and more. These things happen. Washington is full of extremely capable people who are nonetheless dogged by the consequences of dreadful impulses. In an ordinary administration, the president's chief of staff would have quietly shown Porter the door months before his demons became the subject of international headlines. High-level politicians cutting off loyal staffers the minute they become

liabilities is a common occurrence in the nation's capital. Ugly, common, and necessary.

This should have happened and indeed nearly did. Last November one of Porter's ex-girlfriends contacted White House counsel Donald McGahn to tell him that the staff secretary had serious problems with anger control. McGahn, who no doubt knew about the FBI briefings on Porter's background, informed him that he should consider moving on. But he did not move on,

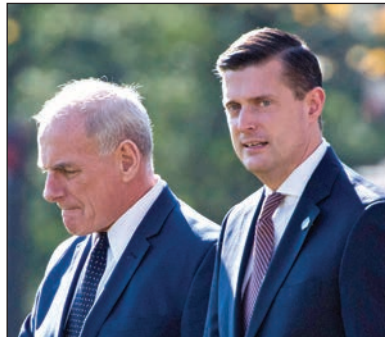
and he was not forced to. The fact that we are living through a period in which almost daily we see successful and famous men lose their positions of eminence as a result of allegations that they debased and dishonored women did not lead senior White House officials to get rid of Porter as quickly and discreetly as possible.

Why did chief of staff John Kelly allow the man to stay? Why was Porter allowed to retain interim security clearance long after top administration officials knew the broad outlines of the staff secretary's reprehensible record? Even after the accusations were published in the *Daily Mail*, both Kelly and the president defended Porter, the chief of staff calling him "a man of true integrity and honor."

Why?

Almost certainly the answer is that Porter was a highly competent worker doing a difficult job in a White House populated by too many hangers-on. Porter, we're left to conclude, was the one guy who could do the job reliably, and Kelly didn't want to lose him. We sympathize with the chief of staff's situation.

Kelly is an accomplished man and an effective chief of staff. But his position is nigh impossible. Scandals like this one spawn new troubles. And so last week White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders found herself offer-



John Kelly and Rob Porter

ing contradictory stories about who knew what when and absurdly trying to blame the whole thing on the White House personnel security office.

All this is why the subject of global threats received almost no attention from the press. We may wish to blame the media, but there is no world in which news outlets will prefer substantive stories about national security to harrowing stories about White House officials resigning as a result of a history of domestic violence. Previous White House operations of both parties have gone long stretches without giving the media any such story to fix on. That Trump's White House habitually generates these stories is a debilitating problem—for the administration and, more important, for the nation. ♦

Pay Them Less

‘D rain the swamp.’ The phrase went from catchy rallying cry to grating cliché in the space of a year. But phrases often become clichés because they signify some important truth. The swamp does, in fact, need draining: Our federal bureaucracy has become so expansive, power-hungry, and unaccountable as to require some traumatic and probably destructive measure to reduce its power and size.

The latest revelation comes from Open the Books, a government transparency watchdog. For the last 11 years, the organization has filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the Office of Personnel Management for the names, titles, agencies, salaries, and bonuses of all federal employees, and then posted this information online. But this year, something shocking happened when they got the data: 254,839 federal salaries, representing over \$20 billion in spending, were redacted from the federal civil service payroll. By comparison, 3,416 salaries were redacted in fiscal year 2016. That's a 7,460 percent increase in redactions.

We are all forbidden from seeing how much one out of every five federal employees is paid. Over 68 federal agencies are now withholding salary information from the public. Most of these agencies have little or nothing to do with national security. That so many federal salaries have gone into hiding is, we suspect, not unrelated to the populist revolt through which the nation is passing.

The average federal bureaucrat makes approximately \$127,000 a year in salary and benefits—compared to an average of \$70,000 in private-sector compensation. Even after controlling for factors such as age, education, experience, race, and gender, the data pretty clearly show federal work-

ers are overpaid. Federal compensation has also risen at a drastically faster rate than private-sector compensation.

Federal salaries started exploding a decade ago, thanks to raises and rule changes under Presidents Bush and Obama. From December 2007 to June 2009, the federal workforce saw a 46 percent increase in employees with salaries over \$100,000, a 119 percent increase in the number making over \$150,000, and a 93 percent increase in the number making in excess of \$170,000. The broader economic climate under which this salary explosion happened makes these numbers even more remarkable. As *USA Today's* Dennis Cauchon pointed out in 2009, the Department of Transportation had only one employee earning a salary better than \$170,000 when the recession started. A year and a half later, 1,690 employees topped 170 grand.

Citizens have a right to know what federal employees are paid. We'd also be entirely justified in demanding that they be paid less.

The whole subject of the civil service deserves to be rethought.

As the Veterans Administration scandal showed, it is nearly impossible to fire unionized federal employees even when their negligence is lethal. A year after the VA scandal broke in 2014, the *New York Times* reported that “at most,

three” people had been fired from their jobs. To its credit, the Trump administration is cleaning house and has fired a further 500 VA employees. Alas, the very recent scandal involving VA secretary David Shulkin's taking a 10-day trip to Europe with his wife on the taxpayers' dime is eroding any goodwill these firings may have generated.

President Trump mentioned civil-service reform in his State of

the Union address. “Tonight,” he said, “I call on the Congress to empower every cabinet secretary with the authority to reward good workers—and to remove federal employees who undermine the public trust or fail the American people.”

Easier said than done. Thanks to civil-service protections passed by Congress decades ago, the president has direct control over just 2 percent of the federal workforce. The constitutionality of these protections is dubious, however. Philip K. Howard has argued that sweeping civil-service reform could be accomplished by executive order.

While the Trump administration needs time to come up with a comprehensive plan for reform, a swift and immediate rebuke is also in order. If acting OPM director Kathleen McGettigan doesn't immediately produce an acceptably transparent account of the federal payroll, there's no reason the president shouldn't replace her with someone who will, and remind these entitled bureaucrats that they are civil servants, not overlords. ♦



David Shulkin

FRED BARNES

The Influencer: Jeff Bell, 1943-2018

When I first encountered Jeff Bell, he was debating Bill Bradley, the Democratic candidate for Senate from New Jersey. Bell was the Republican candidate and the underdog to Bradley, a famous basketball star at Princeton and later for the New York Knicks. It was 1978.

Bell was talking about tolls on a bridge, a tedious subject he managed to make interesting. If the toll was \$5, not many cars would pay to cross the bridge, he said. A \$1 toll, however, would attract so many cars it would earn more money than a toll five times larger.

The toll analogy was Bell's way of justifying tax cuts. They incentivize. They give people and companies more money to spend and invest, produce and create jobs. It was such a simple and compelling argument that after a few debates, Bradley seemed to give up trying to refute it.

Bell won the debates and lost the election. But that's not the end of the tale. In 1986, Bradley was the leading Democrat in shaping and then passing a tax-reform bill that broadened the tax base and cut the top rate on individual income from 50 percent to 28 percent. It was a historic achievement that President Trump's tax bill didn't quite match.

Bradley argued the case for tax reform brilliantly. Had he learned the efficacy of tax cuts from his debates with Bell? I'm not the only one who thinks so. Tax reform consisted of wiping out tax preferences and breaks for special interests to bolster a free-

market economy, a goal Bell and Bradley shared.

Bell was as great an influence on national figures like Ronald Reagan and Jack Kemp as he was a bust at winning elections for himself. He died last week at 74, still focused on shattering impediments to economic freedom.

In the debates with Bradley, Bell would wave a dollar bill. He was promoting a "dollar as good as gold." Indeed, he advocated a gold standard, which would make the Federal Reserve, which he regarded as elitist, an unnecessary relic.

Bell rejected the incremental approach. "He didn't have the patience," his friend David Smick says. He favored the bold play, championing one big issue to revolutionize economic policy and stir the nation. When

he considered running for a House seat in Virginia, an adviser told him he'd have to concentrate on smaller issues like traffic congestion. Bell yawned and declined to run.

He had no interest in the politics of personal advancement. And there was always a moral element to his campaigns. A convert to Catholicism, "he brought so many people closer to God," says his friend Ann Corkery. He opposed abortion and same-sex marriage and said so.

Nor was he eager to get rich, as so many Washington consultants have. When offered a partnership in a new consulting firm, Bell said no. The firm went on to prosper. He published two very good books that generated only modest sales.

After living in Virginia for decades,

Bell returned to New Jersey in 2014 to run for the Senate again. Little statewide fame, much less political clout, lingered from his 1978 race and another in 1982. In that second campaign, the country was in recession and the Reagan tax cut of 1981 with which it was associated hadn't gone into effect. That doomed him.

But the GOP race in 2014 against appointed Democratic senator Cory Booker was wide open. Bell felt there were two ways he could win. One was ousting Booker, the other spurring interest in a gold standard.

He narrowly won a four-way Republican primary and confronted Booker's well-financed campaign with a meager treasury of his own. One potential donor told Bell he would have to listen to his advice first. He recommended the campaign theme be Wall Street vs. Main Street with Bell on Main Street's side. Bell said this was an "interesting idea," then ignored it.

His headquarters was in the lobby of a hotel. Six volunteers sat on sofas and used the hotel's WiFi. Bell's advertising consisted of radio and mail. He appealed by mail for money to air a TV ad and apologized for having to ask.

"Every day people call me and say that I have a great message, a great history and a vision for the future," his appeal said. "I don't disagree, but I tell them TV is expensive. They said put a TV commercial together. People will chip in to help pay for it. . . . I caved in and created a spot. Help me put it on the air." The appeal worked. One ad ran.

Bell sent a final letter just before the election. "I've staked everything on this campaign not because I desire to hold elective office," he wrote, "but because I saw no other way to fix what's wrong with the economy."

How many candidates could honestly say they had no desire to hold office? I can think of only one. ♦



Jeff Bell

Make up your mind already: a retiring senator ponders unretiring

Bob Corker would like you to know that he'll stick around Washington a little bit longer, if you want him to. The Tennessee Republican announced his retirement on September 26, 2017, in a short humblebrag celebrating both the power he'd accumulated and the sacrifices he'd made.

"When I ran for the Senate in 2006, I told people that I couldn't imagine serving for more than two terms. Understandably, as we have gained influence, that decision has become more difficult," Corker declared. "But I have always been drawn to the citizen legislator model, and while I realize it is not for everyone, I believe with the kind of service I provide, it is the right one for me."

That decision apparently became even more difficult for Corker after he made it. So Corker is thinking about reversing himself. Or, more accurately, he's running a public campaign designed to let people know that he's open to reversing himself. At the heart of this effort is the suggestion that while Corker would really prefer to stick to his principled citizen-legislator model, he'd be willing to abandon it in response to a public that demands he continue his selfless service.

"In recent days, people across Tennessee have reached out to Senator Corker with concerns about the outcome of this election because they believe it could determine control of the Senate and the future of our agenda," a Corker spokeswoman told the *New York Times*.

As it happens, one of those encouraging Corker is Tom Ingram, a

"Republican strategist and longtime friend of Mr. Corker." According to the *Times*, Ingram "argued that Republicans could imperil the seat and their [Senate] majority if they do not rally around an incumbent who has already won the state twice."



Senator Bob Corker is thinking about reversing himself. Or, more accurately, he's running a public campaign designed to let people know that he's open to reversing himself.

It's a convenient argument, though not a very compelling one. It was obvious last fall that the outcome in Tennessee could determine control of the Senate. And there is no public polling to suggest that the leading Republican candidate to replace Corker, Representative Marsha Blackburn, is any less likely to win today than she was when Corker made his announcement. In fact, given improvements in President Donald Trump's approval rating and the polling on Republican prospects generally, Blackburn seems more likely to hold the seat today than she was when Corker decided to retire.

Blackburn is running. So if Corker jumps back in, he'll be joining what promises to be a particularly nasty primary, perhaps doing more to imperil the Tennessee seat—and the one-seat Senate majority—than the Republi-

cans who jumped in on the assumption that Corker meant what he said when he announced his retirement.

And there's the lesson in this entire sordid episode: Don't trust Bob Corker.

Even in a town that features a disproportionate number of unprincipled, self-aggrandizing lawmakers, Corker has distinguished himself. In March 2016, well before Donald Trump won the GOP presidential nomination, Corker scolded those who'd expressed concerns about the consequences of a Trump victory. "Here's my message to the Republican party leaders: Focus more on listening to the American people and less on trying to stifle their voice." As the primary continued, Corker said he was "repulsed" by those who spoke of a contested convention and told Paul Ryan and other Trump skeptics to "chill." Corker's early loyalty got him notice, reportedly placing him under consideration to be Trump's secretary of state and even, briefly, his running mate.

Corker remained loyal for much of Trump's first year. But when he announced his retirement, Corker declared, "I believe the most important public service I have to offer our country could well occur over the next 15 months," and a short time later he made clear what he meant, offering some of the harshest criticism the president has received from any elected Republican. Trump's White House was an "adult day care center," Corker said, and the president "would have to concern anyone who cares about our nation." There was "no question" that Trump is "an utterly untruthful president" who tells "provable untruths." Corker told CNN's Manu Raju, "Unfortunately I think world leaders are very aware that much of what he says is untrue. . . . I don't know why he lowers himself to such a low, low standard and debases our country in the way that he does, but he does."

Corker was unequivocal when asked whether he regretted supporting Trump in 2016. "Uh, let's just put it this way: I would not do that again," he said, twice adding there was "no

way” he’d support Trump’s reelection. He wasn’t done:

I think at the end of the day when his term is over, I think the debasing of our nation, the constant non-truth-telling, just the name-calling, I think the debasement of our nation will be what he’ll be remembered most for, and that’s regretful.

Just four months later, the only thing Corker finds “regretful,” apparently, is his own criticism of Trump. Jonathan Martin of the *New York Times* reports that Corker and his allies have been “aggressively working to win over the White House, embarking on what one West Wing official described as a sudden charm offensive,” designed to win back the support of the man Corker disparaged as reckless and untruthful—a stain on the country.

It’s taking nothing away from Martin’s reporting to note that the best part of his detailed account of Corker’s efforts to ingratiate himself once again with Trump came after the last word Martin typed.

In a box at the end of the article labeled “Related Coverage,” the top link carried a headline that could only be funny in the context of Corker’s suddenly rediscovered love for the president.

“Bob Corker Says Trump’s Recklessness Threatens ‘World War III.’” ♦

COMMENT ♦ CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

Prize fight: the Powerball winner’s discontent

An ex-convict named Abraham Shakespeare thought he had hit the big time in 2006. He won \$30 million in the Quick-Pick, one of Florida’s state lottery games. Women flocked to him, including one named Dee Dee Moore, who had a genius for embezzlement. By 2008, Shakespeare was a missing person. Police found his body under a slab of concrete at Dee-Dee’s house in Plant City. By that time, she had run through almost all of his winnings.

It is, notwithstanding the picturesque names and details, a true story. New Hampshire lawyer Steven Gordon shared it in a complaint he brought before a southern New Hampshire court in the last days of January. Gordon’s client is a woman who three weeks earlier had walked into Reed’s Ferry Market in the village of Merrimack and bought the winning ticket for one of the biggest jackpots in the history of American gambling—a \$559 million payoff in the 44-state Powerball lottery.

Winning the Powerball is a 1-in-292,000,000 shot. Jane Doe, as the court documents call her, can hardly be blamed for failing to consider the difficulties that might arise from having half a billion dollars. But they are occurring to her now. One involves being preyed upon by con artists, the way Abraham Shakespeare was. But more poignantly, according to her court complaint, she wants to retain “the freedom to walk into a grocery store or attend public events without being known or targeted as the winner of a half-billion dollars.”

In theory, she has that freedom. New Hampshire has a citizens’ right-

to-know law that makes anything involved with government an open book, and lottery winners are subject to a once-over from the state’s child-support agency, to make sure money is not being pocketed by a deadbeat dad. But there is a way around these things. The winner can establish a trust and collect his winnings in its name. That



Jane Doe, as the court documents call her, can hardly be blamed for failing to consider the difficulties that might arise from having half a billion dollars. But they are occurring to her now.

is what a New Hampshire resident did who won a \$487 million payout from Powerball two years ago.

But this year’s winner made what she now considers “a huge mistake.” As soon as she discovered that her ticket matched the numbers read out on television, she filled out her name and address on the ticket. She now wants to white out that information and replace it with the name of a trust—but that might constitute a defacement of the ticket and invalidate it. The right to make this alteration is what she is petitioning for. And since a winning lottery ticket has replaced the work-based outcomes that used to constitute the American dream, most observers from coast to coast are rooting for her.

But there is a problem. It is the government that is paying out the money,

‘Suffer the flummoxed to come unto me’

Ask Matt Labash

at weeklystandard.com

and the integrity of the government's operations demand a certain transparency. In 1963, when New Hampshire's legislators created the first state lottery (or "sweepstakes," as they called it), they did not do so as a way of providing fun. They set it up to raise revenue.

A constitutionalist will find this one of the saddest stories of the 20th century. State governments' legitimacy has dwindled to the point that they must now use prizes to "trick" the public into parting with the money to support their states. Because well-educated people are less liable to be taken in by tricks (at least of the traditional kind), and because education is correlated with wealth, the system preys on the ignorant and the economically insecure. Lotteries don't just undermine republican virtue, they sow inequality.

But that is not the question before the court. The question is the legal one of whether this woman has a right to anonymity. And the hard-headed answer is that she probably does not. A lottery is a system of taxing and spending. We know from the Supreme Court's big 2012 Obamacare case, *NFIB v. Sibelius*, that taxes can take many forms. A lottery system is less like a tax than Obamacare, in the sense that buying a lottery ticket is voluntary. But it is more like a tax than Obamacare in the sense that it is a payment of money to government out of which the government then funds its activities. This is where the ambiguity in the New Hampshire case arises.

There are two sides to budgeting.

▫ Those who pay into the government till are taxpayers. They are entitled to privacy about their business doings.

▫ Those who accept money from the government are either welfare recipients or contractors. They have some rights to privacy, too, but those rights are overridden by the right of citizens to know what their government is doing and whom it is favoring. There are exceptions for national-security contractors, but even these are controversial.

The New Hampshire winner is, like most of us, playing both roles. In buying her Powerball ticket, she entered

into a relationship analogizable to paying taxes. In collecting the money, she will be doing something analogizable to government contracting. That New Hampshire collects and pays out only a small share of the national Powerball take does not change the principle here.

And the court simply should not allow a legal channel to be opened up through which such large government payments can be made to anonymous parties.

Consider this very case. Steven Gordon, the lawyer representing the lottery winner, is the law partner and longtime political compadre of Bill Shaheen, the husband of New Hampshire senator Jeanne Shaheen. The firm they founded together, Shaheen & Gordon, is to Concord what the Rose Law Firm was to Little Rock—an intersection of politics and business under perpetual surveillance by its political foes. During Jeanne Shaheen's 2014 reelection campaign

against Scott Brown, her office had to answer questions about whether her husband was a participant in the "Economic Stimulus Opportunity Team" that Gordon and others at the firm had set up to steer part of the trillion-dollar Obama administration stimulus to New Hampshire firms. He was not.

But it undermines public confidence to have the best-connected lawyers in a state arguing that people be paid out vast sums of state money in an untraceable way. Funneling the payment through a trust does nothing to change that. The hundreds of millions of dollars that Gordon's client has just won is what state lottery commissioner Charlie McIntyre once, in a boastful mood, called "life-altering money." The lady has decided she does not want her life altered. God bless her. The problem is not that her wish is unreasonable—it is that it would give the government a dangerous power to defraud. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PHILIP TERZIAN

A parade of horrors: Trump makes his critics look foolish—again

Say what you will about Donald Trump's intellectual acumen, but he does have a certain flair for drawing attention in directions he desires—or better yet, prompting his detractors to say things he wants them to say. This may not be "genius" in the usual sense of a much-abused term, but it's a political talent of a very high order—especially impressive in a president whose political wounds tend to be self-inflicted.

The latest case in point: his suggestion that the annual Bastille Day parade in Paris—featuring troops on the march and mechanized hardware—has inspired him to sponsor a similar event here in Washington.

The reaction to this bright idea was instantaneous and revealing. People who have a high regard for American

armed forces (among whom I would count myself) were favorably disposed to the idea, although not fervently so. But the Resistance was apoplectic: Military parades only take place in the event of a victory, it was argued; and in any case, throngs of soldiers and weaponry processing down the boulevard are familiar sights in Beijing and Moscow but not in Washington.

More revealing still, people who ought to know better—that is to say, Democratic members of the House and Senate—joined in the swelling chorus of derision, citing budgetary costs, or unseemly displays of martial spirit, or, especially, a spectacle of armed might consciously intended to acclaim Trump.

Here was that tactical skill I mentioned earlier. You would think that

Democrats, who have labored mightily to overcome their post-Vietnam status as the anti-military party, would avoid the appearance of hostility or petty condescension toward a celebration of our men and women in uniform—especially as those men and women, since 1973, have volunteered to place themselves in harm’s way to protect us. But you would be wrong. And the television pundit Rachel Maddow captured their tone:

There’s no law against parading your military. . . . But through American eyes, this is a little weird, right? If this gives you the willies to look at, it’s because it’s supposed to. This is an unabashed, uncomplicated, undisguised display of military prowess.

To which, I suspect, a comfortable majority of Americans might respond: So what?

Now I would be the first to concede that ceremonial displays of “military prowess” are not characteristically American. We have a long tradition of civilian supremacy and strict separation of barracks and state. Yes, military parades featuring goose-stepping troops, tanks, artillery pieces, even missiles were features of the pageantry of Nazi Germany and, later, Soviet Russia. Indeed, they are just about the only image that comes to mind when Americans think of Kim Jong-un’s North Korea.

But Trump was inspired not by what he saw in Pyongyang but in Paris, where Bastille Day commemorates that country’s revolution. Even the British—who have a mildly irreverent attitude toward their army that would shock most Americans—gather annually in London to watch the monarch review her infantry regiments.

For that matter, the record of American military demonstrations is curiously mixed. For most of our national life we have had neither conscription nor a standing army of any great size; but the 19th century—when America was neither a world power nor espe-

cially enamored of professional armed services—was a golden age of martial pageantry in the land.

There was, of course, an abundance of “preparedness” marches before and during the First World War and ticker-tape parades in the great metropolises after World War II. But in the decades following 1945—when the United States *did*, in fact, become a world power, dominated the Cold War struggle against communism, and maintained a draft—mass military displays, certainly after the Korean armi-



Can any celebration of U.S. armed forces be successfully separated from their (temporary) commander in chief? The answer, unfortunately, appears to be that it cannot.

stice and Vietnam, were practically unknown, even taboo.

This particular drought ended in 1991, when George H. W. Bush sponsored a comparatively modest victory parade in Washington at the end of the first Persian Gulf war. By then, however, the notion of a tribute to soldiers in review had been complicated by partisan politics: The president was remarkably popular at the time of the parade, but while the U.N.-sanctioned war to punish Saddam Hussein’s

aggression was undoubtedly won, it was a victory complicated by notions—limited objectives, no-blood-for-oil, a multilateral alliance featuring Arab monarchies—that made it “Bush’s war” as much as an American victory.

Which raises an interesting question: Can any celebration of U.S. armed forces be successfully separated from their (temporary) commander in chief? And the answer, unfortunately, appears to be that it cannot—for proof of which we are once again indebted to Rachel Maddow. For just seven years ago, when Barack Obama was in the White House, her attitude toward the prospect of a military parade was rather different from today: “How long do we wait,” she asked then, “to have some showing of national appreciation for the people who have fought the long, long Iraq war on our behalf?”

In that sense, Obama’s successor has a point that makes his critics seem especially churlish. He’s the president and entitled to take the salute on the reviewing stand. But it’s not Donald Trump who will be marching; it’s the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines—male and female, gay and straight, overstretched and uncomplicating—who, in a dangerous two decades, have overcome the Taliban, ousted Saddam and crushed his predatory forces, fought the war on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan, crippled al Qaeda, beaten back Obama’s “junior-varsity” Islamic State, and, above all, prevented any repetition of 9/11.

Parades, to be sure, are not to everybody’s taste. But of all the things a president can do with armed forces, a single day of sympathetic pageantry seems a Good Thing. ♦

Worth Repeating from **WeeklyStandard.com**:

‘One of our very real crises of the day is that every crisis becomes the crisis of the day, or more likely, the crisis of the news cycle, which no longer even lasts for an entire day. And what we are losing, with the pervasiveness of our outrage, is the ability to distinguish between manufactured outrages and real ones.’

—Matt Labash, *‘Don’t Care Less, Care About What Matters’*

RIP, Fiscal Conservatism

Nobody wants to go after mandatory spending.

BY MICHAEL WARREN & HALEY BYRD

Paul Ryan, of all people, was in a defensive posture about his commitment to fiscal discipline. Speaking on February 13 to Maria Bartiromo of the Fox Business Network, the speaker of the House insisted that the two-year budget deal Republicans in Congress had just brokered was a necessary compromise with spend-happy Democrats. “We had to give to get,” Ryan explained. “So we had to do some domestic spending that the Democrats wanted so that we could get our defense spending. We got a lot of the spending cuts that we wanted that they didn’t want either. So yes, this was a bipartisan compromise. You don’t get everything you want.”

It’s a reasonable explanation. Increasing defense spending was a major GOP goal. The narrow Republican majority in the Senate meant dealing with Democrats was inevitable. And besides, what threatens the federal government’s solvency isn’t really discretionary spending, domestic or defense.

“At the end of the day, I’m the same old guy,” he told Bartiromo. “We’re doing the same old thing in the House, which is that we’ve got to have entitlement reform, and that is why we keep pushing for our health-care reform, that’s why we keep pushing for entitlement reform. Baby boomers are retiring, and we’re not ready for them.”

Ryan’s recommitment to fiscal discipline came just two weeks after Donald Trump delivered a State of the Union address in which neither

the country’s \$20 trillion debt nor the government’s trillion-dollar budget deficit earned a mention. It was one day after the White House released a \$4.4 trillion budget proposal that made cuts but no reforms to Medicare, the entitlement program that most threatens our solvency. And it was in the middle of a week in which



the president began touting an infrastructure proposal that includes \$200 billion in new federal dollars.

The administration’s rollout of its infrastructure plan was a good indication of where the party of cutting spending has moved in the Trump era. The White House calls the spending an “investment,” which would, Keynesian-style, create jobs for Americans. And while the official goal is to spark more than \$1 trillion in additional state, local, and private infrastructure spending, Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao said the federal government’s \$200 billion was a “minimum.” White House officials confirmed to us that the president is willing to negotiate on that number.

Congressional Republicans don’t

sound particularly eager to put Trump’s proposal into law. “Oh, you know I don’t know the answer to that,” Texas’s John Cornyn, the number two Republican in the Senate, said when asked which house of Congress will be taking the lead on infrastructure. “I guess we’ll both do our thing and try to meet in the middle.” Some GOP lawmakers are concerned about the plan’s price tag. “The challenge is always the pay-fors, trying to find it,” Jason Lewis of Minnesota, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, says of Trump’s proposal. “But I’m focused on infrastructure that spawns productivity, not just a stimulus plan. And that’s a crucial difference.”

House majority leader Kevin McCarthy, however, was effusive in his praise of the plan, saying “we must invest in America” in a statement. “The president’s bold plan would improve American safety, make our economy more efficient, and restore and create pieces of civic engineering that our country can be proud of.” Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell simply ignored the spending component of the plan in a vague statement of support, as did Paul Ryan.

More alarming for any deficit hawks left on the Hill was the speaker’s assessment of President Trump’s budget. Ryan called the document, which neither balances the budget nor addresses entitlement reform, a “thoughtful, detailed, and responsible blueprint for achieving our shared agenda.” The next morning, with Bartiromo pressing him on the subject, Ryan argued the White House had only put out a “discretionary spending budget.” “This wasn’t a full macro budget,” he said. “No two ways about it,” he continued. “We have to go after mandatory.”

Mick Mulvaney, Trump’s director of the Office of Management and Budget, was certainly in agreement last May about the only path to a balanced budget: “It’ll be very difficult in the future to do that because of the role that [entitlement] programs play in our future spending.”

BRITT SPENCER

Michael Warren is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD. Haley Byrd is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, asked about Ryan's call to "go after" mandatory spending, told us, "I know the president certainly would like to reduce the deficit, and it's one of the reasons that his budget, this budget, reduced the deficit by \$3 trillion, which is one of the largest in history. And he's going to continue to look for ways to do that."

Yet the truth is that the president isn't just uninterested in cutting deficits by reforming entitlements, he's actively opposed to the idea. Years before he ran for president, Trump was already telling conservative audiences that changes to Social Security and Medicare were political losers. "As Republicans, if you think you are going to change very substantially for the worse Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security in any substantial way, and at the same time you think you are going to win elections, it just really is not going to happen," he said at the Conservative Political Action Conference in 2013. Three years later, in the midst of the Republican primaries, Trump told an Illinois radio host that Paul Ryan "wants to knock out Social Security, knock it down, wants to knock Medicare way down." The future GOP nominee continued:

Number one, you're going to lose the election if you do that. . . . I want to keep it. These people have been making payments for their whole lives. I want to keep Social Security intact. I want to get rid of waste, fraud, and abuse. You know, I want to do a lot of things to it that are going to make it much better, actually. But I'm not going to cut it, and I'm not going to raise ages and I'm not going to do all of the other things they want to do, but they really want to cut it and they want to cut it very substantially, the Republicans, and I'm not going to do that.

With definitive statements like that from the party's leader, is fiscal conservatism effectively dead? The most ardent budget hawks of the House Freedom Caucus don't sound optimistic. "It's on life support," says Arizona congressman Andy Biggs. Another Freedom Caucus member, Warren Davidson of Ohio, said "a

lot of us were really stunned that our party, a party that has for a long time represented fiscal discipline, would even be voting" for the recent budget deal. Kentucky senator Rand Paul was so infuriated by the budget agreement, he delayed the Senate's vote on the package, triggering a brief government shutdown. "Are we to be conservative all the time or only when we're in the minority?" Paul asked in a floor speech.

But Ohio senator Rob Portman, who wrote balanced budgets as the director of the Office of Management and Budget under George W. Bush, disagrees that his party has lost the mantle of fiscal conservatism. Portman, who voted for the February 9

deal that scrapped budget caps and authorized \$300 billion in new discretionary funding, counters criticism of that agreement by pointing to the White House's own budget proposal. "The president also just sent up a budget that has lots of cuts in it on the domestic side," says Portman.

Others are more willing to admit this White House has done little to curb deficits. "To date, President Trump has talked financial responsibility," says Alabama's Mo Brooks, another Freedom Caucus member. "I yearn for the day when he exercises his veto power to make it happen." Of his party's concern for reining in federal spending, Brooks says he is "hopeful that, like a phoenix, it will rise again." ♦

Tied Up in Chain Migration

Trump and Democrats are willing to compromise, so why isn't there a deal? **BY JOHN McCORMACK**

There's been a lot of rancor in Washington over immigration this past month—you may recall President Trump's concern about immigrants from s—hole countries, the ensuing s—storm in the media, and the less-memorable government shutdown. Four separate immigration bills were shot down in the Senate on February 15. Yet on another level, there is a surprising degree of agreement on immigration policy.

President Trump has agreed to provide amnesty, including a path to citizenship, to 1.8 million immigrants who entered the country illegally as minors—more than double the number of people granted temporary work permits under Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Trump's concession on a

path to citizenship has rankled some conservatives in Congress like Texas senator Ted Cruz.

In exchange, Trump wants \$25 billion for "border security" (aka "the wall"), and an increasing number of Democrats have said they'd concede border funding in order to protect the so-called "Dreamers." "I'll take a bucket, take bricks, and start building it myself," Congressman Luis Gutiérrez of Illinois told reporters on January 20.

So if Democrats say they're willing to let Trump fulfill one of his biggest campaign promises, and Trump is willing to concede one of the Democrats' top priorities on immigration, why isn't there a deal?

A big part of the answer is chain migration. One condition of the White House plan is that legal immigrants would only be able to sponsor their spouses and minor-age children.

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Under current law, they may sponsor their parents and siblings, which creates a “chain” that can lead to the aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. of the original immigrant also entering this country legally. The Trump proposal—which would grandfather in people who have already applied under the chain-migration rules—would cut overall legal immigration numbers in half once the chain-migration backlog (applying often involves a wait of years) has been cleared, according to the libertarian Cato Institute. (Another part of the White House proposal is an end to the diversity lottery visas, but that’s a much smaller change than curtailing chain migration.)

Many Democrats portray Trump’s demand to limit chain migration as racist because it would eventually reduce legal immigration from places like Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Chuck Schumer rejected the White House proposal immediately. One immigrant-rights group called it a “white supremacist ransom note.” Democratic representative Michelle Lujan Grisham of New Mexico said: “The White House is using Dreamers to mask their underlying xenophobic, isolationist, and un-American policies, which will harm millions of immigrants living in the United States and millions of others who want to legally immigrate and contribute to our country.”

But the White House proposal struck some liberals as a politically savvy move. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Edsall titled a February 1 column “Trump Has Got Democrats Right Where He Wants Them.” Princeton political scientist Nolan McCarty told Edsall: “Blocking [the White House plan] would allow the Trump administration to suggest that the Democrats were willing to trade Dreamers for ‘lottery’ and ‘chain’ migration.”

How committed is Trump to curtailing chain migration? It’s hard to know given his shifting comments. On January 9, he suggested he’d sign whatever deal Congress came up with.

But then there was the infamous January 11 Oval Office meeting in which Trump trashed immigrants from “s—hole countries.” On January 25, the White House unveiled its plan, and Trump outlined it in detail in his State of the Union address.

What is equally unclear is why Democrats have decided to make chain migration a sacrosanct issue. As the *New York Times*’s Linda Qiu



New U.S. citizens watch a congratulatory video from President Trump at a naturalization ceremony in New York City, February 2.

pointed out on January 11, the 2013 “Gang of 8” immigration bill sharply curtailed chain migration. “In 2013,” she wrote, “the Senate passed a bill that also eliminated visas for siblings and married sons and daughters over 31, and instead established a point-based system for their immigration. No Democrat voted against it.”

The Gang of 8 bill, though, was part of a reform that increased overall immigration numbers and amnestied all 11 million illegal immigrants already in the United States. And as the Senate debated immigration last week, Democrats insisted that the issue of family-based migration could only be addressed in a comprehensive bill. “We did it in comprehensive immigration reform once, we can do it there again,” Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer said on February 13. “But to put that as part of the mix here makes no sense.”

“In the Gang of 8 bill, we took family visas from 75 percent of the total down to 50 percent of the total,” notes Arizona GOP senator Jeff Flake, a member of the Gang of 8. “We did that by not allowing adult siblings to

be sponsored. We still allowed parents to be sponsored.”

“The way the White House views it, it’s not an equivalent trade” providing a path to citizenship for 1.8 million people in exchange for \$25 billion in border funding, Flake says. The White House’s position, he goes on, is that “as soon as you involve a path to citizenship, then that triggers a need to change, you know, family reunification or chain migration, and therein lies the rub.”

On February 14, eight Republican senators and seven Democrats unveiled a bill that included amnesty for the Dreamers and \$25 billion for border security, and stipulated that the parents of Dreamers could not get citizenship because of the legal status of their children. But it made no other changes to chain migration and kept the diversity lottery visa program.

The bill got 54 votes on February 15—six short of the 60 needed to advance in the Senate. Only 39 senators voted for Trump’s plan, which was sponsored by Iowa senator Chuck Grassley. “If a solution is developed in the future that can pass both the House and the Senate and be signed into law by the president, it should be considered,” Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell said after both measures failed. “But for that to happen, Democrats will need to take a second look at these core elements of necessary reform.”

If Democrats’ main objection to the White House plan is that it would eventually reduce legal immigration numbers, there would seem to be a fairly obvious compromise: Keep immigration numbers about the same, but curtail chain migration and move toward a merit-based or employment-based system. The Cato Institute’s Alex Nowrasteh, who favors a more permissive immigration policy, says that the White House proposal was never “very serious” because it will “drastically cut family-sponsored immigration at some point in the future” when the chain migration backlog is cleared. But “if [family-based] visas were, say, put into

JOHN MOORE / GETTY

a brand new merit-based system,” says Nowrasteh, “then I think that would be a fine compromise and trade.”

“A lot of Democrats voted for the Gang of 8 bill, and I’m not sure they wouldn’t go for one that didn’t allow parents as long as legal immigration ticked up,” Flake said on February 8.

Asked how such a deal would fly with immigration restrictionists, the Center for Immigration Studies’s Mark Krikorian says: “I don’t know. Probably not. But I can’t speak for everybody.”

Krikorian, who wants a more restrictive immigration policy, says that the White House has privately portrayed its plan as Trump’s “final offer” and not an opening bid in a negotiation. But Trump has not publicly said that. “The nightmare scenario for immigration restrictionists is that the president is so desperate to be able to say he got the wall built that he would be willing to amnesty the DACAs in exchange for nothing but wall funding,” Krikorian says. But he thinks the president is now dug in on curtailing chain migration: “I’m increasingly of the opinion that nothing’s going to happen. I don’t see how the Democrats could agree to the least the president could accept.”

Krikorian also suggests Democrats may not feel any pressure to compromise on chain migration for two reasons. One, “they don’t believe the president will actually pull the trigger” and begin to target people covered by DACA for deportation when their permits start to expire likely sometime this spring or summer. And two, Democrats don’t want to lose the leverage the Dreamer issue provides to enact a broader amnesty. Another issue for Democrats is whether they could convince their own voters a compromise they made with Trump was a good thing.

Who’s to blame for this impasse—the White House for prioritizing curtailing chain migration over “the wall” or Democrats for prioritizing some of the relatives of future legal immigrants over Dreamers? It’s a question that may ultimately have to be decided by the voters. ♦

The Media Swoon

North Korea’s other cheerleaders.

BY ETHAN EPSTEIN

Speaking in Japan a couple of days before the Pyeongchang Olympics began, Vice President Mike Pence delivered a welcome message: “We will not allow North Korean propaganda to hijack the message and imagery of the Olympic Games,” he said. Unfortunately, Pence was not doing double duty as an assignment editor at CNN or the *Washington Post*.

In the first few days of the competition, the Pyeongchang Olympics really did, in many ways, morph into the Pyongyang Olympics. “Hijack” is precisely the word for what happened. These Olympics should have been a celebration of South Korea’s titanic achievements since the Korean War. The country was utterly devastated in that brutal conflict yet in subsequent decades went on to become one of the world’s technological, economic, and cultural powerhouses. It peacefully transitioned from military dictatorship to democracy, giving the lie to the Beijing-propagated notion that societies with roots in Confucianism are somehow unsuited to democracy.

That story went largely untold, though, because of North Korea’s decision to send cheerleaders, field a joint women’s hockey team with the South, and dispatch two top officials to the games: the nominal head of state of the non-democratic, non-republican, and anti-people Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 90-year-old Kim Yong-nam, and Kim Yo-jong, who heads up the propaganda apparatus of the regime. Both are sanctioned by the Treasury Department for their roles in

the grotesque human rights abuses in their country. And Kim Yo-jong happens to be the younger sister of dictator Kim Jong-un. She is accused by many critics of being “complicit” in the North’s human rights abuses. But that’s actually a euphemism—Kim is an active agent and instigator of them.

North Korea’s decision to join the games was likely a sign of weakness and fear: Made nervous by the ever-strengthening sanctions and the isolation of the country, the decidedly abnormal regime in Pyongyang wanted to appear normal to the outside world; to bolster its “brand,” in market-speak. Many in the U.S. media were all too happy to help.

CNN led the way. In the opening days of the games, the television network declared that Kim Yo-jong was “stealing the show at the Winter Olympics.”

In an article that did not once mention the atrocities that Kim is accused of propagating (and that, in a failure of basic journalism, did not even mention that she is sanctioned by the United States), CNN journalists wrote, “If ‘diplomatic dance’ were an event at the Winter Olympics, Kim Jong Un’s younger sister would be favored to win gold. With a smile, a handshake and a warm message in South Korea’s presidential guest book, Kim Yo Jong has struck a chord with the public just one day into the PyeongChang Games.” Kim’s “warm message,” by the way, was anything but: She called for “unification” of the Korean peninsula, which in the terms of her regime means taking over the South. Apparently the three CNN reporters whose bylines appeared over the article—none of whom have any expertise in Korea—were unable to decode the fairly blatant message.



Kim Yo-jong

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PATRICK SEMANSKY / AFP / GETTY

A *Washington Post* article called the dictator's sister the "Ivanka Trump" of North Korea. Yahoo News gushed over "North Korea's political princess." Another, truly perverse, CNN article, citing a "senior diplomatic source close to North Korea," accused Mike Pence of having missed an "opportunity" at the games. "The senior diplomatic source said Pence 'degraded the image of the United States as a superpower' by meeting with North Korean defectors along with Otto Warmbier's father, and by speaking strongly against North Korea on multiple occasions," CNN said. Otto Warmbier was the American college student who died six days after being repatriated in a coma from North Korea, where U.S. officials believe he was beaten during more than a year of unjust imprisonment.

On one level, all this fawning over North Korea's charnel house regime can be chalked up to nothing so much as the parochialism of journalists who wrongly imagine themselves to be cosmopolitan: Hardly conversant in the intricacies of Korean history, reporters airlifted into Pyeongchang (or at home watching on television) grafted their own partisan rooting interests onto an extraordinarily delicate and complicated situation. Kim was mean to Pence; therefore Kim is part of the Resistance! The "Ivanka Trump" line is telling in this regard. Metaphors can be useful, yes—but they can also reveal a poverty of understanding. The North Korean regime knows no parallel anywhere on Earth. Likening Kim to Ivanka obscures that fact.

The swooning came in for criticism, largely on Twitter, and spurred equally heated defenses. A *New York Times* blogger, Max Fisher, accused those who denounced the media's flattery of Kim Yo-jong of engaging in "virtue-signaling." As if it were inconceivable that one could sincerely be upset by the glorification of a regime that's killed millions.

Other defenders of the swooning took a more sophisticated tack. They said the media were simply relaying facts: that North Korea's "charm offensive" had worked. This was the line that *Washington Post* blogger



The North Korean cheerleaders

Daniel Drezner took. But the media were enthusiastic partners in the charm offensive, not refereeing it from the sidelines. When CNN presents Kim Yo-jong as a glamorous political figure, it doesn't just reflect reality; it creates it.

While the U.S. media were taken in by the North's propaganda, the South Korean media and public decidedly were not. South Korea's still highly influential leading dailies flayed President Moon Jae-in for his apparent acquiescence in this

charade. Moon's approval rating fell by around 10 points when the decision to field a joint hockey team was announced. Two-thirds of South Koreans polled, meanwhile, said they didn't believe that the North's charm offensive meant that the regime's attitude had changed; fully 90 percent expected the nuclear program to remain. Indeed, a mere 6 percent professed to believe that the North would give up its arsenal. Even a memorandum of understanding put out by the South's ministry of unification admitted, "Although many Koreans are welcoming North Korea's participation in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, there are also significant criticism and concerns both domestically and internationally."

As usual, the people we did not hear from were the North Koreans, trapped and silenced by the thuggish regime that controls them—just as the fabulous and glamorous Kim Yo-jong wants them to be. ♦

Unexpected Dividend

Workers get more than anticipated from the GOP tax cut. BY JAY COST

Contrary to the dire warnings of Democrats, Republican-backed tax reform has not brought about the end of the republic. Instead, most voters are discovering that their take home pay is on the rise, as the government is withholding less from working Americans.

Even better, corporations—flush with cash from tax reform—are sharing the bounty with their employees. Strategas, a global institutional brokerage and advisory firm, estimates that more than 300 companies have announced benefits for more than 3 million employees, including

\$3 billion in bonuses. That includes companies as varied as Anthem, a health-insurance company, Chipotle, a Mexican-themed chain restaurant, and tech giants Apple and AT&T. Corporations are also upping their investments in their domestic endeavors, to the tune of \$130 billion to date.

This is good news for the economy and a welcome relief for the Republican party—and not just for the obvious reason that the GOP can take sole credit for tax reform. For over 100 years, the Republican party has been identified as the party of business. The more Americans gain confidence that the success of businesses will be good for their own bottom lines, the more persuasive an argument

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ROBERTO SCHMIDT / AFP / GETTY

the GOP can make to the electorate.

Founded in the 1850s to halt the spread of slavery, the Republican party achieved its objectives, and more, during the Civil War. A victim of its own success, the party did not have an ideological *raison d'être* that united all factions thereafter.

Eventually, the party came to represent the interests of American businesses. It found itself the heir to the view articulated long before by Alexander Hamilton in his time as secretary of the Treasury. Hamilton believed that jump-starting commerce, finance, and manufacturing—via policies that favored the moneyed interests in the short term—would eventually help all Americans, by creating a more diversified economy that facilitated general prosperity. Hamilton had mostly been forgotten by subsequent generations, under the sway of Jeffersonian and Jacksonian ideologies, but by the end of the 19th century he seemed the most prescient of the Founding Fathers, at least for pro-business Republicans. Henry Cabot Lodge Sr., who went on to become the leader of the Senate GOP, wrote a biography of Hamilton in 1882—and in so doing captured the ideological spirit of his party.

Pro-business Hamiltonianism was not sufficient to build an electoral majority, so Republicans joined it with other issues, like generous pensions for Union veterans and a commitment to Protestant morality against Catholic immigrants. Pro-industrial policies were also marketed as good for workers, the protective tariff in particular. Republicans argued that high taxes on imports kept wages for workers high. William McKinley's campaign marketed this as "the full dinner pail" in the 1896 presidential election.

Until the Great Depression, Republicans were often able to hold their own with workers in the big cities because of the argument that what was good for business was good for the people. As Calvin Coolidge put it in 1925:

[T]he chief business of the American people is business. They are profoundly concerned with producing, buying, selling, investing and

prospering in the world. . . . Wealth is the product of industry, ambition, character and untiring effort. In all experience, the accumulation of wealth means the multiplication of schools, the increase of knowledge, the dissemination of intelligence, the encouragement of science, the broadening of outlook, the expansion of liberties, the widening of culture.

Of course, the salability of this view is highly dependent on how the economy is doing, which is a big reason the GOP's reputation collapsed during the Great Depression. Corporate greed and irresponsibility were



thought to have brought on economic carnage, and protective tariffs seemed to worsen the crisis. Progressives advocated regulation and labor unions to spread the wealth, and voters were prepared to try a more oppositional attitude toward corporate America.

The next Republican leader to argue successfully for the "full dinner pail" was Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. By that point, the main policy lever was not tariffs but income taxes. Reagan proposed slashing taxes on capital owners as a way to stimulate economic growth, and though liberals decried this as "trickle-down economics," it seemed to work. Economic growth returned in 1982 and continued more or less unabated until the Great Recession of 2008.

That economic collapse presented

a profound challenge for the ancient Republican ideology. It was not simply that once again a Republican president was in office when the crisis began. But more broadly, corporate greed and recklessness seemed to be the cause of the downturn. Worse, the slow recovery, particularly in wages, did not pair well with a booming stock market and corporate cash-hoarding. In 2004, Gallup found that 53 percent of Americans had a great deal of confidence in banks, the financial heart of American capitalism. But by 2012, that number had collapsed to 21 percent. All of this weakened the GOP case that the success of business was good for all Americans. In 2012 Mitt Romney pulled out the old Republican playbook, calling for greater support of job creators. But the "full dinner pail" seemed awfully empty that year.

Little wonder that last year voters doubted they would see many gains from Republican tax cuts. That old Coolidge sentiment—that the business of America is business—seemed outmoded and inapt for America in 2017. And though the GOP has enjoyed enormous political success over the last decade or so, the American people didn't necessarily buy the core economic argument of the party.

This is why these bonuses and investments are doubly good political news for the Republican party. It is not simply that voters will credit Republicans for their greater take-home pay, it is also that they will begin, once again, seeing the success of corporate America as part and parcel of their own rising fortunes. The more voters perceive a connection between business success and their own personal success, the greater resonance the GOP message will have for them politically.

The smart play for Republicans moving forward is to reinforce the connection between business and the people. Tax reform was a good first step, but education should also be a priority of the GOP. Enabling people to acquire skills that businesses demand will forge a connection between corporate American and average voters, helping boost the GOP's standing in the long term. ♦

An Opportunity Lost

Trump has changed the way the GOP thinks, looks, and talks—but Republicans have also changed Trump

BY DAVID BYLER

Most Americans have probably heard the parable of the blind men and the elephant. There are different versions of the story, but the basic idea is that a group of blind men encounter an elephant, and they each touch different parts of it. One man feels the tail, another the leg, another the ear, and so on. They each come away with a true view of what an elephant is like, but it's an incomplete view.

There's more than one way to think about this story—some see it as a metaphor for the monotheistic religions and God, others simply see it as an illustration of how all of our perspectives are limited—but it works surprisingly well as a political metaphor. The elephant right now is (obviously) the Trump-era GOP, and the blind men are the analysts, reporters, and researchers like myself trying to understand it.

For the last two and a half years, we have tried a variety of tools—polls, analysis of legislation, interviews with everyone from voters to top Republicans, statistical analysis of election results, and combinations of these tools—to get a handle on the GOP and how Trump has and hasn't changed the party. Each of the approaches is helpful, but none tells the full story. And there are the related questions of who Republicans are, what they believe, and what they do. All together these might give us a better sense of exactly how much the president has changed the party.

THE CHICKEN AND THE EGG

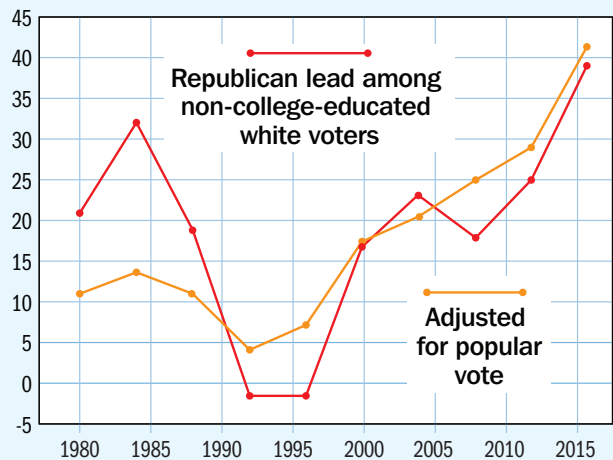
On the morning after the 2016 election, many Republicans woke up to a political party they didn't recognize. Traditionally Republican suburbanites had fled, white blue-collar Democrats had hopped aboard, and a former reality-TV star from the party's populist wing was the most powerful Republican (and person) in the world. It would be easy to look at what

happened and conclude that Trump had reshaped the party. But an examination of historical data shows that Trump wasn't just a cause of the demographic—and by extension, ideological—changes in the party, he was also an effect.

To see this, we need to rewind to 1992. That year, Bill Clinton won a three-way presidential race against Ross Perot and George H.W. Bush partially by posting a solid showing among blue-collar white voters. According to exit polls, Clinton won among whites without a college degree in 1992 and 1996. But in the elections since, Republicans have steadily gained strength among working-class whites.

A Growing GOP Edge

White, non-college-educated vote in presidential elections



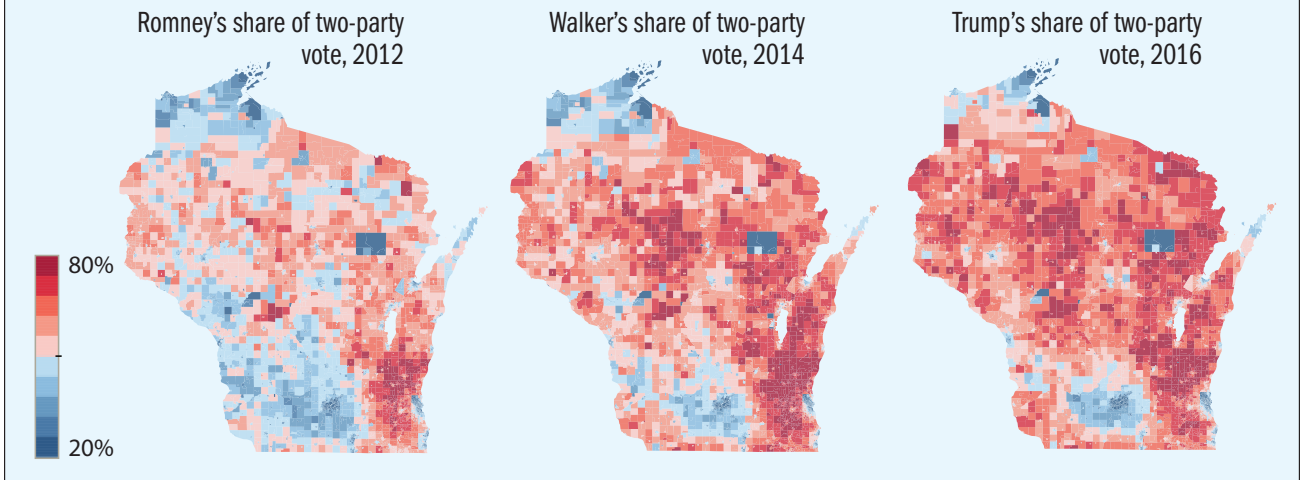
SOURCE: *New York Times* exit polling

The chart above shows two trends. The blue trend is simply the Republican candidate's win margin among white voters without a college degree from 1980 to 2016. Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush showed some strength with non-college educated voters in their landslide 1980, 1984, and 1988 victories, but Bill Clinton was able to win some back and edge out both Bush and Bob Dole with that group.

The trend is a bit noisy after that, but when you correct for the national popular vote (that is, subtract out the Republican margin of victory or defeat in the popular

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Wisconsin as a test case



vote), it becomes clearer (the orange line). Republicans have been gaining ground with working-class whites for 20 years. Exit polls have their issues, but the academic American National Election Studies (ANES) surveys paint a roughly similar picture.

Put simply, blue-collar whites have been trending towards the GOP for a while, and there's evidence that some of these key voters for Trump—especially in the Midwest—were trending away from the Democrats during the Obama era.

Let's take a look at Wisconsin. (See maps, above.)

The story here is pretty simple. Mitt Romney lost Wisconsin in the 2012 presidential election by seven points, and Republican governor Scott Walker won it by six points in 2014. The difference is striking—Walker carried a large, mostly rural swath of the state that Romney did not. And when Trump won the state by less than a point in 2016, he showed strength in those same areas. There are obvious differences between these three cases (e.g., Walker was an incumbent, turnout is different in midterm and presidential elections, Obama was on the ballot in 2012 but not in 2014 or 2016, etc.). But it wouldn't have been unreasonable to look at those two maps in 2014 and conclude that the Republicans could gain some votes in the rural Midwest in 2016.

We can see a similar phenomenon in Iowa. Romney won only 54 percent of the vote in Iowa's rural counties in 2012 (which cast about a quarter of the votes for the two major parties in the state). But in 2014, Republican Senate candidate Joni Ernst won 64 percent of the two-party rural vote—foreshadowing Trump's 67 percent in those same counties in 2016. Ernst and Trump also outperformed Romney in Iowa's small towns and ended up winning by eight and nine points respectively. (Romney lost Iowa.)

These parallels aren't perfect. They don't hold up in every state (e.g., both Trump and Republican governor Rick Snyder won in Michigan, but Trump outperformed Snyder in rural areas while Snyder was stronger than Trump in the key suburban counties), and it's hard to know how many of these working-class white voters would have crossed over to the GOP if the party had run a different candidate. But Ernst and Walker foreshadowed future Republican strength and suggest that Trump did not have to singlehandedly bring those swing states into the Republican fold.

Blue-collar whites weren't the only group to switch their vote in 2016. There's evidence that many college-educated whites moved away from the GOP, and here Trump is likely more responsible. According to ANES data, Republican presidential candidates generally won college-educated white voters by mid-to-high single digits in every election from 1992 through 2012. Pew's party identification data (which don't track votes but has the advantage of being taken more frequently than every four years) show some decline in Republican affiliation during the middle of the Aughts, but the trend isn't nearly as sharp as what we see among white high-school graduates or white voters who have some college education. Yet, according to an analysis of Cooperative Congressional Elections Studies data by the University of Virginia's Geoffrey Skelley, Clinton won among white college-educated voters.

If we pull all of this data together, we start to see a clear story. As Democratic presidential candidates drifted leftward culturally (compare Bill Clinton to Al Gore, Gore to John Kerry, Kerry to Obama, and Obama to Hillary Clinton), they lost ground with the white working class. Racism and sexism likely played a role for some

voters, but it's not a full explanation, as the trend predates Obama or Hillary Clinton leading the Democratic ticket. The 2016 election was another step in that direction, with Trump both making further inroads with the white working class and repelling a number of normally reliable college-educated white voters.

Blue-collar white voters have also begun leaving their mark on the GOP. According to political scientist Lee Drutman's calculations for the Voter Study Group, the Obama voters who went for Trump were primarily "populist"—generally liberal on economic issues but more conservative on some combination of social issues, racial attitudes, and immigration. Republican politicians in states that shifted heavily right (Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, and Minnesota) are feeling some pressure to cater to these new voters and keep them in the fold.

But these new voters are only a small percentage of the GOP. Some of Trump's natural constituents have been part of the party for much longer. As Sean Trende of *Real Clear Politics* has argued, Pat Buchanan, Mike Huckabee, and Rick Santorum showed in different ways that there is a real audience within the GOP for hawkish immigration policies, less than free-market positions on the economy, and cultural conservatism in general. Trump won the 2016 presidential nomination in part by winning over voters who felt immigration was the most important issue, and, in 2014, immigration hardliners had fared well in GOP primaries.

Trump can be seen then as both a cause and an effect of the changes in the Republican party. He attracted some new blue-collar voters, but the downscale whites that powered his primary wins were already part of the party. Some of the Obama-voting blue-collar whites who helped him win the Electoral College were headed to the right, as well. Trump pulled the party in his direction by shedding traditionally Republican college-educated whites and grabbing some populist blue-collar whites—but the preexisting political trends are part of that story.

REPUBLICANS TRUST TRUMP

The average voter doesn't have strong, stable preferences on every area of public policy. Most don't have time to read white papers on Syria or the national debt—they have full-time jobs, kids to raise,

friends to visit, hobbies to pursue, and more. So when a politician takes an unorthodox stance (e.g., when Trump has argued for universal healthcare), sometimes the rank and file will just follow the leader. Republicans are no exception to this rule.

More than one survey has shown that when Trump takes a political position, many Republican voters adopt that position. Some of the most striking examples come from Ariel Edwards-Levy of the *HuffPost* Pollster. Edwards-Levy worked with the polling firm YouGov to measure how much Republicans and Democrats follow their leaders—that is, if voters would suddenly move left or right on policy if they heard that a key politician broke with party orthodoxy. They told part of their sample that Barack Obama supported universal healthcare, told the other part that Donald Trump supported it, and compared the results.

When YouGov told respondents that Obama supported universal healthcare, 82 percent of Democrats and 16 percent of Republicans agreed with him. But when YouGov told the second group of voters that Trump had praised universal healthcare, the results were wildly different—46 percent of Democrats and 44 percent of Republicans agreed with him. Similarly, when YouGov told voters that John Kerry wanted to keep the Iran

nuclear deal in place and strictly enforce it, 52 percent of Democrats agreed with Kerry and 20 percent of Republicans did. But when YouGov told the second group that Trump held the same position (he has at some point held all of these positions), 54 percent of Democrats and 53 percent of Republicans agreed with Trump.

The effect of swapping Trump's name for a Democrat's isn't always this strong. When YouGov told Republicans that Hillary Clinton was against cutting social security, 57 percent of the party agreed with her. When Trump's name was subbed in, that number went up to 74 percent. But the overall point is clear—if Trump moves to the left on policy, many Republicans will follow him. And this follow-the-leader effect isn't just an oddity confined to clever survey experiments.

According to an April study by Pew Research, Republican views on free trade have shifted hugely in the short Trump era. Prior to Trump's presidential campaign, Pew found that a majority of Republicans believed free trade

Trump can be seen as both a cause and an effect of the changes in the Republican party. He attracted some new blue-collar voters, but the downscale whites that powered his primary wins were already part of the party. Some of the Obama-voting blue-collar whites who helped him win were headed to the right, as well.

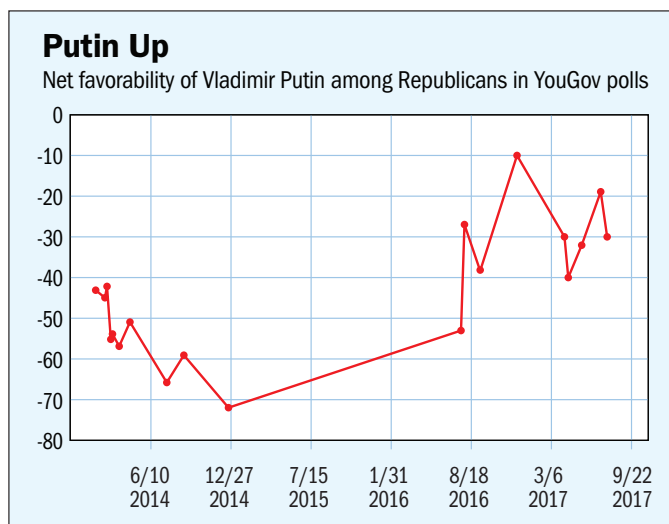
was good for the United States—the longtime conservative position. But in late 2016, Pew found that only 29 percent of Republicans said that free-trade agreements were beneficial for the country. *Vox*'s Dylan Matthews also examined these results and thinks that Republican opinion on free trade has rebounded slightly from that low point, but the basic story is clear: Trump bucked conservative orthodoxy on free trade, and a significant segment of the party followed his lead.

Trump has also led Republicans to change their opinions on the personal character of presidents and the importance of political experience. According to a 2011 survey by the Public Religion Research Institute, only 36 percent of Republicans believed that a politician who had committed immoral acts in his or her personal life could still execute his or her duties ethically while in office. By 2016, that number had shot up to 70 percent. It's possible that other events between 2011 and 2016 contributed to this movement—Democrats also became more accepting of morally dubious leaders in that same time, moving from 49 percent to 61 percent on the same question). But it's not hard to draw a dotted line between the rise of Trump (whose personal life is anything but spotless) and the GOP's changing tune on the personal morality of leaders.

Similarly, Pew found that between March and September 2015 the percentage of Republicans who preferred “new ideas and a different approach” over “experience and a proven record” grew from 36 percent to 65. Trump only announced his run for the Republican nomination in June of that year, so it's possible that not all of this increase came from his entry onto the political scene. But it provides more evidence that Republicans were willing to change what they expected of political leaders in response to Trump.

Trump has also shifted Republican views of Russia and the FBI. According to YouGov polling data cited by Dylan Matthews, Republicans have become more positive about Vladimir Putin since Trump entered the presidential race.

The chart above shows the net favorability rating of Putin among Republicans over time in YouGov surveys. There's a significant amount of noise here, but the pattern is simple. As Trump became more politically powerful, Republicans began to view Putin more favorably. The Russian dictator still has a net-negative favorability among the GOP, and there are signs that his rating is dropping. But these polls are part of a broader story. YouGov has also seen a spike in GOP friendliness towards Russia in general—specifically, they measured how many Republican respondents said Russia was an “ally/friendly” or “enemy/unfriendly” and found that GOP's overall rating assessment of Russia has become less negative in the Trump era.



At the same time, Republicans have soured on the FBI. SurveyMonkey recently found that only 38 percent of Republicans have a favorable view of the FBI. As pollster Will Jordan points out, that's a significant shift from 2015 when Pew found that 70 percent of Republicans viewed the FBI favorably. The story of Trump and Russia is knotty—it involves a special investigation into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia, Putin's human rights violations, and a long history of tension between the United States and Russia. But the public opinion story seems simple and troubling: The ostensibly hawkish, law-and-order Republican party is more accepting of Russia and Vladimir Putin now that Donald Trump is its leader.

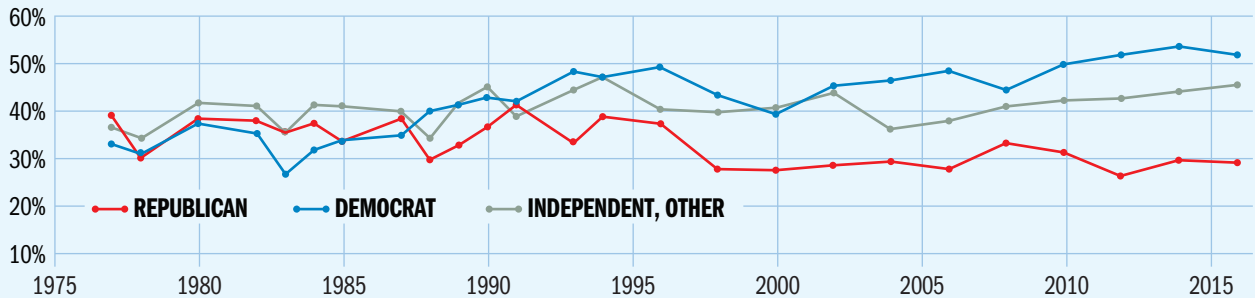
It's worth noting that Trump hasn't changed the GOP's position on every issue. He hasn't always been pro-life and has shown his ignorance of traditional conservative policy on the issue (e.g., Trump's assertion that there should be “some form of punishment” for women who seek abortions is not shared by many pro-lifers). But according to the long-running General Social Survey (a project of NORC at the University of Chicago), Trump-era Republicans are roughly as pro-life as Republicans were in the late 1990s. Michael Barber and Jeremy Pope of BYU (who conducted a survey experiment similar to Edwards-Levy's) have also seen that Trump is less able to move GOP opinion on gun control than he is on other issues.

And there are issues where the trends predate Trump. Republicans have been softening on LGBTQ issues for decades, and it's not clear that Trump's leftward leanings on such issues have moved the needle.

But overall, it seems that there are real differences between what the pre-Trump GOP and the Trump-era party believe. Trump didn't completely rework conservative ideology or change Republican thinking on every issue. But Republicans have followed his lead on

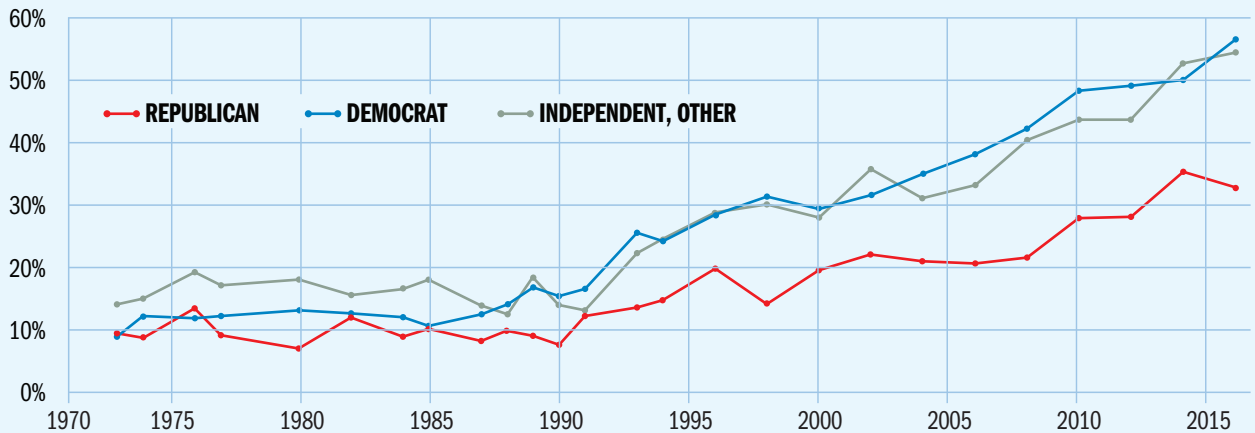
Not Budging on Abortion

Percentage of respondents, by party affiliation, affirming that a woman should be able to have an abortion for any reason



Shifting on Homosexuality

Percentage of respondents, by party affiliation, affirming that it is not wrong at all for same-sex adults to have sexual relations



SOURCE: Smith, Marsden, Hout, and Kim / General Social Surveys 1972-2016 / NORC, Univ. of Chicago

some policy issues (trade) and have accommodated him by changing their views about morality and the world (Russia). Some of these changes might not stick—the GOP might fall back on its instinctual distrust of Russia and trust of the FBI when the Mueller investigation is resolved. But it’s also possible to imagine parts of Trumpism—like the suspicion of trade and tough rhetoric on immigration—calcifying and becoming GOP orthodoxy. It’s too early to say which changes will or won’t stick, but for the time being there are differences between how pre-Trump and Trump-era Republicans think about the world.

THE REPUBLICANS STRIKE BACK

Trump may have changed the way the GOP thinks, looks, and talks, but as many others have previously argued, Republicans have also changed Trump. Specifically, the policy pushes in Trump’s first year in office were at their core efforts to turn conservative promises into policy. Trump was out of sync with GOP

orthodoxy on a number of issues during the campaign—attacking trade deals, calling for vast infrastructure spending and building a “wall,” instituting universal healthcare, and more—yet he’s spent much of his political capital on legislation that a more conventional Republican president might have come up with.

First, there was healthcare. Before the 2016 election, Trump made numerous contradictory statements about healthcare, some of which sounded more like a call for universal healthcare than for a conservative effort to overturn Obamacare. Yet last spring, Trump supported congressional Republicans in their efforts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. Republicans tried multiple different bills and failed. Throughout the process, Trump (mostly) backed the conservative reforms that House speaker Paul Ryan and Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell championed.

It’s a similar story on taxes. Before Trump won the 2016 election, many speculated that he would be an economic populist—someone who would move the Republican

party leftward on economic issues while pulling it to the right on cultural issues. But in December, Trump signed a traditionally conservative tax-reform bill. It's hard to tell whether Trump's core beliefs have changed since 2016, but more traditional Republicans seem to have been able to influence his economic actions.

Trump nominated a staunch conservative for the Supreme Court. Neil Gorsuch is someone almost any Republican president might have placed on the high court. This isn't as clear-cut a case of conservative influence as taxes or healthcare. But it's another instance of Trump's essentially doing what another Republican would have done on policy.

Still, he hasn't been a predictable Republican president on every issue.

After multiple fights with various courts, Trump successfully instituted restrictions on travel to the United States from eight nations (six of which are predominantly Muslim). There's room for disagreement within the GOP on foreign policy and immigration, but it is hard to imagine a different Republican president (Marco Rubio, for example, or John Kasich) taking that action.

Trump has also focused much less on the national debt than a more conventional Republican might have. He didn't mention it in his most recent State of the Union address, and it didn't seem to be a primary concern during the debate late last year over tax reform. It's possible to argue that past Republicans have failed to live up to their campaign promises on the deficit, but failing even to talk about the issue (much less try to act on it) is a significant departure from past GOP policy.

The point here isn't to go through every area of policy and compare Trump's actions, his prior statements, and traditional GOP orthodoxy. The point is to show that change isn't a one-way street. While Trump has acted on some of his policy instincts, traditional Republicans have still managed to push (and in some cases successfully enact) their policies during the Trump era.

The traditional GOP's influence makes sense. Trump is a newcomer to politics, and as political scientists Matt Grossmann and Dave Hopkins showed persuasively in their 2016 book *Asymmetric Politics*, the GOP is a fundamentally ideological party. Trump may not have had fully fleshed-out view on various policy issues (he contradicted himself many times during the 2016 campaign), but the larger Republican party did. And Republicans have been able to get Trump to move towards them on many policies.

THE OPPORTUNITY LOST

The question of how Trump changed the Republican party is obviously complicated, and the data and analysis presented here only scratch the surface. I'm ignoring some of the below-the-radar aspects of Trump's domestic and foreign policies, his tendency to break norms, his relationship to the media and other institutions, and his effect on racial attitudes. In all of these areas and more, I could track ways in which Trump has or hasn't changed his party (and vice versa). But a pattern is clear, and it's worth turning our attention instead to a related question: What changes did the Republican party forgo by nominating and electing Donald Trump?

It's possible to argue, and many have, that Trump won the Republican nomination because the party's three-legged stool (social conservatism, fiscal conservatism, and a hawkish foreign policy) failed during George W. Bush's administration and Trump offered something new and different.

The legs of the stool have seen plenty of wins, losses, and draws over the last 35 years. Fiscal conservatism certainly posted wins when Reagan and Bush cut taxes, but it's also seen some losses—the national debt has increased and the financial crash happened on Bush's watch. Foreign-policy hawkishness served the Republican party well during the Cold War and after, but that leg of the stool suffered serious injury

during the Iraq War. And while religious conservatives can point to public opinion remaining relatively stable on abortion, they lost the battle on same-sex marriage.

But no matter how you tally up the score, you end up with a Republican party that often runs and governs on ideas that have already won or lost the battles they were designed to fight. The social and political problems facing the United States aren't identical to the problems it faced in the 1980s. Yet Trump's GOP, which arguably has more power now than any iteration of the party has had since the 1920s, hasn't come up with anything more creative than another tax bill and a few attempts to overturn Obamacare.

The 2016 election provided Republicans with an opportunity to apply conservative principles to new problems in healthy, innovative, and constructive ways. But the GOP chose Trump. And Trump's lasting impact on the GOP might in the end not be the policies he enacts, the positions he takes, or the way he changes politics, it may be that he kept the party from renewing itself despite having a real opportunity to do so. ♦

The GOP is a fundamentally ideological party. Trump may not have had fully fleshed-out views on various policy issues, but the larger Republican party did. And Republicans have been able to get Trump to move towards them on many policies.

Not So Fast

The danger from ISIS and al Qaeda is still present

BY THOMAS JOSCELYN

On January 19, the Pentagon released its new National Defense Strategy. The second paragraph of the 14-page declassified summary painted a dire picture. “Today, we are emerging from a period of strategic atrophy, aware that our competitive military advantage has been eroding,” the Defense Department warned. “We are facing increased global disorder, characterized by decline in the long-standing rules-based international order—creating a security environment more complex and volatile than any we have experienced in recent memory. Inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security.”

That last line garnered widespread attention. It signaled that defense planners no longer want the jihadist wars unleashed by the 9/11 attacks to be their primary focus. The rest of the overview explained why. China is now a “strategic competitor,” while Russia seeks to “shatter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and change European and Middle East security and economic structures to its favor.” Both China and Russia “want to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian model—gaining veto authority over other nations’ economic, diplomatic, and security decisions.” Meanwhile, rogue states such as North Korea and Iran increasingly pose threats to American interests. While the Defense Department recognizes that ISIS and other “terrorist groups” will continue “to murder the innocent and threaten peace more broadly,” Washington must shift its focus to “long-term strategic competition.”

In many ways, the Pentagon’s planning document makes sense. China and Russia command resources that far outstrip the jihadists’ capabilities. They have nuclear-tipped missiles; the jihadists do not. The gap between their conventional military prowess and America’s has closed somewhat. Russia and China also use other means, ranging from economic pressure to cyberattacks to espionage and disinformation, to challenge American supremacy. Meanwhile, the 9/11 wars have been costly. But as threatening as they’ve been, the jihadists lack the industrial capacity and military might to

be a top-tier competitor. It is only natural, given these facts, that the Defense Department seeks a rebalancing.

It will not be so easy, though, to pivot away from the jihadists. ISIS and al Qaeda have tied up security services throughout the West for years. Thousands of terror suspects across Europe require monitoring. The FBI has been swamped by hundreds of U.S. cases involving potential terrorists. The CIA and allied intelligence agencies continue to hunt down professional terrorists who plot mass destruction in the West. ISIS and al Qaeda operatives still threaten aviation with smartly concealed bombs. And while ISIS has lost its territorial caliphate, the fight is far from over.

This past week, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) presented its annual worldwide threat assessment to the Senate. It contains numerous warnings that the Defense Department pivot may be premature: “Over the next year, we expect that ISIS is likely to focus on regrouping in Iraq and Syria, enhancing its global presence, championing its cause, planning international attacks, and encouraging its members and sympathizers to attack in their home countries.” ISIS, the ODNI assessment warns, “has started—and probably will maintain—a robust insurgency in Iraq and Syria as part of a long-term strategy to ultimately enable the reemergence of its so-called caliphate,” and it will continue to “threaten U.S. interests in the region.”

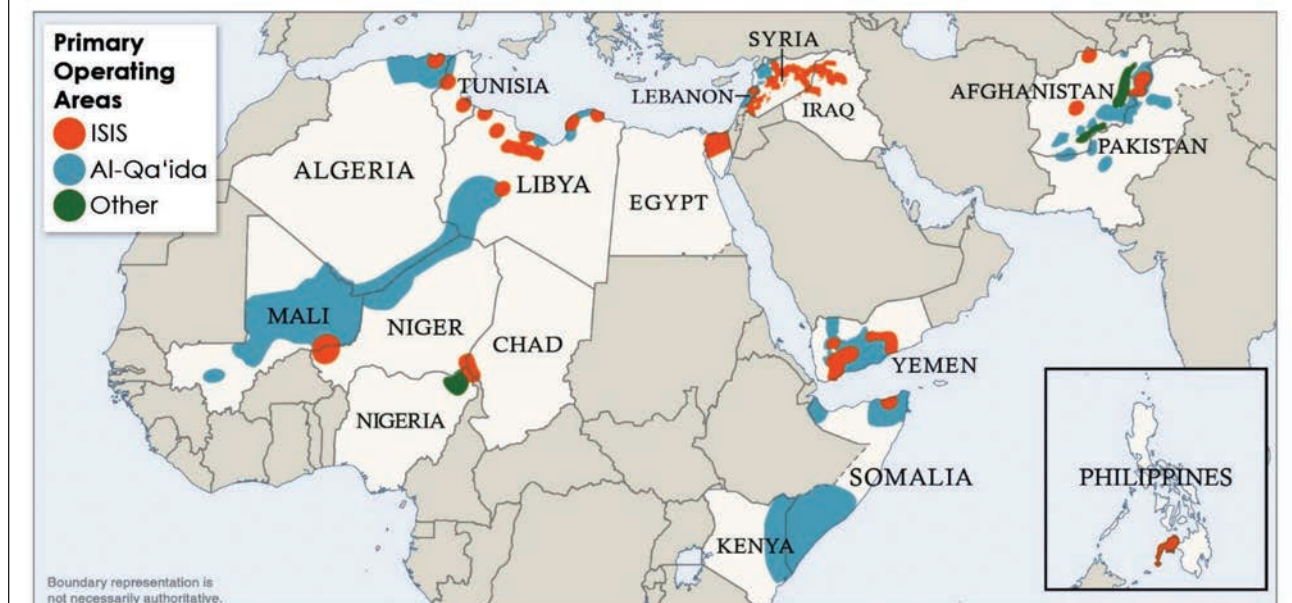
The bottom line: ISIS is far from finished. While most of the territory once under its rule in Iraq and Syria has been “liberated,” the group still retains the resources to wage guerrilla warfare indefinitely.

A map produced by the ODNI (see opposite) underscores the global nature of the threat. Outside of Iraq and Syria, ISIS fighters continue to wage insurgencies in several countries. And some of these branches of the so-called caliphate still threaten the United States and its allies.

Consider the situation in Egypt. In November 2014, an al Qaeda-linked group known as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis swore its fealty to ISIS emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The group was then rebranded Wilayat Sinai, or the Sinai Province (of the caliphate), and pledged to fight for the caliphate’s cause. Wilayat Sinai remains a security threat to the Egyptian state. Its members blew up a Russian airliner in October 2015, killing all 224 passengers and crew on board. The bombing was the jihadists’ first successful attack on commercial aviation since the 9/11 hijackings. Wilayat

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Sunni Violent Extremists' Primary Operating Areas as of 2017



The U.S. intelligence community's depiction of organized jihadist outposts, presented in Senate testimony on February 13

Sinai has assassinated Egyptian officials, harassed locals, and conducted a series of bombings against mosques, tribesmen, and Christians. At times, the ISIS branch has been strong enough to capture Egyptian checkpoints and overrun security facilities. ISIS also spawned a terror network in mainland Egypt that has dispatched suicide bombers to strike Coptic churches, including on Palm Sunday last year.

The Sinai jihadists are so fierce that President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's men haven't been able to contain them on their own. Earlier this month, the *New York Times* confirmed a thinly veiled secret—Israel has been helping the Egyptians hunt down ISIS leaders and commanders in the northern part of the Sinai since 2015. Despite this assistance from Israel's expert terror-hunters, Wilayat Sinai hasn't been eradicated. Just this past week, the group threatened Egypt's upcoming presidential election, scheduled for late March. In a lengthy video disseminated on ISIS media channels, the caliphate's Sinai brethren pledged to extract blood from the "tyrants" and celebrated some of its most heinous acts. In one scene, a jihadist snuck up behind an Egyptian security official, slowly raising his pistol to the man's head before pulling the trigger. The murder was meant to send a message to the Egyptian government: Nobody is safe. It is a threat Sisi has taken seriously. Earlier this month, his government announced a major campaign against the Sinai jihadists. The Egyptians have struggled to find the right counterinsurgency formula, meaning the jihadists will likely continue to threaten the area for the near future.

In Libya, ISIS no longer controls significant turf. But

there are reasons to worry that Baghdadi's goons may make a comeback. At the height of its power in North Africa, beginning in 2015, ISIS ruled over the city of Sirte for more than a year. Muammar Qaddafi's hometown and site of the Libyan dictator's demise in 2011, Sirte was more than just a symbolic stronghold. ISIS considered it one of the three most important cities under its control, ranking just behind Mosul, Iraq, and Raqqa, Syria. But the Libyan branch of ISIS lost control of the city in December 2016, after a prolonged siege by U.S.-backed local forces.

Some of the ISIS survivors decamped for remote areas south of Sirte in the Libyan deserts, where they attempted to regroup. In early 2017, the U.S. government announced that two of their makeshift training camps had been bombed after "external plotters"—that is, operatives responsible for planning terror attacks in Europe or the United States—were discovered there. Some of these terrorists may have been directly involved in the May 2017 Manchester Arena bombing, which left 22 people dead and hundreds more wounded.

How many men does ISIS still have inside Libya? We don't really know. The State Department estimates that ISIS had "as many as 6,000 fighters in its ranks" in Libya in early 2016—that is, before the start of the heaviest fighting inside Sirte. Some 1,700 ISIS jihadists are thought to have been killed in or around the city in the months that followed, in U.S. airstrikes and during ground battles. This implies that upwards of 4,300 ISIS members either slithered away or were stationed elsewhere inside Libya. It is possible that

ISIS retains a significant cadre of diehards in North Africa.

Elsewhere in Africa, ISIS has upstart branches that are seeking to expand. In West Africa, a former al Qaeda commander named Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui leads a group that claimed responsibility for killing four American and five Nigerian soldiers last October. The circumstances surrounding their deaths are murky, but the men were on patrol in Niger when the jihadists seized an opportunity to strike. Sahraoui and his men have fought in the caliphate's name since 2015. Separately, the leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, also swore allegiance to Baghdadi in 2015. Boko Haram is infamous for a string of high-profile slayings and kidnappings, including the abduction of hundreds of Nigerian schoolgirls. Even compared to Baghdadi's psychopaths, Shekau has always been one of the most disturbed jihadists on the planet. His unhinged ways led to a dismissal in 2016, when ISIS named a new leader for its men in West Africa. Shekau continues to run his own Boko Haram contingent.

To the east, in the horn of Africa, ISIS has carved out a small but deadly fighting force. Headquartered in the autonomous northern Puntland region of Somalia, another former al Qaeda commander, Abdulqadir Mumin, heads an ISIS contingent that carries out regular attacks. Mumin's men have been unable to capture and hold ground for any significant length of time, and their remoteness hampers their efficacy. But they have exploited their local roots, relying on Somali businesses to fund their enterprise.

Across the Gulf of Aden, in Yemen, ISIS fanatics have added another dimension to an already complex, multisided war. In December 2017, U.S. Central Command cited "intelligence estimates" that ISIS there "has doubled in size over the past year." This hardly speaks to an effort on the wane. What's worse, the Pentagon has warned that ISIS "has used the ungoverned spaces of Yemen to plot, direct, instigate, resource and recruit for attacks against America and its allies around the world." The jihadists use the war-torn country as "a hub for terrorist recruiting, training and transit."

The American air campaign in the southern Arabian Peninsula was increased dramatically last year, with a record number of airstrikes (131) targeting jihadists in Yemen. Most of these hit Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which rejects Baghdadi's caliphate. But several, for the first time, struck the growing ISIS presence. In October, the Pentagon said that "dozens" of ISIS militants had been killed in two Yemeni training camps. One of the camps was named after Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, a deceased ISIS spokesman who helped build the jihadists' campaign of terror across the world. Adnani played a direct role in instigating and planning attacks in the heart of the West. That the Yemeni jihadists train in his name is an ominous portent.

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, ISIS loyalists fight their foes nearly every day. Wilayat Khorasan, or the Khorasan

Province of the caliphate, has lost significant ground in eastern Afghanistan, where it once controlled several districts. The United States has systematically hunted down several of Wilayat Khorasan's emirs, disrupting its chain of command. But the jihadists remain resilient—surviving such extreme measures as America's use of a GBU-43 Massive Ordnance Air Blast (also known as a MOAB, or "mother of all bombs") in Nangarhar Province in April 2017. It was the first time that a MOAB, the largest nonnuclear bomb in the American arsenal, has been deployed in combat.

Baghdadi's representatives regularly claim operations in the heart of Kabul, the Afghan capital. In January, a team of highly trained *inghimasis* (guerrilla fighters who immerse themselves in battle before carrying out suicide bombings) struck the Marshal Fahim National Defense University in Kabul. Last March, an *inghimasi* squad infiltrated the Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan Hospital, Afghanistan's largest medical facility for military personnel and their families. It killed or wounded dozens.

Some claim that outfits such as Wilayat Khorasan have merely adopted the caliphate brand and lack meaningful connections to Baghdadi's enterprise. This is not so. The U.S. military has discovered connective tissue. Gen. John Nicholson, the commander of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan and NATO's Resolute Support, has explained that there is a "connection" between Wilayat Khorasan and the ISIS headquarters. The first head of Wilayat Khorasan "went through the application process" and the group has received "advice," "publicity," and "some financial support" from ISIS. In June 2017, the U.S. bombed an ISIS "media production hub" in eastern Afghanistan. The Pentagon explained that the bombing "disrupt[ed] their connections to ISIS main in Syria."

ISIS fighters remain a threat as far away from Iraq and Syria as Southeast Asia. As elsewhere, ISIS built a network in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines by wooing some veteran jihadists to its cause, while also electrifying new recruits with its initial battlefield successes in 2014. Indonesian and Malaysian authorities have disrupted a string of terror plots tied directly to operatives in Syria and Iraq. The governments of Australia and Singapore have as well. In one startling case last year, the Aussies discovered that ISIS had shipped bomb components from Syria to a cell targeting Australian aviation. Meanwhile, over the span of several months last year, Philippine armed forces fought to eject jihadists from the city of Marawi, on the island of Mindanao. The Treasury Department recently revealed that at least some of the money used to arm the insurgents in Marawi came from ISIS central command.

Look at the ODNI map again and you'll notice something else: ISIS isn't the only jihadist menace. Al Qaeda lives—despite the Obama administration's many attempts

to declare it dead. In some countries, such as Somalia and Yemen, al Qaeda's footprint is broader and deeper than that of the ISIS outfits. A new al Qaeda chapter is especially prolific in Mali and the surrounding countries. In Afghanistan, al Qaeda remains heavily invested in the Taliban-led insurgency. Although many in Washington, particularly at the State Department, would have us believe that the Taliban and al Qaeda are mutually exclusive, numerous details show otherwise. The Taliban's deputy leader, Siraj Haqqani, is a longtime al Qaeda ally. And some of the Taliban's most important facilitators also serve al Qaeda.

In September 2014, Ayman al Zawahiri, the successor to Osama bin Laden, announced the formation of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). Its primary mission is to help the Taliban reconquer Afghanistan. Today, the Taliban and its allies contest or control more than 40 percent of Afghanistan's districts—far more territory than the caliphate's flag-bearers. The Taliban also regularly rocks Kabul with large-scale bombings and guerrilla-style raids. In neighboring Pakistan, al Qaeda has reorganized elements of several decades-old jihadist groups under the AQIS banner, ensuring that the organization has staying power.

Al Qaeda hopes to use ISIS's territorial losses to win the loyalty of disaffected jihadists. It remains to be seen how

successful these efforts will be, but an al Qaeda recruiting campaign is underway in several of the ISIS hot spots discussed above. Recently, for example, a pro-al Qaeda group known as Jund al-Islam reemerged in the Sinai after several years of quiet. It is explicitly marketing itself as an alternative to ISIS. Similar efforts are reportedly underway elsewhere, including in Syria. Al Qaeda has encountered serious management problems in northwestern Syria, where thousands of fighters were once under its command. But it is too early to count al Qaeda out of that fight.

The Pentagon is not wrong in its National Defense Strategy. China is rising. And Vladimir Putin will always see America as Russia's adversary. It is no coincidence that Iran and North Korea—the two rogue states highlighted in the new strategy document—have benefited from Chinese and Russian largesse. The U.S. government will have to counter new challenges from all four nations. But the jihadists' revolution has spread across the globe in the 16 years since 9/11. In many of the areas highlighted on the ODNI's map, America's involvement is the only thing standing in the way of new Islamic emirates sprouting up. That is what the jihadists are fighting for—to claim new territory, either for Baghdadi's caliphate or a new one. The United States cannot wish away this threat. ISIS isn't defeated. Neither is al Qaeda. ♦

Tax Reform Pads Workers' Wallets

THOMAS J. DONOHUE

PRESIDENT AND CEO
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The benefits of tax reform continue to roll in—and not just for businesses. As our leaders in government promised, many Americans across the country are now seeing a welcome surprise in the form of higher paychecks.

The reason for the bump? With new, lower tax rates in place for 2018, the IRS updated federal withholding tables, which govern the amount in taxes employers deduct from paychecks each month based on the taxpayer's characteristics. The deadline for adopting these new tables was last Thursday, February 15. With these changes, as many as 90% of workers across America are now officially keeping more from their paychecks.

Almost immediately after passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act in December, many workers received bonuses, raises, or other benefits. These gains came from a range of businesses—from agriculture to manufacturing to services. They came from big businesses such as American Airlines, which announced it would give \$1,000 bonuses totaling about \$130 million, and from small businesses such as RPMS Group, which awarded \$1,000 bonuses to its employees. These announcements have been widespread, impacting over 3 million workers to date.

For those who have been advocating for tax reform for many years, it comes as no surprise that workers are directly benefiting from the law's passage through generous bonuses or pay raises from their employers and by getting to keep more of what they earn. This is as it should be.

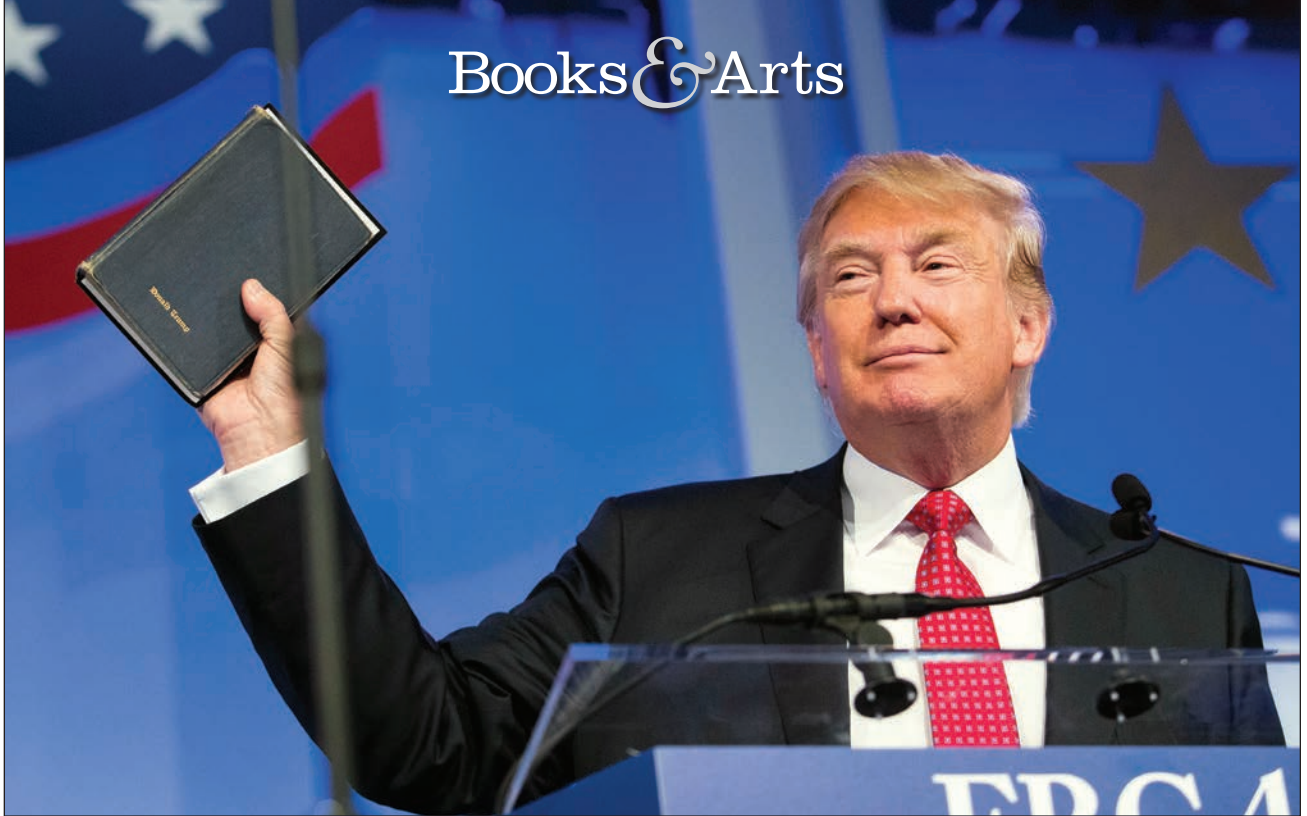
As I often point out, the money we pay in taxes is not the government's money; it's our money that we share with the government.

Good news for workers is also good news for the entire American economy. With a boost in take-home pay, consumers will be able to invest more of their earnings in their families and local economies. Higher wages, increased consumer spending, and a rise in business investment owing especially to the lower corporate rate are all positive developments for economic growth—and economic growth, in turn, will raise government tax revenues.

The advantages of tax reform are reaching far and wide, and they've only just begun. Businesses will feel the impact in every quarter going forward, and Americans will feel it in every paycheck. For the entire American economy, tax relief is truly a gift that keeps giving



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Speaking at a conservative gathering in September 2015, then-candidate Trump holds up the Bible his mother gave him for his confirmation, with his name embossed on the cover.

The Apotheosis of Donald J. Trump

What evangelicals gain and lose by doing business with the president. BY ERICK W. ERICKSON

President Trump relishes his reputation as a savvy dealmaker. “Deals are my art form,” he once tweeted. “Other people paint beautifully or write poetry. I like making deals, preferably big deals.” He promised during the 2016 campaign that if elected, he would work with politicians and foreign leaders to make “smart deals for the country.” But since he took office there has been pre-

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The Faith of Donald J. Trump

A Spiritual Biography

by David Brody and Scott Lamb
Broadside, 375 pp., \$26.99

cious little evidence of Trump’s vaunted dealmaking prowess. Such successes as his administration has been able to claim have generally been accomplished without his direct involvement—and sometimes in spite of it.

There is, though, one obvious piece of evidence from the president’s political career that suggests his dealmaking reputation might be deserved after all:

the relationship he has with evangelical political leaders. He has lavished them with attention and let them bask in his celebrity star-power, things that they, long feeling like outsiders in American culture and politics, have badly craved. In exchange, they have thrown him their support—unconditional support, by all appearances—and with it, the backing of a political constituency vital to his success at the polls.

In *The Faith of Donald J. Trump*, authors David Brody and Scott Lamb provide an in-depth look at the relationship between the president and American evangelicals. Brody and Lamb—

DREW ANGERER / BLOOMBERG / GETTY

respectively a newscaster with Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network and a vice president at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University—have written what they dub a “spiritual biography,” even though they come right out and say they have no intention of answering the question of whether Trump is a Christian. Instead, they hope to convey his faith through his actions.

In the process, though, Brody and Lamb inadvertently expose the corruption and moral vacuity of the political evangelical movement in the United States.

Trump only started paying attention to evangelicals once he began to consider running for president—some five or more years before the 2016 campaign. He made a show of cozying up to evangelical pastors who write books that usually don't sell well outside their own congregations. He reached out to the prosperity-gospel heretic Paula White and flattered her. He asked questions of other religious leaders.

As his ambitions grew, Trump cannily cultivated relationships with evangelicals, and they convinced themselves that those relationships must be sincere since they began before he openly started campaigning for the presidency. Once he did start openly campaigning, the outreach only became more intensive. As Brody and Lamb report, Trump would seek out the preachers to sit next to at events. He would bring his mother's Bible to meetings to show it off. Evangelicals fell for it. So deluded and distracted are they by the trappings of power, they do not even see what Brody and Lamb see. “He's the P.T. Barnum of the 21st century,” an anonymous banker in the book says of Donald Trump. These evangelical leaders have yet to realize that they are the suckers.

Brody and Lamb's book highlights everything wrong with the morphing of American evangelicalism into a post-Jesus cult of personality looking for salvation delivered by politicians—including its hypocrisy and sophistry regarding Trump and morality. The authors quote one evangelical leader saying that evangelicals' relationship with

the president is authentic, not transactional. But a few chapters earlier, the same individual described a conference call he led with the Trump campaign's evangelical advisers just after the release of the *Access Hollywood* tape in which Trump bragged about assaulting women. During that call, “all of us agreed to stand behind the candidate.” After all, Trump “had sacrificed his entire life, in my viewpoint, and supported us. How could we not support him?”

The authors say that ‘when assessing the faith of Donald Trump, the significance of the Neil Gorsuch nomination cannot be underestimated.’ Really? That is essential to assessing Trump’s faith? More than his adulteries, which are barely touched upon in the book?

We can wink-wink at Trump's misdeeds because he does good things for us. The authors actually write that “when assessing the faith of Donald Trump, the significance of the Neil Gorsuch nomination cannot be underestimated.” Really? *That* is essential to assessing Trump's faith? More than his sexual proclivities and adulteries, which are barely touched upon in the book? In a few spots in the book, the authors blame American culture for Trump's sexual ethics, and in one passage, they even find a way to implicate evangelicals in Trump's sexual behavior. Follow the twisted logic: First, Brody and Lamb quote another biographer who says that “Clint Eastwood, James Bond, and Hugh Hefner” are the figures who dominate Trump's self-image. Then we

are told that Trump boasted about being a womanizer roughly around the same time Pierce Brosnan's first James Bond movie came out. And who do we have to thank for Bond's having a place in Trump's mind? “Americans—including evangelicals—fund these culture-shaping products with their book purchases and ticket sales.” So if you've ever seen a Bond movie, you've contributed to the culture that made Trump Trump.

More egregiously, in another passage the authors suggest that Trump's rapacious libido is just his misguided quest for God. I wish I were kidding. The authors prominently quote a character from a 1944 Bruce Marshall novel: “I still prefer to believe that sex is a substitute for religion and that the young man who rings the bell at the brothel is unconsciously looking for God.” Brody and Lamb's book was printed before the appearance of press reports about Trump having had sex with a porn star around the time his wife was giving birth to their son, but one gets the sense that the authors of *The Faith of Donald Trump* and the evangelical casuists they quote would have no trouble spinning that infidelity as something unimportant or, in a roundabout way, even admirable.

When not justifying or shifting blame for Trump's sexual escapades, the authors turn to anonymous sources to assure us that Donald Trump's heart is not bent on greed. “These off-the-record friendly interviewees sense that Trump's ambition stems from a deep-rooted need to command respect.” It is certainly true that he enjoys receiving praise and respect—including from the book's authors. One five-page chapter recounts a lunch at the Polo Bar in New York City with one of the authors (Brody), his wife, and Trump. George Lucas, Ralph Lauren, and Michael J. Fox all come to Trump's table to genuflect. Trump then brags to Oprah that he is meeting with the Christian Broadcasting Network. The chapter ends. Time and again the authors boast about their access to Trump, giving away the game of just how *Mean Girls* evangelicalism has become.

While the authors praise Trump for his supposed authenticity in being willing to meet with them, Mitt Romney

is criticized for talking to evangelical leaders through conference calls and national meetings: “Past Republican nominees like Mitt Romney and John McCain would come in front of a Christian audience but only minimally, knowing it was a political rite of passage to do so. ... Trump, on the other hand, not only did substantially more interviews

they wouldn’t bust their asses every time they jump. That’s not actually in the book, but I kept thinking about it when whole sections of the book were premised on *if* Trump did or read or saw something.

Much of the book is padded with descriptions of every conceivable Christian influence on Donald

son Fred admired who lived down the block from that church recommended it. Or maybe it was because someone who worked for Andrew Carnegie who had the same name as Donald Trump’s mother recommended it. But the couple did not stay at that liberal church, they only got married in it.

Instead, Fred and Mary Anne went to another liberal church, First Presbyterian Church in Queens, after they were married. Pay no attention to the church’s liberalism because in 1936 an elder in the church named Frank Donaldson sided with Dr. J. Gresham Machen when the liberal Presbyterians voted to kick Machen out for being a conservative. And if that is not enough of a reassurance about Donald Trump’s conservatism in the liberal church into which he was born, consider this. Donald Trump went to a liberal church that had once been a theologically orthodox church and at that time the church was filled with people who prayed for the future generations of the church. So Trump must be a believer. And if that’s not enough, consider this. “He grew up in a church birthed by fresh-off-the-boat, religious-liberty-seeking Puritans.” Never mind that that was 300 years prior to his arrival on the scene.

Donald Trump grew up and moved to Manhattan, where he attended the church of Norman Vincent Peale, the author of *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Here the authors descend into hucksterism. They argue that Peale was not an enormous influence on Trump. “The Trumps didn’t start attending Peale’s church until the 1970s, when Peale was in his seventies,” they note. They conclude that it was Fred Trump’s friendship with Peale that was really influential. There is just one problem. Donald Trump, Donald Trump’s lawyer, Donald Trump’s friends, and Donald Trump’s spiritual advisers are all quoted in the book identifying Peale as a huge influence on Trump. The authors themselves later reference Peale’s influence on Trump. But in the specific chapter on Peale they prioritize downplaying Peale to take cheap shots at evangelical critics of Trump.

This is perhaps the most ridiculous



Jerry Falwell Jr., president of the evangelical Liberty University, speaks as President Trump is presented with an honorary doctorate of laws in May 2017.

with us, his staff didn’t even bother to ask us what we planned to talk about.” See there, Trump gave them access, so he must be a believer. It clearly wasn’t a transactional relationship.

So if Brody and Lamb don’t grapple seriously with Trump’s moral character and choose not to answer the question of whether or not Trump is a Christian, how do they fill their hundreds of pages?

The book is stuffed with supposition. At one point we are assured that if Andy Warhol were alive today, he’d watch *The Apprentice*. This comes one page after announcing how much Warhol hated Trump. “If young Donald Trump” did something or other is a recurring theme. If he had picked up a book on church history he would have discovered all sorts of things. “If Trump recalled his Old Testament Bible stories,” he would have clearly understood what he was talking about by referencing the promised land in a speech. If frogs had wings

Trump, no matter how attenuated. Brody and Lamb make him out to be the heir of Martin Luther, John Knox, John Winthrop, John Witherpoon, and Billy Graham.

Trump’s paternal German ancestry gives the authors the excuse to bring in Luther, in a chapter called “Making Augsburg Great Again.” And Trump’s Scotland-born mother lets them bring in Knox and speculate on “five specific ways in which Scottish Presbyterianism impacted either the history of the United States or the life of Mary Anne MacLeod,” Trump’s mother. Presbyterians, we are told, “emphasized using the Sabbath day for the spiritual training of children,” and while the Trumps went to church on Sundays, there is no evidence Mrs. Trump worked through the catechism with Donald.

We get a lengthy disquisition on Donald Trump’s parents, Fred and Mary Anne, marrying in a liberal Presbyterian church. It was probably only because a relative who worked for a rich per-

part of the book except for all the other parts. They introduce the chapter on Peale's relationship with Trump by noting that Peale had been long forgotten until Trump ran for president and the relationship surfaced. They then try to claim Peale had no real influence on Trump while quoting Trump and others saying the opposite. Then they claim Peale really wasn't as theologically liberal as he really was by the time Trump knew him. Then they attack evangelical critics for waiting until Trump ran for president to be vocal about the man they acknowledged had largely been forgotten until Trump ran.

Then we learn that Donald Trump had two great-aunts who attended a Pentecostal church in Manhattan in the early twentieth century. Trump never knew them and had nothing to do with them. But in the quest to build up Trump's Christian cred it helps to get all the family holy rollers in there. They are thrown in just before a random story about a friend of Pat Robertson's speaking in tongues to Norman Vincent Peale's wife, who, again, had no influence on Donald Trump despite Trump's longtime lawyer calling Peale "his childhood spiritual mentor."

Brody and Lamb document all the conceivably Christian influences in Trump's life—the histories of his churches and pastors, how much he watched Billy Graham on television with his dad, a description of the picture taken the day young Trump was confirmed into the church, and even how Trump carries around his mother's Bible. But then they expose the evangelical political movement's shallowness and lack of discernment by quoting Paula White at Trump's inauguration: "[Trump] doesn't know our 'Christianese'" —the language of a regular, church member. This calls to mind James Dobson's famous characterization (strangely, not quoted in the book) of Trump as a "baby Christian." Trump is, you see, really new at this Jesus stuff. Except the authors just spent well over 100 pages copiously documenting the multitudinous interactions the man has had with the faith since his birth while apparently learning absolutely nothing.

What is missing from the book is

what is necessary to really buy into the notion of Trump's Christianity. There are stories of Trump praying with people. There are stories of his meetings with evangelical leaders and of him writing them large checks. But there are no stories of repentance. Trump famously said during the campaign that he has never asked God for forgiveness:

I am not sure I have. ... Now, when I take—you know, when we go in church and when I drink my little wine, which is about the only wine I drink, and have my little cracker, I guess that is a form of asking for forgiveness. And I do that as often as possible, because I feel cleansed, OK?

True to form, Brody and Lamb praise Trump for this, casting it as an admirably candid moment. But a Christian is commanded to repent and accept Jesus as his Lord and savior. Donald Trump never has. There are plenty of people who attest to his faith. But no one has a story of Trump publicly or privately acknowledging he is a sinner in need of saving. The best they can do is let Paula White take Jesus out of context about casting stones.

The Bible is very clear that Christians are to judge the conduct of other Christians. Consider 1 Corinthians 5:

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

This is why Brody and Lamb must dance around the issue: If they claim Trump is a Christian but there are no stories of repentance, then Christians must rebuke Trump.

Evangelical leaders will not rebuke him. They have access to him. He loves their company and makes a show over them. They love being able to interview him, go to the White House, and feel as if they are shaping public policy. When other evangelicals call them out on their behavior and the president's, they behave like Amaziah the priest of Bethel did when Amos declared Israel

needed to repent: "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there." In other words, we're making money here—you go make money somewhere else. It is a racket to them, so it must be a racket to everyone else.

You should know that I read *The Faith of Donald J. Trump* in the English version and can only guess at what was lost in the translation from the original North Korean. Donald Trump has, it is clear from this book, become Dear Leader, Generalissimo, Eternal General Secretary, Eternal Chairman, and Eternal Leader of the People's Evangelical Party of America. The Soviets, Chinese, and North Koreans would find it very familiar.

I assume the book had no editor. Chapter 2 references events to happen in chapter 4 that actually happen in chapter 7 in a vastly more understated way than promised. At another point Donald Trump is quoted saying *Roe v. Wade* was "strongly decided" when he clearly said or meant to say "wrongly decided" given the context of the paragraph in question; it is unclear whether Trump misspoke or his words were mistranscribed. And the book has completely unnecessary digressions. At one point, the authors feel compelled to go off on a tangent about Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, having an affair. Life stories of ancillary figures fall throughout the book, serving no purpose but to fill space.

In the end, Brody and Lamb's book exposes how the leaders of the evangelical movement, long treated as outcasts from mainstream culture because of the charlatans in their midst, now enjoy an utterly transactional relationship with Donald Trump, each using the other for an end they believe justifies the means. The long-term damage to the American evangelical movement, which has spent decades working toward respectability and intellectual seriousness, remains to be seen. And a president in need of a savior is surrounded by men and women of faith who are more interested in doing business with him than calling him to repent so that his eternal soul might be saved.

But Gorsuch!





Now a museum, Biltmore House has more than four acres of floor space.

BCA

Building Biltmore

The public goods and great beauty that flowed from private fortune. BY AMY HENDERSON

One night over dinner, Mark Twain and his neighbor Charles Dudley Warner decided to write a satire skewering the postbellum culture of excess. They took their novel's title from a line in Shakespeare's *King John*: "To gild refined gold, to paint the lily ... is wasteful and ridiculous excess." *The Gilded Age* emerged as a delicious mockery of the over-the-top extravagance of America's new-rich industrialists, whose ethics anticipated Mae West's belief that "too much of a good thing can be wonderful."

In real life, America's Gilded Age, which took its name from their novel, was a conflicted era of great wealth and gross disparity—of recently arrived immigrants streaming into factories and industrial barons summering in Newport "cottages."

Amy Henderson is historian emerita of the National Portrait Gallery.

The Last Castle

The Epic Story of Love, Loss, and American Royalty in the Nation's Largest Home
by Denise Kiernan
Touchstone, 388 pp., \$28

But not all the super-rich trekked to Newport. Denise Kiernan's *The Last Castle* tells the story of one wealthy scion who diverged. George Washington Vanderbilt was the youngest son of shipping and rail magnate William Henry Vanderbilt, who had amassed the greatest private fortune of the era. George grew up in a block-long mansion on Fifth Avenue, but while his older brothers joined the family business, he preferred the world of art and books. When his father died in 1885, he used his inheritance to follow his interests.

George's personal ambitions were as enormous as his father's, but instead of vast transportation systems, his dream led him to create something of extraor-

dinary beauty: His Biltmore House became the largest and grandest private castle in America.

He discovered the site for Biltmore by accident. To help his mother recover from malaria, George took her by train from New York to a resort sanitarium in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. Asheville had a growing reputation as a healthful place where well-heeled visitors "could heal lungs ailing from tuberculosis or the suffocating by-products of the industrial age." They could sit on "breathing porches" and inhale the curative, fresh mountain air.

Asheville suddenly struck Vanderbilt as the perfect site for an estate—a place, Kiernan writes, "where he would make his mark, far from the rocky shore of Newport, where straw boaters and candy-striped umbrellas dotted a tired scene he knew too well." After this epiphany he began buying up parcels of land and organizing the team that would make his dream house a reality.

Vanderbilt first lured Frederick Law Olmsted to Asheville in 1888. At 67, Olmsted was recognized as the father of landscape architecture in America, with Central Park and the U.S. Capitol grounds among his most notable designs. Olmsted was, upon first impression, underwhelmed by Vanderbilt's site—much of the first-growth timber had already been lumbered or

GEORGE ROSE / GETTY

“skinned by poor white farmers.” But he spotted opportunity and suggested creating a *managed* forest: “It would be of great value to the country to have a thoroughly well organized and systematically conducted attempt in forestry made on a large scale.”

Vanderbilt also enlisted architect Richard Morris Hunt, described here as “no dilettante in the realm of Gilded Age extravagance.” He had designed the pedestal for the Statue of Liberty, the great hall of the Metropolitan Museum, and many grand homes of the super-rich. As Kiernan writes, “If architectural excess were a religion, Hunt was surely its patron saint.” He was the perfect architect for building grandeur—for ballrooms and parlors decorated with precious art, glittering chandeliers, and ornate Italian marble.

By January 1889, the Vanderbilt-Olmsted-Hunt triumvirate was in place and work began in earnest. Vanderbilt went forward with Olmsted’s idea of creating a school of managed forestry; he also wanted the estate to have a farm and a village where workers and employees could live.

Meanwhile, the plans for the mansion kept growing. Hunt told Vanderbilt that the mountains surrounding the site were “just the right size and scale for the chateau” he was envisioning. The edifice also needed a name, and Vanderbilt announced in early 1890 that his mansion would be called “Biltmore” in honor of his Dutch ancestor, Jan Aartsen van der Bilt.

With construction underway, in June 1898 George Vanderbilt, then 35 years old, married Edith Stuyvesant Dresser. Edith was descended from one of Dutch New York’s founding families, her face noted (in the words of a Biltmore forester) for “sparkling with kindness, sweetness, lovability, grace and womanliness.” Vanderbilt introduced her to the estate by driving her up the swerving three-mile approach road Olmsted had designed: After a 45-minute ride, a vista opened magically to reveal the mansion.

Biltmore indeed was breathtaking: Surrounded by 125,000 acres, the

mansion had a 780-foot façade and an interior of 175,000 square feet containing 250 rooms, 43 bathrooms (with hot and cold running water), 3 kitchens, 65 fireplaces, and a 72-foot-long banquet hall. This grand private castle was exactly what George Vanderbilt had envisioned for his priceless collection of art, antiques, tapestries, and books.

Edith immediately established herself over the household. She was interested in gardens and would work closely with Gifford Pinchot, who had been hired to establish Biltmore’s



George and Edith Vanderbilt

school of managed forestry—America’s first such school. In *The Last Castle*, Edith is depicted as both an accomplished hostess to wealthy friends and as someone who helped look after the laborers, farmers, and shop owners connected to the estate. Her most important contribution was to develop the area’s arts and crafts; starting around 1903, she established the Biltmore Estate Industries, which became known for quality woodworking crafts, yarns, and handwoven fabrics.

In 1914, George died of a heart attack—a complication of a routine appendectomy. He was just 51. He left Biltmore to Edith and their daughter Cornelia (then 40 and 13, respectively). But his enormous wealth had been vastly diminished by Biltmore’s demands. To reduce expenses, Edith had to sell off parcels of the land; 86,700 acres were sold to the U.S. government “to perpetuate my husband’s pioneer work in forest conservation, and to

insure the protection” of the forest for the use of the American people.

In 1925 Edith married Peter Goelet Gerry, a senator from Rhode Island, and her focus no longer centered on Biltmore. Five years later, the family decided to open the house to paying tourists to help defray the estate’s costs, which included an annual tax bill of \$50,000.

Biltmore’s glory years in the late-19th and early-20th centuries had made it a destination for the famous—Edith Wharton, Henry James, John Singer Sargent, James McNeill Whistler, Thomas Wolfe, and Theodore Roosevelt were among the many who graced its long table. But as the story moves further into the 20th century, Biltmore fails to attract such colorful characters, and the final third of Kiernan’s book loses momentum. One notable highlight: The mansion was the secure site for the National Gallery’s collection during World War II; George Vanderbilt would have been pleased that over \$26 million of the nation’s art was kept safe at Biltmore.

Daughter Cornelia occasionally lived at Biltmore in the 1920s, but the estate wasn’t lively enough for her, and in 1932 she left Biltmore forever to live in New York, Paris, and London. Edith died in Providence in 1958 and bequeathed Biltmore to her grandsons, who have kept it afloat as a tourist attraction. (George Henry Vanderbilt Cecil, now in his 90s, is still the owner and operator of Biltmore Farms; his younger brother William Amherst Vanderbilt Cecil, who ran the Biltmore Estate, died last October at 89.)

Denise Kiernan’s book offers an entertaining and meticulously researched glimpse into faded grandeur. The book admittedly suffers because Biltmore has for much of the past century lacked fascinating personalities to illuminate its magnificence. Still, *The Last Castle* will appeal to audiences who delighted in *Downton Abbey* and who look forward to its creator Julian Fellowes’s new series—aptly titled *The Gilded Age*. ♦

Marshall Law

The chief justice was a lifelong antagonist of Jefferson.

BY GERALD J. RUSSELLO

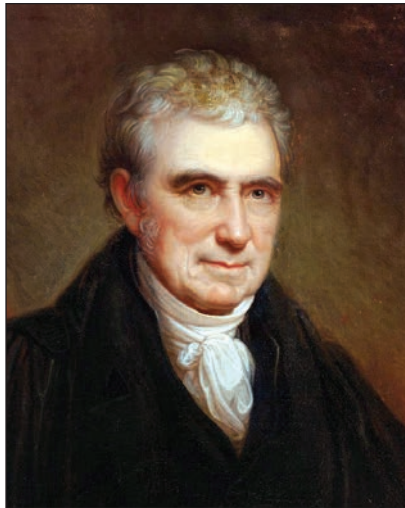
In October 1797, 42-year-old John Marshall arrived in Paris with Charles Pinckney and Elbridge Gerry, the three of them constituting an official American commission charged with defusing tensions arising from the larger war between England and France. Both belligerents were seizing American ships thought to be trading with the enemy, and relations between the Jeffersonian Republicans, who favored the French, and the Federalists and President John Adams, who tilted British, were growing more acrimonious. The commission was to meet Talleyrand, the French foreign minister, who embodied both the ancien régime and the new revolutionary fervor (though his greatest cause was himself). He was well educated, rich, and powerful. John Marshall, by contrast, was a backwoods Virginian with little more than a year of formal education. This was his first trip outside America.

But Marshall was no stripling. He had fought with Washington and served during the harsh winter at Valley Forge, where he was known for his good humor and energy when the Continental Army was at perhaps its lowest point. (It is still shocking to read that the troops stayed that winter without being paid or adequately fed and with many lacking shoes.) He led the fight to ratify the Constitution in Virginia, along with his friend James Madison, against the giants of the Virginia elite, Patrick Henry and George Mason.

Still, nothing in Marshall's experience could have quite prepared him for the bizarre diplomatic dancing he experienced in Paris, the scorn and

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Without Precedent
Chief Justice John Marshall and His Times
by Joel Richard Paul
Riverhead, 501 pp., \$30



John Marshall (1755-1835), painted in 1834 by Rembrandt Peale

schemes of Talleyrand and his associates. In the end, after many weeks of resisting Talleyrand's blandishments and threats, Marshall and Pinckney returned emptyhanded to the United States. (Gerry stayed behind at Talleyrand's demand.) When the commission's correspondence from France was produced to Congress in what became known as the XYZ Affair—those letters standing in for the names of the French diplomats—Talleyrand's poor behavior was revealed: arrogance, bullying, badgering for huge bribes. The revelations turned American opinion decisively against France and contributed to President Adams's decision to appoint Marshall secretary of state.

The encounter with Talleyrand and France appears about a third of the way

through the engrossing new biography of Marshall by Joel Richard Paul, a professor at the University of California's Hastings School of Law. Just when you think we have reached Founders overload, they continue to astonish. Marshall is best remembered today for his three decades as chief justice of the United States, a position he assumed in 1801; he was the last chief justice to be born before America proclaimed its independence. Marshall was a cousin of Thomas Jefferson but unlike Jefferson was born poor. Indeed, as Paul discusses, their common ancestor William Randolph disinherited Marshall's family in favor of Jefferson's because of family scandal; therefore, as a recipient of the Randolph fortune, Jefferson "enjoyed enormous privilege and wealth" while Marshall scrambled on the frontier, one of his parents' 15 children. Nevertheless, his father, through an association with Lord Fairfax, a large Virginia landowner, eventually prospered, and young John took advantage of a substantial library in Lord Fairfax's Virginia home. Despite his lack of formal education, Marshall became a lawyer and quickly established himself among the prominent men of Richmond in the years leading up to the revolution.

As Paul notes, this background inculcated in Marshall a very American sense of equality:

His upbringing allowed him to identify with the common man and also gave him the aplomb to associate with his social superiors. ... The narrative of the Marshall family's fall from grace also endowed him with the boldness to lift himself up and the confidence of knowing that this was possible.

Jefferson, in contrast, comes across as snobbish, opportunistic instead of principled, and ineffectual. (Paul's account of Jefferson's ignominious abandonment of Richmond during the Revolutionary War when he was governor of Virginia should dent his reputation.) Marshall's long history with Jefferson is a thread that runs through the book, for not only was there family controversy but the two disagreed on most every issue they were to face in the succeeding decades—not the least of which was the Aaron Burr treason trial in 1807. In those days,

Supreme Court justices still “rode the circuit” and it fell to Marshall to preside over the spectacle of the Burr trial in Richmond. During those proceedings Marshall resisted Jefferson’s overreach (and likely dishonesty) and rejected the prosecution’s hazy evidence of treason.

Marshall’s understanding of the proper role of the federal government was shaped by his experiences before his 1801 appointment as chief justice. As a Federalist, and like his sometime ally Alexander Hamilton, Marshall believed the central government needed to be strong enough to act in the national interest. As Paul explains, what Marshall witnessed during the war profoundly affected him: “The near collapse of the army convinced Marshall that the Articles of Confederation were unworkable. Only a strong central government with the power to tax, regulate commerce, and raise an army could defend the nation effectively.”

As chief justice, Marshall established the Supreme Court as a truly coequal branch of government and decided cases in favor of a broad interpretation of the Constitution and the Court’s powers. The impress he left upon the Court and judicial practice is not unlike that made by his hero Washington upon the presidency. Paul brings to life Marshall’s seminal cases, especially *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), the crucial case that confirmed the practice of judicial review; *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819); *Cohens v. Virginia* (1821); and *Gibbons v. Ogden* (1824). Taken together, these cases asserted federal supremacy over the states. In *Cohens*, Marshall ruled that the Supreme Court had jurisdiction to review a criminal conviction involving the sale of lottery tickets. He wrote that

the American States, as well as the American people, have believed a close and firm Union to be essential to their liberty and to their happiness. They have been taught by experience that this Union cannot exist without a government for the whole, and they have been taught by the same experience that this government would be a mere shadow, that must disappoint all their hopes, unless invested with large portions of that sovereignty which belongs to independent States.

But having established the principle, Marshall upheld the ability of Virginia to prohibit lottery sales in the state, and so also the conviction of the Cohens. In *Gibbons*, involving the rights of steamships in state waters, Marshall found that such state laws were inconsistent with the supremacy and commerce clauses of the Constitution.

Marshall was also adroit in dealing with the vicious Cherokee-nation policies of Andrew Jackson’s administration. Paul makes a strong case that although Marshall was not free from prejudice

*Less effete than
Jefferson, less aristocratic
than Adams, less
haughty than
Hamilton, Marshall
was known for his
friendships and for an
earthiness that recalls
Abe Lincoln.*

his three decisions on relations with the Native American tribes were a principled effort to preserve their sovereignty against incursion by the states and hostility from the federal government.

Paul is similarly persuasive on Marshall and slavery. Marshall owned slaves in Richmond, although he was never a plantation owner and he believed that slavery would have to come to an end, preferably gradually. He agitated for reforms to the system of slavery, including making manumission easier, and as a lawyer he defended slaves pro bono against their masters. Paul notes Marshall’s close relationship with his valet, Spurlock, who managed Marshall’s household. The chief justice’s decisions upholding national sovereignty were rightly seen by Southerners as an attack on their ability to protect the “peculiar institution”; unfortunately, Marshall was succeeded by Roger Taney, who had a different view. Chief Justice Taney would argue, in the infamous *Dred Scott* decision, that the federal Consti-

tution could not countenance blacks as free citizens, leaving it to states to regulate slavery.

Paul does not shy away from criticism when he feels Marshall was simply inventing legal doctrine or was not a neutral judge—as in several land cases over which he presided despite having a personal interest, and even in *Marbury*, where Marshall signed the very commissions that were at issue before the Court. Nevertheless, Marshall comes off as a principled jurist in a deeply polarizing time.

In synthesizing existing scholarship and a fair amount of archival work, Paul does not break much new ground in *Without Precedent*. But he presents a very personable and accessible Marshall. Less effete than Jefferson, less aristocratic than Adams, and less haughty than Hamilton, Marshall was known for his friendships and for an earthiness that brings to mind Abe Lincoln. As Paul also notes, Marshall’s life, again like Lincoln’s, was marked by his great love and devotion for his wife, Polly, who suffered from various ailments and was frequently bedridden, a trial for the often-traveling and fun-loving Marshall; less evident here are Marshall’s relations with his children, though Paul is clear on the influence Marshall’s own father had on him.

Marshall’s last years were marked by increasing tension with President Jackson and the loss of several children and friends. He still tried to sit circuit in Richmond in 1834-35 before he was forced to travel to Philadelphia for medical help and kept bedridden by complications from a spine injury and liver abscesses. When Marshall died in July 1835, “the nation mourned the loss of the chief justice with the kind of somber ceremony and affection that it had mourned Washington,” with overflowing eulogies and a massive funeral procession in Philadelphia. Paul closes with an assessment of Marshall compared with his great antagonist Jefferson and concludes that despite his flaws, Marshall’s overarching goal was a worthy one: preservation of the union, sought through compromise when possible and imagination when necessary. ♦



Kristen Bell, William Jackson Harper, and Ted Danson in *The Good Place*

B&A

The Divine (Situational) Comedy

Ethics in the afterlife on NBC's The Good Place.

BY ALEXI SARGEANT

The *Good Place* is the most unexpectedly profound show on television. NBC's afterlife sitcom, which just concluded its second season, stars Kristen Bell as an impostor in paradise and Ted Danson as her supernatural overseer. It begins by skewering shallowly sentimental ideas of heaven and then transitions to asking (sincerely!) how a bad person can become good. You know the show is something special when the Kierkegaard jokes start and don't let up.

Bell plays a selfish woman named Eleanor Shellstrop who's let into "The Good Place" by mistake and realizes she has to learn ethics to blend in. Danson's unearthly architect Michael introduces Eleanor to her unearned eternal reward, a bour-

geois bohemian paradise of manicured lawns and frozen yogurt stores on every corner. The ostensible moral basis of this afterlife is an absurd Pelagian system: If you "Remember Sister's Birthday" you gain 15.02 points, but to "Ruin an Opera with Boorish Behavior" loses you 90.90 points.

Those who come out ahead in this reckoning are rewarded with houses in the eternal suburb and assigned a singular "soulmate"—just as Hallmark piety would expect. Eleanor's supposed soulmate is ethics professor Chidi (William Jackson Harper), a sweet nerd who agrees to keep Eleanor's secret and to teach her how actually to become the good person she's impersonating. Their under-the-radar ethics classes become entangled with the shenanigans of another impostor, a Jacksonville Jaguars fan posing as a Buddhist monk, Jason (Manny Jacinto), and his supercilious celeb-

tante soulmate Tahani (Jameela Jamil). Rounding out the cast is the neighborhood's Siri-like, programmed, all-purpose assistant Janet (D'Arcy Carden). The show is a wacky ensemble comedy even as it's an earnest exploration of moral development.

Showrunner Michael Schur (a co-creator of *Parks and Recreation* and *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*) has blogged about the ethical struggles he's faced in his life, some of which have their own sitcom-like quality. Example: In 2005, Schur's fiancée rear-ended a Saab, leaving it with an all-but-invisible scratch on its bumper. The Saab's driver wanted to file an insurance claim for the scratch. To dissuade him from filing a claim—which might have raised insurance rates for Schur's fiancée—Schur promised to donate to a Hurricane Katrina relief fund, then started roping in his friends to donate as well, as a way of shaming the unnamed "Saab guy." But Schur began to have moral qualms about his actions, and spent hours on the phone with Harvard, Yale, and Stanford ethics professors to talk through the situation.

Someone inclined to concoct a plot like this—and then to noodle nervously over its morality—has just the sort of mind well suited to putting TV characters into sticky situations. Although Schur says he consulted ethics professors in 2005, he never mentions seeking religious guidance. Nevertheless, in *The Good Place* he's made a show that explores and then explodes "moralistic therapeutic deism," the mushy, post-Christian pseudo-religion of America's youth diagnosed by sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton. Moralistic therapeutic deism posits that God wants you to be happy but otherwise stays out of the way and that nice people go to heaven when they die. *The Good Place* starts off as a Technicolor *Divine Comedy* for the therapeutic deist universe. The twists of the show suggest Schur is well aware of the extent to which this worldview is lame and saccharine. (Ye who enter here: Major spoilers follow.)

By the first-season finale, the human characters' deceptions are found out and a stern judge tells them they must

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COLLEEN HAYES / NBC

choose two of their number to go to “The Bad Place.” As they debate and bicker, Eleanor realizes that they are torturing each other with their faults and foibles. This isn’t “The Good Place” at all, and Michael is a demon pulling a *No Exit* on them. It’s a brilliant moment, because it upends audience expectations and retroactively makes this sappy, chichi heaven a satire of our impoverished imaginings of eternal bliss.

Where can a show go after revealing its characters are in hell? Only up. Eleanor’s quest to become good causes Michael to have a crisis of conscience. Soon, he joins Chidi’s ethics classes and begins hatching a scheme with his erstwhile torturees to put one over on his fellow demons and stage a breakout for the real Good Place. The show sings as its morally ramshackle characters try to wrap their heads around different philosophies of good and evil. In one episode, when Michael leans toward using murder to solve a problem, a distraught Chidi tries to explain the doctrine of double effect to him. Briefly, the doctrine is that one may undertake a morally neutral act, knowing two effects will likely come of it, one good and one bad, only if one intends the good effect and does not intend the bad as either an end or a means—St. Thomas Aquinas applied it to using violence in self-defense. The recovering demon parses Chidi’s lesson to mean he should do what he was going to do, “and it *sure* would be *terrible* if that ultimately led to Derek’s death, wink.” (He says the word “wink” out loud.) This is a reaction that’s laughably familiar to anyone who has tried to clarify what the doctrine of double effect really is to someone who wants it to justify any desired immoral action.

One whole episode is spent running variations on the famous “trolley problem,” the allegedly ethics-clarifying hypothetical that asks you to decide how you would act if an out-of-control trolley were on course to run over several people. Would you pull a lever to direct the trolley if it meant it would run over only one person? Would you push a person into the trolley’s path?

Chidi first explains the problem by diagramming the thought experiment on a blackboard, but a nettled Michael, resentful of being taught by a human, hijacks the lesson and plunges Chidi into a hyperreal simulation in which he’s soaked in cartoonish blood whichever choice he makes.

Bioethicist Elizabeth Yuko wrote for the *Atlantic* that *The Good Place*’s trolley problem episode “allows the experiment to surface in multiple

For all the ways Eleanor’s sleazy behavior and poor impulse control make her a hilarious center of the show’s humor, it’s her character arc toward accepting responsibility and receiving love that makes ‘The Good Place’ captivating and consistently enjoyable.

forms, helpfully reinforcing the notion that there is, in fact, no single correct answer, and many ways of thinking through the question.” But the show does not in fact make the ethical shrug Yuko imputes to it. Michael’s use of the trolley problem represents his briefly backsliding into torturing Chidi, suggesting there is something demonic about the trolley problem itself, or at least about the utilitarian interpretations that make it a numbers game—as if any evil can be made good if a malicious mastermind adds enough arbitrary consequences to refraining from evil. The trolley problem is one of those edge cases so sharp it’ll cut you. When it is referenced later in the season, it is to show how Michael has grown beyond it. He muses, as he takes a self-sacrificial action, that he has solved the trolley

problem. This is a solid point based in virtue ethics: A person with a well-formed conscience will resist or escape the constraints of an immoral dichotomy, to the point of giving up his or her own life.

Although the show has been airing on broadcast TV, it is also clearly written with the streaming—and even binge-watching—audience in mind, with each episode flowing immediately into the next and the characters evolving over the course of the show. The show’s writing on philosophy is smart, although not completely consistent; Chidi, the adorably geeky, indecisive ethics professor, does seem to swing wildly between utilitarianism and deontology as the plot demands. However, the very fact this is a relevant critique of a *sitcom* illustrates the show’s earnest, ethical themes. Because the showrunner cares about Eleanor learning to be a less selfish and more altruistic person, we the viewers care as well. For all the ways Eleanor’s sleazy behavior and poor impulse control make her a hilarious center of the show’s humor, it’s her character arc toward accepting responsibility and receiving love that makes *The Good Place* captivating and consistently enjoyable.

The second-season finale, which again takes the show in an unexpected direction, offers a mix of insight and inanity. The heavenly bureaucracy still seems capricious rather than wise. But Eleanor’s journey has taken her past the trite idea that “Hell is other people” to an understanding that she can’t become a better person by sheer willpower. For that, she needs others’ love, instruction, and support—even of a supernatural kind. By progressing from parodying popular pictures of paradise to entertaining real moral debate, *The Good Place* has backed into the idea of divine grace—specifically, prevenient grace, the kind we have to receive as a gift before we can desire the good. And who knows: Maybe next season we will find out that the show is all taking place in Purgatory—not a vaguely limbo-ish place (as in the finale of *Lost*) but a sin-expurgating, growing-in-sanctity place made by God for us wayward souls groping toward the light. ♦

“[Mohamad] Khweis was tasked with running errands such as grocery shopping, taking out the trash at his Islamic State house and caring for wounded fighters. He eventually became ‘frustrated with waiting’ for military training, according to an FBI special agent who testified during Khweis’s trial. He ended up fleeing and was captured in Iraq.”

**—“For Americans Who Joined, ISIS didn’t meet the hype,”
Washington Post, February 8, 2018**

Just subscriber please turn out the lights?

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‘Jihadis today—pfft!’

YOUNG RECRUITS DISMISSED AS SOFT

*‘A generation
of snowflakes’*

BY RANDALL FOEST

Ahmad Abdullah Almasi, the regional commander of ISIS here in Syria, takes a long drag on the water pipe. Twin jets of smoke billow from his nostrils.

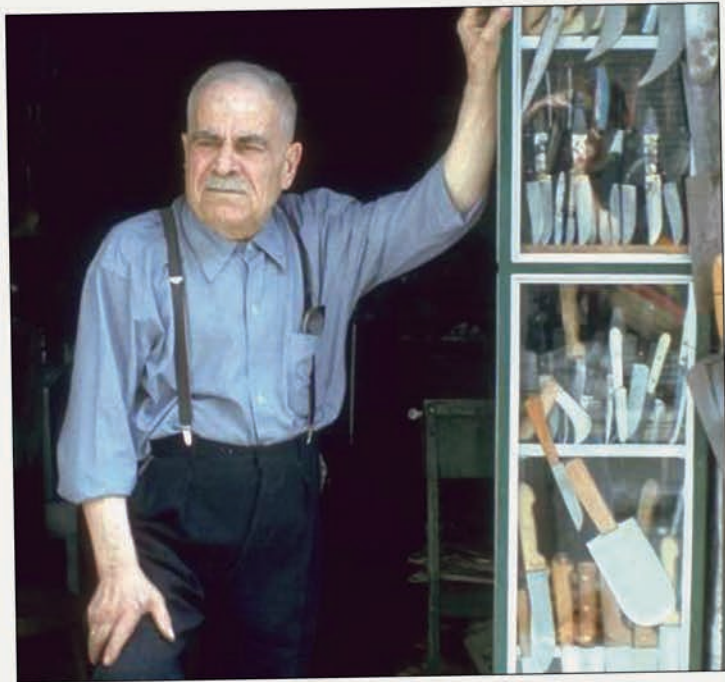
“These jihadis today,” he says with a shake of his head. “They think they can just come over here, strap on an explosive vest, and blow themselves up at a military checkpoint like *that*,” he says, snapping his fingers. “They do not want to do the hard things. The training. The preparation. Executing prisoners, flogging women who show their faces, putting bombs into children’s toys. There is much work. Much work. It is not all suicide missions and heavenly virgins.”

Suddenly he rises from his cushion.

“I show you something,” he says. He returns with a meat cleaver. The blade is chipped, the handle cracked.

“I used this to chop off thieves’ hands,” he says. “Five years I chopped off hands. Before that? Vegetables, chicken, and lamb. Chop, chop, chop. All day long, until my own hand is ready to fall off.”

He lays the cleaver aside and takes another drag on the argileh. “The infidels, they have a famous legend about a great warrior



Ahmad Abdullah Almasi with some tools of his trade

named the Karate Kid. Before he could fight, he waxed cars. All day long: wax on, wax off. Then he painted fences. Paint, paint, paint. So it is here. Before you wage war in the name of Allah, you chop vegetables in the name of Allah. You take out garbage in the name of Allah. You wash dishes in the name of Allah. You must—what is the expression?—you must pay your dues.”

Almasi sits silently for a long moment, absorbed in his thoughts.

“I blame the parents,” he finally says. “Everything is about *self-esteem* these days. Every child in a race receives a trophy.

Every boy in school gets high marks. There is no discipline. No struggle. So when they come here, they think they can just pick up an FN-6 anti-aircraft missile and point it at the nearest MiG-23 or start torturing prisoners to death for a YouTube video. And then when we tell them they must start at the bottom and work their way up to these things, they give us attitude.”

“There was this one American,” he continued. “A real—what do you say?—piece of work. One time

JIHADIS CONTINUED ON A17