

**CALIFORNIA,
THE ONE-PARTY STATE**
MICHAEL WARREN

the weekly Standard

OCTOBER 8, 2018 • \$5.99

Climbing the Trump-Era Bestseller List

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

... in which
our correspondent
reads them all,
so you don't have to



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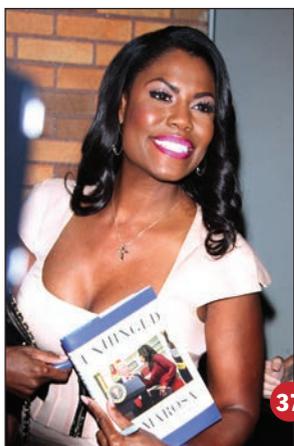
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COVER: DAVE MALAN

The Quindlen Effect

Readers of THE SCRAPBOOK will remember *New York Times* columnist Anna Quindlen, author of some of the most widely praised and dumbest columns ever written.

Quindlen stepped down from the *Times* in 1995 in order to pursue a career as a writer of sentimental novels, and it has to be said she's done well for herself.

Those who remember her as a *Times* columnist, however, will recall her distinctive and powerful combination of tired metaphors, glib phrasing, and artificial outrage, and especially her strong propensity to argue fiercely for points few of her readers would disagree with. The critic Lee Siegel, in a 1999 essay for the *New Republic*, called this propensity “the Quindlen Effect.” The object of her ire was often something “no sane *Times* reader would ever defend,” he wrote, but Quindlen would go on at length in a “surfeit of sentiment ringing with an absence of true feeling.”

Today's *New York Times* is beset by the Quindlen Effect. The same is true, indeed possibly truer, of



the *Washington Post*. Many of these newspapers' columnists can't stop denouncing a thing that 90 or 95 percent of their readers already oppose and/or loathe: the Trump administration and Donald Trump himself. This magazine, as readers will be aware, has not been reluctant to criticize the 45th president, but we're also aware that there are other topics under the sun. We're not sure how many recent columns by Paul Krugman, Charles Blow, and Gail Collins have neglected the theme of Trump's all-around awfulness, but the number must be low. The *Post*'s E.J. Dionne and Eugene

Robinson never stray far from the subject either.

Which brings us to the news that the *Times* has hired a new columnist, Michelle Alexander. We are not otherwise familiar with Alexander, a civil rights lawyer and legal scholar according to her byline, but her debut column isn't promising. In it, she takes on the challenging and controversial topic of—how did you guess?—the awfulness of Donald Trump. Her cutesy thesis is that the “Resistance”

is Trump himself. How's that? Because Trump “resists” the river of progress. Pretty clever, huh?

Every leap forward for American democracy—from slavery's abolition to women's suffrage to minimum-wage laws to the Civil Rights Acts to gay marriage—has been traceable to the revolutionary river, not the resistance. In fact, the whole of American history can be described as a struggle between those who truly embraced the revolutionary idea of freedom, equality and justice for all and those who resisted.

One might wonder whether it matters, in the end, whether we consider ourselves members of the resistance or part of the revolutionary river. Can't we be both?

The answer, I think, is yes and no. Yes, of course, we can and must resist the horrors of the current administration—thousands of lives depend on us doing what we can to mitigate the harm to our fellow humans and the planet we share. But the mind-set of “the resistance” is slippery and dangerous.

We often wonder if Donald Trump's bewildering rise to power didn't owe itself in part to his ability to make his most impassioned adversaries believe they can thwart him by producing fifth-rate balderdash. Call it the Quindlen Multiplier Effect. ♦

Stamp Act

Officials in Fairfax County, Va., recently wondered why so few college students take advantage of the county's absentee ballot program, so they did what government officials normally do when they encounter a perplexing question: They convened a “focus group.” That's a fancy-sounding way of saying: They asked some college kids why they don't vote.

The answer they discovered has generated some ridicule. The reason a lot of college kids don't

vote absentee, so they say, is that they can't figure out how to buy stamps. Lisa Connors, an official with



the Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs, tells local radio station WTOF that “the students will go through the process of applying for a mail-in absentee ballot—they will fill out the ballot, and then, they don't know where to get stamps. . . . They all agreed that they knew lots of people who did not send in their ballots because it was too much of a hassle or they didn't know where to get a stamp.”

We will grant that a young person bright enough to gain

TRASH CAN AND FIGURES: BIGSTOCK

acceptance to college ought to possess sufficient intelligence to buy a stamp. Ha ha, those lazy millennials, etc., etc.

Still, we view the students' quandary with a smidgen of sympathy. It's a shame and an outrage that the most advanced nation in the world still requires people wishing to send an envelope from one location to another first to obtain an overpriced government-issued sticker. We bear no ill will toward employees of the U.S. Postal Service, who mostly perform their jobs well under artificially constrained circumstances, but federal laws preventing private companies from delivering envelopes have made the simple act of sending a thank-you note to Grandma one of the most irksome and time-consuming activities in American life.

We can sympathize with 18-to-20-year-olds who, accustomed as they are to email and the hyperefficient delivery systems of UPS and FedEx, find the task of getting a stamp strange and confusing. When else does an ordinary American have to stand in an inert, almost Soviet-length line simply to buy an everyday product? Why is it that declining demand drives the price of USPS stamps higher rather than lower? Sorry, we're with the kids on this one. ♦

Religious Right and Left

Given our inveterate mocking of the *New York Times*, we'd be remiss if we didn't draw attention to an incisive op-ed published in the paper's September 20 edition by the Cato Institute's Emily Ekins. The headline: "The Liberalism of the Religious Right."

Ekins upends the assumption that Donald Trump's most religious supporters are also his most ideologically fervent supporters. In a report published by the Democracy Fund Voter Study Group,



she finds that "religion appears to actually be moderating conservative attitudes, particularly on some of the most polarizing issues of our time: race, immigration and identity." Indeed, "churchgoing Trump voters have more favorable feelings toward African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Jews, Muslims and immigrants compared with nonreligious Trump voters." The findings persist across demographic factors such as education and race.

This conclusion accords with what we've suspected for

years: Sincere religious belief tends to give believers some assurance that the present life is not all there is and so inhibits them from adopting extreme beliefs in order to protect the nation they value from real or perceived threats. It doesn't always work that way, of course—some religious people are wackos—but in our experience it works that way more often than not. "Secular conservatives lack church membership to provide that sense of belonging and may succumb to the temptation to find it on the basis of their race or the nation," Ekins writes, "thereby bolstering white nationalism or the alt-right movement. We found that secular Trump voters are three times as likely as churchgoing Trump

BELOW: BIGSTOCK

voters to say that their white racial identity is ‘extremely’ important to them; a majority of them report feeling like strangers in the country.”

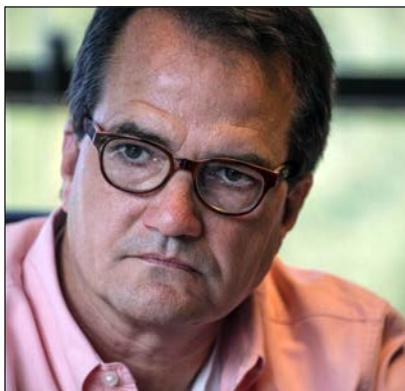
In one sense, it’s a touch galling that *Times* readers need to be told that religious belief can make people more reasonable rather than less. Yet most liberal *Times* readers, we suspect, will interpret a vote for Donald Trump (even one motivated by a desire to keep Hillary Clinton from the presidency) as prima facie evidence of unthinking malice. Ekins has performed a service in reminding our liberal brethren that this is not so.

For her next study, we suggest an attempt to answer the question: Does religious belief tend to moderate progressives’ views on race, immigration, and identity—or to aggravate their zealotry? ♦

Soul Man

Ralph Taylor, owner of the Orion Insurance Group in Lynnwood, Washington, is decidedly white. Several years ago, though, he took a DNA ancestry test that determined he was only 90 percent Caucasian. He was also, according to the ancestry test, 6 percent “indigenous American” and 4 percent “sub-Saharan African.” This led Taylor to apply to the state for certification that Orion is a minority-owned business. In Washington, as in most states, minority-owned firms receive tax and other benefits.

Taylor’s application was denied, on



Ralph Taylor

the grounds that he is white, whereupon he sued the Washington Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises and the federal government. “There’s no objective criteria, and they’re picking winners and losers,” he tells the *Seattle Times*. His suit is now on the docket of the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Not surprisingly, Taylor is hoping to make a larger point. He told the *Washington Post* he “would like to see the minority-business certification process scrapped and replaced with a program that would be based on socioeconomic status, not race. After all, he points out, the son of a millionaire such as Michael Jordan would be considered ‘disadvantaged’ under the existing guidelines.”

He’s right about that. Government agencies can and should stop rewarding some people—and by extension punishing others—for the possession of preferred physical traits. ♦

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The Deerslayer

Stories of first deer hunts are a staple of family lore for many Americans. The genre peaks around the dinner table at Thanksgiving and Christmas, where the token vegan relatives, already feeling a twinge of guilt for demanding a meatless turkey molded out of tofu, are obliged to hear how cousin Johnny-the-future-serial-killer bagged those antlers. That's not the reason the story is being told, of course. Hunting stories are about honor and respect and other timeless values. The plot is always the same: Johnny enters the forest a boy and emerges a man. For my younger brother Noah, however, the saga lacked all romance.

It was the last day of his very first deer season. Noah had been hunting with his friends since dawn on their grandfather's tree farm, a wonderfully isolated stretch of wilderness in Culpeper, Virginia. He'd spent countless weekends there fishing in the pond, riding dirt bikes, and tossing fireworks, but the sacred rite of deer slaying is reserved for 16-year-olds. Now he was finally of age, but his first deer season was coming to an unsuccessful close. The fall had passed quickly without a kill, and daylight was fading fast.

Freezing and bored, Noah's friends trudged uphill to the house. My brother stayed in his tree stand, insulated by inexperience. It was 5:45. The season ended at 6:00. Swallowing a lump of disappointment, he knew his next chance was eight months away.

He heard movement behind him. A buck stepped into the clearing. Noah's brain and heart gave each other a sideways glance and flipped out screaming in unison. The deer grazed. Noah's brain and heart

knocked the top off a bottle of adrenaline, clinked glasses, and drank to excess. The deer stood almost perfectly still, flicking his beautiful white ears. Noah remembered the existence of his rifle. The deer, deep in deer thoughts, failed to notice the first bullet flying overhead.

Noah is a talented shot under normal circumstances. But at that critical



moment my brother had no scope on his rifle (it had malfunctioned the day before), no iron sights, and no common sense. He was guessing instead of aiming, and somehow his second guess went through the deer's head.

Most whitetails run after they've been wounded. This particular buck, at peace with himself and the universe, flopped to the ground like a World Cup soccer player hoping for a red card. Noah took four more shots and missed four more times.

The horror sank in. Three generations of men, all waiting for him up at the house, had taught Noah that a

hunter obsesses over accuracy, ammunition, and his prey's anatomy for the sake of a humane kill. Now he'd maimed a living thing. Noah always carries one extra round with him in his pocket, a romanticized lucky bullet that he plans to keep until they make that *Duck Dynasty* spin-off reality show starring him, in which he wills the bullet to his son, Noah Jr., during an emotional season finale. To clarify, that will be a new lucky bullet—because Noah chambered the original lucky bullet and missed again.

Petrified, he climbed down and ran toward his victim. Up close, it was clear that the buck was about the size of a family dog. I'll spare you the gory details, but it took a hunting knife, a rifle butt swung like a croquet mallet, and Noah running a mile through the snow to get a second gun to finish the task.

"Congratulations," the grandfather said, "you shot the smallest deer of the season," watching one of the deer's limbs spin freely on a string of cartilage. On the way to the butcher shop, the hunters heaped character-building shame on Noah. "It's a tradition that you eat part of the heart of your first deer," they told him, offering a *Temple of Doom*-style slice. Traumatized and looking for redemption, Noah snatched it like a Costco sample. "And then he actually ate it," his friend told me later. "We were just joking!"

I hope the story of Noah's first deer hunt comes up at the dinner table more often than Thanksgiving and Christmas. Hemingway might be unimpressed, but it's one of the best tales I've ever heard. Is hunting sometimes a cruel, brutal sport? Clearly. Love hunting, hate hunting, I don't care. My brother went into the woods an adolescent and emerged a kinder, gentler man.

GRANT WISHARD

The GOP's Best Argument

Donald Trump's Washington is compelling TV. Every day, Beltway subplots take new twists. What comes next with the Russia investigation? Trade wars? North Korean rapprochement? Deep state intrigue? Mistress payoffs? What cabinet member or presidential adviser is taking a shiv to the back today? News junkies around the country have been binge-watching this show for more than two years.

Is it any wonder, then, that Republicans' single biggest policy achievement—tax reform—receives scant attention? An internal Republican National Committee poll earlier this month concluded that Republicans had “lost the messaging battle” on tax cuts. The survey, conducted by right-leaning Public Opinion Strategies, found that, by a two-to-one margin, Americans believe that the tax cuts benefited large corporations and the rich more than middle-class families.

Americans are failing to see the connection between the new tax law and the booming economy. By slashing corporate taxes and increasing incentives for investment, the Republican tax plan was intended to let loose the economy, which grew steadily but slowly in the latter Obama years. The results of Republican economic policy, led by the tax overhaul and sweeping deregulation, are manifest. Growth is accelerating. Unemployment is at a two-decade low. The stock market hit an all-time high on September 21. Even wages are finally growing, shooting up in August at their fastest rate in nine years. Business confidence, business investment, consumer confidence, corporate profits—all point upward.

That so many economic indicators suddenly register strength is astounding—especially given so many uncertainties: the future of free trade, our swelling national debt, and rising interest rates. We're concerned about these things. As James Capretta and Yuval Levin wrote in our last issue, Trump “promised voters big tax cuts, no changes to entitlement spending, and a significant reinvestment in the military. With that combination of commitments, he signaled that restraining deficits and debt would not be a

priority for his administration.” Spending on entitlements is the primary driver of the national debt. The unwillingness to address this growing crisis is one of the president's biggest failures, even if he deserves some credit for our current economic growth.

Businesses deserve credit, too, of course. They are responding to the incentives by investing and hiring, which is making a tight job market even tighter and pushing wages higher.

Economic growth and nearly full employment isn't what Democrats and progressives expected. *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman on the day after the 2016 election predicted: “We are very probably looking at a global recession, with no end in sight” because of a “regime that will be ignorant of economic policy.” Senate minor-

ity leader Chuck Schumer said in late 2017 that the effect of the tax law was a big mystery: “If the economy grows or shrinks, if it creates jobs or loses them, who knows? Certainly no one here.” Certainly not Schumer. Nancy Pelosi called the tax bill “Armageddon” and “the worst bill in the history of the United States Congress.”

In ordinary times, such strong economic performance would be likely to keep a political party in power. But these are not ordinary times. Democrats are heavy favorites to take control of the House and have a shot at a majority in the Senate, too, even as economic worries have plunged to record lows. Americans see evidence of a solid economy all around them—in their neighborhoods, at their jobs, and in their retirement accounts. But they don't hear a lot about that evidence when they follow the news.

It's true that the media are generally reluctant to credit positive economic news when Republicans are in charge, but that doesn't explain everything. The more compelling explanation is lack of a clear message, and that comes from the top. The president is too easily baited, his attention span too short, to let a robust economy tell its own story. He talks about the positive economic news. The trouble is that he talks about everything else, too, all the time. Trump has an unflinching ability to get the media



Sign of the times: Unemployment's at a two-decade low.

discussing and debating things other than the good economic news. As soon as there's evidence of solid wage growth or record investment numbers, he can be counted on to attack his own attorney general on Twitter or pick a fight with NFL players.

Almost nobody is reporting, for example, that the House will vote this month on a second round of tax reform designed to lock in last year's tax cuts, aid retirement savings, and spur innovation. Everybody knows, by contrast, about the latest tweetstorm and the ludicrous White House melodramas.

What's needed is relentless message discipline that draws a straight line between the GOP's economic policies and boom times. In the 1990s, even Bill Clinton's wandering

eye could focus like a laser on the economy. His 1992 campaign's internal motto—"it's the economy, stupid"—might easily apply to the present cycle. Clinton's success overseeing the country's longest economic expansion rightly belongs to the congressional Republicans who alternately forced and enabled him to scuttle left-liberal conventional wisdom. But credit the 42nd president; he understood what got him into office and kept him there.

Tax reform passed last year with zero Democratic votes, and Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell said, "If we can't sell this to the American people, we ought to go into another line of work." Come next year, too many Republicans will likely have to do just that. The good news? A lot of companies are hiring. ♦

We Haven't 'Wiped Out' ISIS

'T hanks to the United States military and our partnership with many of your nations," President Donald Trump said in remarks to the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, "I am pleased to report that the bloodthirsty killers known as ISIS have been driven out from the territory they once held in Iraq and Syria." The statement is technically true but misleading: ISIS has lost most of the territory it gained beginning in 2011, but that does not mean the international terror group is vanquished. Far from it.

Trump's claim was only technically true, though, because it was scripted. When he speaks off the cuff, as he usually does, he puts the point in far bolder terms. On Monday, for instance, he remarked to Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, "If you look at various parts of the Middle East, you look at Syria, we've wiped out ISIS. [They're] in the very final throes." Vice President Mike Pence frequently makes the same claim. "ISIS is on the run," he said in late August; "their caliphate has crumbled, and we will soon drive ISIS from the face of the earth."

Trump and Pence are politicians, of course, and politicians like to take credit. We don't know if these and many similar statements are mere credit-taking or if they represent the thinking of the administration's top policymakers. Even if it's just political rhetoric, though, declarations that ISIS has been "wiped out" demoralize American intelligence and military personnel working to defeat ISIS right now and encourage quasi-isolationists such as Rand Paul and Bernie Sanders who want the United States to cede its influence in the Middle East and elsewhere.

In this sense, at least, Trump and Pence sound a lot like Barack Obama, who famously told George Stephanopoulos in 2015 that ISIS had been "contained" just hours before

the group's fighters carried out coordinated attacks in Paris, killing 130 people.

The trouble, as we've remarked before in this space, is the blinkered insistence that the Islamic State's strength corresponds to the territory it holds. While it is true that ISIS has been forced to relinquish most of its territory in Iraq and Syria, thanks mostly to the work of the U.S. military, it is also true that the group continues to carry out terror attacks. Nobody knows how many soldiers pledge allegiance to the black flag of the Islamic State, but we do have some idea of its operational capacity. In August alone, ISIS carried out roughly 200 operations in Iraq and Syria. The numbers for September will be about the same. That's considerably fewer than it carried out at the height of its power in 2013 and 2014 but hardly indicative of a group that's been "wiped out."

ISIS has tens of thousands of loyal fighters operating around the world—in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and beyond. ISIS claimed responsibility for a bombing in Syria two months ago that killed 166 people. It conducts operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan on a near-daily basis. The group has fighters in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, too, and has mounted operations as far afield as Australia. ISIS has branches in Niger, Somalia, and Libya—as well as other parts of Africa. A December 2017 report from U.S. Central Command estimated that the ISIS presence in Yemen had "doubled in size over the past year," and the group uses "the ungoverned spaces of Yemen to plot, direct, instigate, resource, and recruit for attacks against America and its allies around the world."

The audience for Trump's boasting, Egyptian president Sisi, knows well the continuing threats from ISIS and other jihadists. In his own speech to the United Nations on Tuesday, Sisi described in detail the comprehensive

counterterrorism efforts undertaken by his government over the past 10 months—known as “Sinai 2018.” As Thomas Joscelyn noted in these pages in February, the threat is so significant the Egyptian government has enlisted the help of Israel’s anti-terror experts to help fight it. An Associated Press story published two days after Trump’s comments reports that the situation there is so dire that Sisi has begun arming Bedouin tribes to fight the Islamic State. The Sinai Peninsula “is the center of a yearslong, bloody conflict between the Egyptian military and a local affiliate of the Islamic State group. . . . Egypt has struggled to defeat the insurgency, led by the IS affiliate known as the Sinai Province of the Islamic State.”

There is furthermore the problem of al Qaeda. The network once headed by Osama bin Laden hasn’t made headlines in Western capitals recently, but there is a growing body of evidence that it is even stronger than ISIS. Terror groups affiliated with al Qaeda don’t brand themselves with the media savvy of ISIS and aggressively take credit

for every terror operation, but they are increasingly active, not just in Iraq and Syria but in Yemen, Somalia, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and in the West. A United Nations report issued in late July concluded that al Qaeda is stronger than ISIS, capable of carrying out more and deadlier operations in the West and East Asia.

The Trump administration deserves credit for the progress it has made in its campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. But progress isn’t the same as victory; diminishing a threat isn’t the same as eliminating it. Rhetorically, the Trump administration is making the same mistake the Obama administration made: declaring victory over jihadist terrorism across the globe. We understand the political and practical attractiveness of such triumphalism. It’s far easier to pretend such threats have been eliminated, particularly if your stated goal is to turn attention back to America. But it is not true. And we can say with confidence that the Trump administration or its successor will come to understand that reality in due course. ♦

Return of the Bush Doctrine?

On September 20, 2001, speaking to a joint session of Congress, President George W. Bush famously articulated the key component of what would later be called the Bush Doctrine: “From this day forward,” the president said, “any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.” It was an assertion of great moral clarity.

If the Bush administration didn’t always adhere to its own doctrine in subsequent years, the Obama administration repudiated it—nowhere more so than in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), otherwise known as the Iran nuclear deal. Supporters of the 2015 agreement vehemently argued that the Trump administration should not pull the United States out of it because Iran was in compliance with its terms. We always doubted that claim—there was plenty of evidence that Tehran was flouting, for example, the agreement’s heavy-water limit—but the core problem with the Iran deal wasn’t so much Iran’s compliance or noncompliance as what the deal set aside. In short: The JCPOA allowed Iran to persist in rogue behavior—including its sponsorship of terrorism across the Middle East and beyond.

The Trump administration rightly and vocally rejected its predecessor’s insistence that Iran’s promise not to pursue

nuclear weapons could be considered in isolation from its malign behavior as a terror sponsor. All week, in anticipation of President Trump’s addresses at the United Nations, top administration officials have been making that case. They’re not short on material.



Secretary of State Pompeo, September 25

“Iran’s leaders sow chaos, death, and destruction,” Trump himself said in remarks at the General Assembly. “They do not respect their neighbors or borders or the sovereign rights of nations. Instead, Iran’s leaders plunder the nation’s resources to enrich themselves and to spread mayhem across the Middle East and far beyond.”

Iran, he argued, has used the cash it procured through the nuclear deal to bolster its terror agenda, advance its missile program, and more. He’s right.

Administration officials say any new deal must address these key deficiencies. In the meantime, the United States is reimposing sanctions lifted under the agreement in an effort to deprive the regime of its capacity to fund terrorist proxies.

Europe, which is sticking with the deal, wants to circumvent these sanctions. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo sent them a stark message on September 25: “By sustaining revenues to the regime, you are solidifying Iran’s ranking as the number one state sponsor of terror, enabling Iran’s violent export of revolution, and making

MANDEL NGAN / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

the regime even richer while the Iranian people scrape by.”

Pompeo went on to note that Iran’s terror support is not confined to the Middle East, as the State Department’s yearly terrorism report, issued last week, made clear. Tehran has been caught conducting or supporting malign activities on U.S. and European soil. The State Department report cites the June 2017 arrest of suspected Hezbollah operatives in New York and Michigan. Another example offered by State’s coordinator for counterterrorism Nathan Sales last week: “On June 30th of this year, German authorities arrested an Iranian official for his role in a terrorist plot to bomb a political rally in Paris.” “Iran uses terrorism as a tool of its statecraft,” Sales added. “It has no reservations about using that tool on any continent.”

There’s also the usual support for terrorism across the Middle East, including cash, arms, and training for groups like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which hold as their goal the destruction of Israel. Lebanese Hezbollah also has a sweetheart deal with Tehran, which every year provides it with \$700 million. And there’s Iran’s longstanding support for Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, who has used chemical weapons against innocent civilians.

Much of Iran’s terror activity is conducted by its Quds Force, which has long been the country’s “primary mecha-

nism for cultivating and supporting terrorists abroad.” Why does Iran use proxy groups to do its dirty work? According to the State Department’s report, “to shield it from the consequences of its aggressive policies.” In other words: to create plausible deniability.

Iran also harbors al Qaeda (AQ) operatives and “has refused to publicly identify the members in its custody,” the State Department noted last week in its report. It “has allowed AQ facilitators to operate a core facilitation pipeline through Iran since at least 2009, enabling AQ to move funds and fighters to South Asia and Syria,” the report reads. Adds a separate State Department report released this week: “As AQ members have been squeezed out of other areas, all indications suggest that they are continuing to find safe haven in Iran.”

Focusing on this reality doubtless makes life more difficult for our diplomats, but that’s thanks to the Obama administration’s naïveté. Diplomacy ought to be rooted in the world as it is, not as our leaders wish it to be, and above all else it should advance America’s interests, elevate our values, and ensure our security. The Trump administration has the right approach, as President Bush did 17 years ago: States that harbor and support terrorism deserve our hostility, not our money. ♦

Small Business Optimism Soars

THOMAS J. DONOHUE

PRESIDENT AND CEO
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is proud to represent Main Street’s millions of small businesses—the engines of our economy. America’s 28 million small businesses represent more than 99% of all employers, account for nearly half of all private sector workers, and produce more than 60% of new jobs.

This week small business leaders from around the country will join us in Washington, D.C., for the Chamber’s 14th annual Small Business Summit. We’ll hear from business leaders across industries and arm them with tools and best practices to bring home to their companies and communities.

One thing we expect to hear a lot about at the summit—as the economy finally gets back on track—is optimism.

MetLife and the Chamber have teamed up to track attitudes across the small business landscape through

a quarterly survey of employers. We recently released our third-quarter index, which reveals that almost 70% of small business owners have a positive outlook about their companies and today’s business environment. And this is the *sixth* consecutive quarter where optimism has *increased*.

There’s no denying that small businesses have much to feel upbeat about. Congress and the White House achieved comprehensive tax reform this year for the first time in three decades. The administration has rolled back dozens of burdensome regulations that stifle innovation and economic growth.

Remarkably, members of our small business community report feeling appreciated by lawmakers in Washington. Chamber member David Mahoney, CEO of Noble Gas Solutions in Upstate New York, speaks for many small business owners when he says, “I might start to feel the love, like somebody else actually cares about me.”

Beginning next year, Mahoney and Noble Gas will be able to write off

business investments. This will enable his company to expense the \$600,000 cost of a new automated cylinder filing island and reinvest that money back into salaries and business expansion. And this is just one example—tax reform is lifting businesses of all sizes.

Even as we celebrate pro-growth victories on tax reform and regulatory relief, there’s still work to be done. At the summit, we will also discuss looming concerns on trade, health care, cybersecurity, and workforce preparedness. Together we will explore solutions to the problems left to solve.

Advocating for small business is one of the most important things we do at the Chamber—and it’s also one of the most inspiring. The enduring optimism and enthusiasm of our nation’s small businesses embody the very best of our free enterprise system. There’s nothing *small* about that.



Learn more at
[uschamber.com/abovethefold](https://www.uschamber.com/abovethefold).

BARTON SWAIM

The Sexual Revolution Is Over

At some point in the fall of 2017, when nearly every day brought news of another famous man disgraced as a result of allegations of sexual misconduct, I remarked flippantly to a liberal friend that the sexual revolution had not worked out the way we were told it would. “Oh, come on,” he responded. “Women were always treated this way. It’s only now that they can speak out about it.” I made the same point to others of a secular or liberal disposition and got more or less the same response each time.

It’s impossible to know when this “revolution” began with any precision, but perhaps we could date it from the publication of “sexologist” Alfred Kinsey’s two famous studies, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* in 1953. Kinsey conducted hundreds of interviews and concluded from these that most Americans’ private sexual practices differed sharply from their professed beliefs about sexual morality. Holding as he did to a crassly Darwinian worldview in which men and women are highly developed animals and so merely animalistic in their appetites, Kinsey believed Americans could achieve greater happiness and fulfillment only by expressing their sexual urges without deference to arbitrary cultural and religious rules. Except, of course, the rule of consent. That one had to stay.

Kinsey’s many critics, then and since, have pointed out the laughably unscientific nature of his research, but it didn’t matter. The second half of the 20th century in the United States is the story of the slow collapse of a

broadly Christian cultural consensus on sexual morality.

At least one sensible way of understanding the ongoing succession of men credibly charged with sexual harassment and assault is that it’s the highly predictable consequence of the revolution begun by Kinsey and his fellow libertine ideologues. Men, especially men of a hubristic bent and in positions of authority, were only



Liberal intellectuals may defend the heritage of sexual liberation if they like, but it will be hard for them to do that while they’re tut-tutting the high school party culture of the 1980s.

too happy to discard the old rules governing the expression of their appetites, but those rules were put in place over many centuries in large part because such men were apt to behave like beasts without them. Setting aside morality and ontology, Kinsey’s presupposition that men are animals isn’t entirely wrong.

The counterargument to this interpretation is the one made by my liberal friends: These things have always happened, only now it’s reported. It’s not an unreasonable point—men have forced themselves on disinclined women since there were men and women. This is the experience of Pamela Andrews in Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*, published in 1740, and of Tamar, half-sis-

ter of the loathsome Amnon, in the Book of Second Samuel.

The question, though, is whether these things happen more frequently as a result of the dissolution of sexual mores. Such a thing is perhaps unknowable in a strict sense, but the important thing is this: It looks and feels like men behave badly much more often than they used to. It’s hard to believe that Harvey Weinstein would have dared to engage in the systematic abuse of women if he had achieved his fame and wealth in the 1890s rather than the 1990s.

It’s for that reason, I think, that public discussions of sexual misbehavior by men have become hopelessly confused. The old rules oppressed women, we’re told, but they also shackled men; now we want some rules back, for men anyway, but it’s never clear which ones or why. Under the sway of the sexual revolution, we were taught that restrictions on sexual relations are irrational and oppressive, manifestations of ancient prejudices, yet meanwhile the rules governing workplace sexual harassment year by year become more voluminous and complex. College campuses are places of license but also places of endless debates about rape, harassment, and the shifting lines between consent and coercion.

The controversy over allegations against Brett Kavanaugh brought these contradictions into sharp relief. Most of the high-profile politicians, entertainers, intellectuals, and journalists recently brought down by credible allegations of sexual misconduct—not all but nearly all—have been left-liberal elites. Those politicians and pundits who deplored their conduct in liberal media venues did not, for the most part, have partisan motivation to assail them as monsters.

With Brett Kavanaugh it was different. A disclaimer: I happen

to believe Kavanaugh is innocent of the uncorroborated allegations brought against him by Christine Blasey Ford, and the other allegations brought against him appear to me laughable. I also happen to think many Democrats, for all their bluster, don't care one way or the other: They were not interested in nailing Kavanaugh for sexual assault; they were interested in blocking him from the Supreme Court. Their interest in Ford's allegations was primarily instrumental, not substantive.

Even so, the allegations against Kavanaugh seem to have provoked America's liberal elites into launching an unwitting attack on the culture of sexual license created by their ideological forebears. Day after day in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* we read accounts of the follies and dangers of youth culture in the 1980s. When Kavanaugh produced his calendars from 1982, the year of the alleged encounter, left-wing pundits scoured it for evidence of sexual allusions. In Kavanaugh's 1982 yearbook he wrote, "Anne Daugherty's—I survived the FFFFFFFFourth of July." To which Democratic activist and lawyer Michael Avenatti responded, "We believe that this stands for: Find them, French them, Feel them, Finger them, F— them, Forget them. . . . Perhaps Sen. Grassley can ask him."

Never was a 17th-century New England Puritan so pruriently inquisitive about the possible sexual misadventures of a teenager.

Even now, with the country's liberal journalists combing through Kavanaugh's early life for any hint of peccadillo, few if any of today's elites will question the premises of the sexual revolution. They will continue to insist that their interests lie only in harassment and assault and not in cultural norms. But eras don't end according to the facile arguments of day-to-day punditry. What matters is the conclusion millions of Americans will draw from this seemingly never-ending succession of ugly accusations and revelations.

Liberal intellectuals may defend the heritage of sexual liberation if

they like, but it will be hard for them to do that while they're tut-tutting the high school party culture of the 1980s; and in any case very few literate Americans are likely to conclude from these unlovely catastrophes that the baby boomers who gave us Woodstock and the Summer of Love had it right all along. Young parents are far likelier to want something better for their children than a world full of sexual aggression and recrimination—a world in which one uncorroborated accusation can bring the nation to an acrimonious standstill.

The idea that a society like ours can never pull back from its accustomed libertinism is not grounded in history. Britain of the 1820s and '30s was far more libertine than Britain of the 1870s and '80s. There is evidence that

concupiscent behavior was commoner in the American colonies of the 1720s than it was after the First Great Awakening of the 1730s and '40s. Already there is evidence that sexual activity is down among teens from what it was a generation ago—evidence, perhaps, of more time spent on social media than in physical gatherings, but also, perhaps, evidence that their parents—the kids who grew up watching *Porky's* and MTV—have rediscovered the virtues of reticence.

What comes next probably won't be some 21st-century form of Victorian public morality. But neither, if I'm right, are we likely to advance further into the realm of sexual chaos urged upon our society by young radicals a half-century ago. Everything comes to an end, including revolutions. ♦

COMMENT ♦ FRED BARNES

Just another reminder: Appeasement never works

There's a worse way to deal with members of a restive voting bloc than fight them. It's called appeasement. And yes, that's the one that Republicans chose to boost Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh.

It didn't work. Of course it didn't work. It's never worked, at least when used by Republicans in a crucial situation. So it was no surprise it failed when Christine Blasey Ford, who claims Kavanaugh assaulted her in 1982, testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Since they're afraid of losing the women's vote in a landslide, Republicans were terrified of Ford. In situations like this, they often adopt the liberal script and assume any unkindness to a woman will have disastrous electoral consequences.

To avoid having 11 GOP men

question Ford, they imported Rachel Mitchell, a sex crimes prosecutor from Arizona, to ask the questions. She did so gently. By the time she finished, the odds on Kavanaugh's con-



A text of the nominee's opening statement was thrown away, and he delivered a fiery indictment of Democrats for turning the hearings into a sham.

firmation had dropped significantly.

Mitchell stood in for all 11 Republicans on the committee, some of whom are tough and effective interrogators. I'm referring to Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and John Kennedy (R-La.),

who had to sit silently while 10 Democrats lauded Ford as if she were a new Joan of Arc. Senator Cory Booker (D-N.J.) called her a “hero” for coming forward to accuse Kavanaugh. Her testimony was warm and appealing.

Republicans recognized what they’d done wrong. While they’re given to weak speeches on controversial issues, Republicans know when they’re dying, Kavanaugh and Graham especially. A text of the nominee’s opening statement that had been released the day before was thrown away, and he delivered a fiery indictment of Democrats for turning the hearings into a sham. The Senate’s right to “advice and consent” had become “search and destroy,” he said.

Kavanaugh was nervous and emotional. But his opening statement was as powerful as his comments in a Fox News interview three days earlier had been wimpy. And he took no guff from Democratic senators. When they demanded yes or no answers, he kept talking.

Before Kavanaugh spoke, there was some doubt among Republicans about his ability to turn the tide. In four days of hearings, he had been impressive in providing detailed answers. But he turned up the intensity when his reputation was on trial and his nomination in doubt. Democrats weren’t ready for it. They were still focusing on micro-issues like his high school yearbook.

Graham delivered a full-throated condemnation of Democrats and had a strong message for Republican senators who might be wavering. “To my Republican colleagues: If you vote no, you are legitimizing the most despicable thing I have seen in my time in politics,” he said.

Two good things may come of this experience for Republicans. By itself, it would be important to win confirmation of Kavanaugh. And if he pulls it off, Republicans would get a huge boost going into the mid-term election. It would be a reversal of GOP fortunes.

Kavanaugh’s rebound thrilled Trump. And why not? He’d said he’d consider a new nominee if this one

continued to falter. Now he may not have to. Two justices in two years would be a remarkable achievement for a president who gets little respect

in Washington and from Democrats and the media. And if it happens now, it will be because Kavanaugh fought back. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PHILIP TERZIAN

Gambling on sports— it’s what Americans want

The local government in Washington, D.C., announced this past week that if the police find you smoking marijuana in public you will not be arrested but issued a citation to pay a nominal fine. How rigorously this not-very-rigorous policy will be enforced is an open question but I am pleased about it, and not for the usual reasons. I loathe pot—the aroma, its effect, the “culture” associated with habitual use—but cannot think of any plausible reason outside custom to criminalize it while tolerating, say, alcohol (which, admittedly, I do not loathe).

I thought of this last spring when the U.S. Supreme Court, in a stroke of clarity and good sense, struck down the 25-year-old federal Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA), which had been intended to ban states from legalizing gambling on athletic events.

To be sure, the Court’s argument in *Murphy v. National Collegiate Athletic Association* was strictly constitutional—PASPA violated New Jersey’s rights under the Tenth Amendment (“The powers not delegated to the United States . . . nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people”)—but it signified as well what we might call a cultural shift.

I have no doubt that if the social stigma attached to gambling were as potent today as it was, say, in the 19th century, the Court might easily have found a rationale to affirm the ban. But in a world where Congress grants a statutory advantage to Indian tribes by allowing them to own and operate casinos, and states depend to some

degree on revenue from lotteries, the moral argument for PASPA is comparatively forlorn.

This is not to say that there isn’t a moral argument for outlawing sports betting, or that statutes aren’t rife with hypocrisy and inconsistencies. But it is to say that the Court reflects evolving social standards as readily as it follows the election returns. Nor is this necessarily a one-way street. The Court’s decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) was clearly a reflection of society’s changing attitude toward homosexuality. But one might also argue that the Court’s affirmation of the Second Amendment in *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008) was a step that gun-control advocates would not have expected a generation ago. From the progressive standpoint, one step forward and one back.

By contrast, from my standpoint, both decisions were steps forward. I happen to believe that the language of the Second Amendment isn’t the least bit ambiguous and was clearly intended to ensure the right of individuals to own firearms. By the same token, while marriage has been regarded throughout the centuries as the union of women and men—a view endorsed by Barack Obama himself until a few years ago—there is no particular legal principle involved other than custom. Custom, of course, is not a trivial consideration; but in a free society, just how much constitutional weight should it enjoy?

Similarly, with the District government’s newfound benevolence toward marijuana, custom has essentially given way to widespread practice. In my view, arguments against the use

of any “recreational” drug apply as readily to booze as to pot, and we have the sad example of the 18th Amendment—“the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors . . . for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited”—to see where that trail leads. The arguments against drugs like cannabis are indistinguishable from the (reasonable) prohibitionist case against liquor. Demon Rum was seen to imperil health, public order, and family life. But should the inability of some to tolerate drink be held against all those citizens who drink responsibly?

There are some social problems that legislation cannot solve.

In that sense, the future of sports and betting is an interesting one. The Constitution is entirely silent on both subjects but society is deeply invested in each. I like to think that I have an entirely disinterested perspective—I’m not much of a sports fan and am bored by gambling—but American society in particular feels otherwise. But in what way and for how long? The stigma attached to gambling has not entirely dissolved but is scarcely as ubiquitous as it once was. Moreover, certain practices are embedded in history—betting on horses and other creatures at tracks—or custom, such as World Series/Final Four office pools.

It is worth mentioning that the governing bodies of professional athletics were, in fact, opposed to New Jersey’s appeal against the ban on sports gambling. But their opposition, based on the fear of corruption, was tintured with a certain inconsistency.

The National Football League, for example, worried that legal gambling on games—or point spreads, or yardage statistics, or whatever—would open the door to player malpractice of the kind that roiled pro baseball in 1919 (the “Black Sox” scandal) and college basketball in the 1950s. No doubt they have reason to be worried. But at the same time, the NFL is entirely comfortable with wagering

on “fantasy” football, which exposes real players to real temptation.

The active ingredient in all of this, of course, is money. The NFL along with Major League Baseball and the National Basketball Association, among others, stand to earn billions of dollars annually from legalized wagering. Inasmuch as these institutions exist primarily for commercial purposes, I suspect they will swiftly and decisively come to terms with commercial betting. Which, by the grace of *Murphy v. NCAA*, is fine with me.



I like to think that I have an entirely disinterested perspective—I’m not much of a sports fan and am bored by gambling—but American society in particular feels otherwise.

I have inherited few of my late father’s prejudices, but I confess that one of them is a certain snobbishness about professional sports. Although in his youth he was a fan of the Philadelphia Athletics and University of Pennsylvania football, in middle age my father believed that grown men playing boys’ games for a living was unseemly, and that there was an inverse relation between the distinction of an institution of higher learning and the size of its sports establishment.

I don’t entirely disagree, but my own view is more cynical. Americans tend to romanticize, not to say idealize, athletes and athletics, and gambling will inevitably complicate relations. Moreover, the romance tends to exaggerate the virtues and ignore the realities of professional sports. Accordingly, I may be one of the few Americans who failed to be moved by A. Bartlett Giamatti’s famous declaration when, citing “the integrity of the game,” the late commissioner in 1989 banned the Cincinnati Reds’ player-manager Pete Rose from baseball for betting on contests, including games involving his own team.

I believe baseball is a beautiful and exciting game, loved by millions . . . and I believe baseball is an important, enduring American institution [and] must assert and aspire to the highest principles of integrity, of professionalism. . . . Because it is so much a part of our history as a people and because it has such a purchase on our national soul, [baseball] has an obligation to the people for whom it is played . . . to strive for excellence in all things and to promote the highest ideals. . . . Let there be no doubt or dissent about our goals for baseball or our dedication to it. Nor about our vigilance and vigor—and patience—in protecting the game from blemish or stain or disgrace.

Eloquent words, even if applied to Major League Baseball. Yet now that some tantalizing mercenary fruit is dangling before this “enduring American institution,” it will be almost as fun as a well-played game to see how those ideals fare when coming into conflict with good old human frailty. ♦

Worth Repeating from **WeeklyStandard.com**:

The only people to benefit from what the Democrats did with Ford’s allegations is the group whose primary goal was stopping Kavanaugh from getting on the High Court. They deserve the scorn of all Americans. And special scorn should be reserved for Dianne Feinstein, who—there is no other way to say this—simply used Ford, even though she understood what it would cost the woman.

—Jonathan V. Last, ‘Six Takeaways from the Ford-Kavanaugh Hearings’

Badness Personified

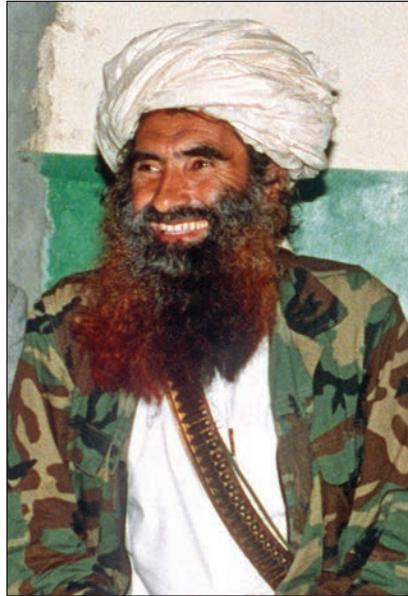
Jalaluddin Haqqani is dead. The terror network he created lives on. BY THOMAS JOSCELYN

On September 4, the Taliban announced that Jalaluddin Haqqani had “passed away after a long battle with illness.” A notorious jihadist who was one of Osama bin Laden’s earliest and closest allies, Haqqani had long been a recluse, with rumors swirling that he left the land of the living some years ago. But if the Taliban is telling the truth, then Haqqani died only recently. The terrorist organization he built lives on, however, and it has more influence today than ever. And a brief look at Haqqani’s career helps to explain how al Qaeda survived America’s relentless post-9/11 counterterrorism campaign.

After the September 11 attacks, some claimed that the hijackings were blowback—a consequence of America’s decision to work with Osama bin Laden and his men during the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan. This “blame America” argument is still popular in the fever swamps online. But there is no publicly available evidence suggesting the CIA was ever in direct cahoots with bin Laden. Haqqani is a different story, however, and a problematic one at that. The CIA, along with its Pakistani and Saudi allies, did back Haqqani and his followers against the Russians.

Congressman Charlie Wilson’s colorful life was first memorialized in a book and then a movie, with actor Tom Hanks playing the hard-partying politician from Texas. Wilson famously pulled levers in Washington, with assistance from the CIA and

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Jalaluddin Haqqani in 1991

others, to provide Haqqani and other “mujahedeen” with funding and weaponry during the war against the Soviets in the 1980s. There is nothing in Wilson’s biography to suggest he was a religious zealot—quite the opposite. Yet he was smitten with Haqqani. In *Charlie Wilson’s War: The Extraordinary Story of How the Wildest Man in Congress and a Rogue CIA Agent Changed the History of Our Times*, author George Crile writes that Wilson even described Haqqani as “goodness personified.”

Shoulder-fired missiles, or MANPADS (Man-Portable Air-Defense Systems), such as the Stinger, proved to be especially effective for downing Soviet helicopters. Haqqani was among the mujahedeen commanders who received them. During a trip to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Wilson sought to fire one. The story is briefly

recounted in *The Main Enemy: The Inside Story of the CIA’s Final Showdown with the KGB*, by CIA veteran Milton Bearden, who worked the Afghan portfolio, and journalist James Risen. Haqqani’s men were happy to indulge Wilson’s wartime fantasy. They used chains to rake the dirt on one road, hoping to kick up clouds of dust that would attract the attention of Soviet choppers. The Red Bear was unmoved, however, and Wilson didn’t get his opportunity to down a Soviet warcraft. Still, the episode highlights how close Haqqani was to an American politician.

Haqqani and several other extremist commanders received the lion’s share of assistance from the American-Pakistani-Saudi coalition. The CIA relied on Pakistani intelligence—the ISI—to pick winners and losers in the Afghan jihad, and this was a mistake. The Pakistanis preferred extremists.

“The CIA’s leadership continued to regard Pakistani intelligence as the jihad’s main implementing agency, even as more and more American trainers arrived in Pakistan to teach new weapons and techniques,” veteran journalist Steve Coll writes in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. “All this ensured that ISI’s Muslim Brotherhood-inspired clients . . . and radical commanders who operated along the Pakistan border,” including Haqqani, “won the greatest share of support.”

Coll, who interviewed American officials directly involved in the Afghan war effort, describes Haqqani as one of the “CIA’s favorites,” adding that he had the “CIA’s full support.” Haqqani “was seen by CIA officers in Islamabad and others as perhaps the most impressive Pashtun battlefield commander in the war,” a “proven commander who could put a lot of men under arms at short notice.” The CIA and Pakistani intelligence relied on Haqqani “for testing and experimentation with new weapons systems and tactics.” He “was so favored with supplies that he was in

ZUBAIR MIR/AFP/GETTY

a position to broker them and to help equip the Arab volunteers gathering in his region.”

The “Arab volunteers” included Osama bin Laden and the jihadists who founded al Qaeda in 1988. Haqqani gave them a foothold in South Asia. His patronage was crucial for al Qaeda’s early development, as some of bin Laden’s most trusted lieutenants trained in Haqqani-sponsored camps and fought the Soviets alongside Haqqani’s men. It is a relationship that has survived more than three decades of war.

After the Soviets retreated from Afghanistan, the mujahedeen began fighting one another for power. Eventually the Taliban, backed by Pakistan, gained control of much of the country. Haqqani joined the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, and he was named a member of the group’s *shura*, or senior advisory council. Haqqani was also named the minister in charge of the Afghan-Pakistan border.

Coll has written elsewhere that Haqqani was a “unilateral” asset of the CIA during the war against the Soviets. So shortly after the 9/11 attacks, the agency made some furtive efforts to convince Haqqani to turn against the Taliban and al Qaeda. The thinking was that the old alliance could be rekindled against a different foe. It didn’t work. Haqqani remained loyal to his Arab comrades, declaring jihad on the Americans.

In fact, according to Osama bin Laden’s own bodyguard, Haqqani sheltered the al Qaeda leader just weeks after the 9/11 attacks. In *Guarding bin Laden: My Life in Al-Qaeda*, Nasser al-Bahri (also known as Abu Jandal) says that his master briefly “took shelter in Khost at his friend, Jalaluddin Haqqani’s house” before moving on. Haqqani and his minions helped other al Qaeda operatives escape America’s retaliation in late 2001 as well. Indeed, Haqqani had become a powerbroker during the anti-Soviet jihad, in part because he controlled key terrain straddling the Afghan-Pakistan border. Haqqani’s eponymous network has harbored al Qaeda operatives and leaders

in this same region, which includes Waziristan, for years. The United States has launched hundreds of drone strikes on the Haqqani strongholds in northern Pakistan.

It took nearly a decade for the United States finally to catch up with bin Laden. Files recovered during the May 2011 raid in Abbottabad, Pakistan, reveal that the Haqqani family remained closely allied with al Qaeda in the years following 9/11. Jalaluddin Haqqani eventually relinquished his leadership role, passing authority to

America is not responsible for the Haqqanis’ actions, but Haqqani’s life story should be a cautionary tale. Washington was willing to work with extremists to counter the Soviet threat. That may have been somewhat justifiable during the Cold War, when communism was a nuclear-armed, worldwide threat. But it was a deal with the devil.

his son and ideological heir, Sirajuddin (or Siraj). Like his father, Siraj is an al Qaeda man.

In the spring of 2010, about a year before bin Laden’s death, the Haqqanis acted as intermediaries between the Afghan government and al Qaeda. They helped negotiate a ransom payment, paid by the Afghans (in part with CIA-provided funds), to secure the release of an Afghan diplomat who was kidnapped in 2008. Millions of dollars in ransom flowed into al Qaeda’s coffers. One memo to bin Laden described how the funds were divvied up, with some of the money being used to secure weaponry.

In another 2010 memo, bin Laden’s top lieutenant explained that al Qaeda used Siraj as a conduit for threatening the Pakistani state, warning that “big, earth-shaking operations” would take place if the Pakistanis didn’t negotiate a truce with al Qaeda. At the time,

al Qaeda was orchestrating a campaign of terror inside Pakistan that was intended to disrupt an American-led counterterrorism campaign. That same memo, as well as other evidence, indicates that some Pakistani officials were willing to negotiate with al Qaeda to end the violence. Bin Laden’s correspondence also described al Qaeda’s cooperation with Siraj in conducting anti-American attacks inside Afghanistan.

Today, Siraj is the deputy head of the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan—a post that gives him broad power over thousands of insurgents fighting against the Afghan government, the United States, and their allies. Siraj has held that number-two position within the Taliban since 2015. After Jalaluddin’s death was announced, al Qaeda honored the senior Haqqani as Osama bin Laden’s “brother.” Al Qaeda also said in its eulogy that it took “solace” in the fact that Siraj had ascended through the Taliban’s ranks.

The United States is not responsible for the Haqqanis’ actions in the decades following the anti-Soviet jihad. But Jalaluddin Haqqani’s life story should be a cautionary tale. Washington was willing to work with extremists to counter the Soviet threat. That may have been somewhat justifiable during the Cold War, when communism was a nuclear-armed, worldwide threat. But it was a deal with the devil—a man who was the opposite of “goodness personified.” And while the Soviet Union crumbled, the threat of global jihadism, which Haqqani incubated, lives on.

In September, the State Department released its annual *Country Reports on Terrorism*. Among its findings: Pakistan continues to provide safe haven for the Taliban’s leadership, including the Haqqanis. The Trump administration has taken a hard line with Pakistan on this score. But there has been no change in Pakistan’s behavior. As a result, the Haqqanis, along with their al Qaeda allies, are poised to declare victory in Afghanistan once again. ♦

A Literary Lynching

Ian Buruma hoped to stimulate discussion about #MeToo—the Twitter mob got him fired.

BY JAMES CAMPBELL

William Faulkner's novel *Intruder in the Dust* opens with the arrest of one of Faulkner's great vibrant characters, the "intractable" mixed-race Lucas Beauchamp. We learn that "the whole town . . . had known since the night before that Lucas had killed a white man," and Sheriff Hampton escorts Lucas to the jailhouse. Even in justice's waiting room, however, he is not safe from the mob. There was no Twitter in those days, but word circulated and a crowd gathered in the street. "They seemed to fill it, block it, render it suddenly interdict as though not that nobody could pass them . . . but that nobody would dare . . . as people stay well away from a sign saying High Voltage."

Ian Buruma felt the shock of that voltage about 10 days ago. It lifted him out of the editor's chair at the *New York Review of Books* after only 16 months in the job. His predecessor, Robert Silvers, had sat there immovably from the magazine's founding in 1963 till his death in 2017. Buruma's misfortune was not to be accused of any crime. Nor has anyone tried to pin the scarlet letter of sexual harasser on him. Rather, his offense was to have commissioned a first-person essay by someone who had played nasty games on that field and to publish it without consulting the majority of his staff—a not uncommon event in most magazine offices.

The Canadian radio host and sometime musician Jian Ghomeshi was charged in 2014 with sexual assault and was the subject of many more

allegations. He was acquitted of the charges in a court in Ontario in 2016, after the judge criticized the accusers' behavior and testimony. Few people have vouched for Jian Ghomeshi's character, and I have yet to meet anyone who admired the piece Buruma



Ian Buruma in 2013

commissioned from him, "Reflections from a Hashtag," in which the bleat of narcissism sounds regularly. It is advertised on the cover of the October 11 issue, along with related essays, under the now-mocking banner "The Fall of Men." (Ghomeshi's piece appeared online in early September.)

Buruma was the editor, the man who mattered, and in his opinion it was worth running. It is hard to imagine him relishing Ghomeshi's tone, but he felt that the piece spoke, however clumsily, to the moment—the moment of #MeToo. Presumably, he imagined it would stimulate discussion. That's what literary magazines exist to do, as well as to inform and entertain.

Rather, Buruma believed he was the man who mattered. He was wrong.

On September 24, a statement was sent from the email address of Rea Hederman, the owner of the *New York Review of Books*. It said: "we acknowledge our failures in the presentation and editing" of Ghomeshi's article—a "we" that did not include the editor. It also acknowledged "the validity of this criticism" the piece has attracted. "Most members of the editorial staff (including six female members of staff, four of whom worked with Bob and Barbara) were excluded from the substantive editorial process." If he wasn't already suffering maximum exclusion syndrome himself, Buruma must have done so on reading that "Bob and Barbara"—Barbara Epstein was Silvers's co-editor for 43 years until her death in 2006. In response to Hederman's message, a large number of distinguished contributors to the magazine signed a letter of protest against the sacking.

No one, not even Rea Hederman, is under any illusion about what brought down the curtain on Buruma's brief show: the reaction on Twitter. Whatever his other accomplishments, he will go down in literary history as the editor who was forced out of office for publishing an article that a small but highly vocal number of people objected to. I would guess that the loudest among them have spent but a small portion of their lives reading the *New York Review of Books*. Had it not been for the public-shaming aspect, the disagreements between Buruma and his staff would have remained in-house, and perhaps led to a refinement of procedure; a good and civil outcome.

Editors are expected to take risks, and great magazines treat their readers to articles that are "unexpected" (William Shawn's word for the ideal *New Yorker* piece). One person's delight is another's dismay. If you don't like it, write a letter, publish an opposing essay, skip the next issue, or—the extreme reaction—cancel your subscription. Again, these are civilized reactions. In 1981, the *New York Review* published an unexpected set of "Two Notes" about prison life by the convicted killer Jack Henry Abbott, a protégé of Norman Mailer. They

James Campbell, a columnist at the Times Literary Supplement, is the author of a biography of James Baldwin, *Talking at the Gates*.

M. ZHAO / HINDUSTAN TIMES / GETTY

were brilliantly written. Nine days after his release from prison that summer, Abbott killed a young waiter in a trivial argument. Silvers and Epstein remained in place. It would be surprising to learn that at no other point in its history has the journal published pieces by convicts or ex-convicts (Mailer himself had an ugly spot in his past). Ghomeshi, of course, is not among them. Unsavory though he may be, he has not been convicted of anything. “Am I dreaming?” I wrote in an email to a friend who happens to have been in the running for the job before Buruma was appointed. “Did the proprietor of a left-liberal publication just sack his editor for printing an essay which was disapproved of by the unruly mob?”

From the perspective of anyone who holds freedom of expression and editorial independence dear, Buruma is a victim of rough justice. Twitter mobs, Faulknerian mobs, real mobs in real streets threatening real violence, all have this in common: The law by itself will not satisfy their demands. In the wake of successive Twitter storms, analogies are often drawn with McCarthyism. Not only in reference to those accused of actual offenses: It is enough just to be suspected of skepticism of #MeToo and the rush to judgment begins. We are getting used to craven apologies for causing “pain” to fellow citizens, which have sparked comparison to “Soviet-style reeducation.” Seventeenth-century Salem gets mentioned, too. But the best parallel is with the lynch mob—“Let’s get down to the jailhouse and string ’im up.” The surge of high-voltage power. The relegation of due process to an afterthought. The difference between this and real lynch mobs is only in degree.

Writing in the *New York Times* recently about the debacle over the decision first to invite Steve Bannon to

be interviewed onstage by David Remnick at the New Yorker Festival, then to disinvite him, Bret Stephens noted: “What this really means is that Remnick is no longer the editor of *The New Yorker*. Twitter is. Social media doesn’t just get a voice. Now it wields a veto.”

It was a well-aimed jab, provoked by the news that not only had a clutch of celebrities threatened to withdraw from the festival, but that a member of the magazine’s staff drummed up opposition to her editor’s authority. “I love working for @NewYorker,” Kathryn Schulz tweeted on September 3, “but I’m beyond appalled by



*The mob gathers in a 1949 MGM version of *Intruder in the Dust*.*

this.” She gave a link to a *Times* story about the planned Bannon event, then added: “I have already made that very clear to David Remnick. You can, too.” It was effectively a call to rouse the mob. Thereafter, the course of events was set (“they seemed to fill it, block it . . . nobody would dare . . .”). Remnick proved himself to be no Sheriff Hampton—“I told you folks once to get out of here. I aint going to tell you again”—and the mob had its way. The *New Yorker*, onetime champion of the “unexpected,” joined that dubious band of organizations willing to no-platform controversial speakers.

What now for the *New York Review of Books*? The possibility of a bright new dawn cannot be discounted. Under Silvers and Epstein it was the finest periodical of its kind, which only makes the pusillanimity of owner

and editorial staff appear all the more dismal. It might well raise itself back up to its customary height. Yet whoever is appointed as the magazine’s fourth editor will be condemned not only to wrestle with the shadow cast by Robert Silvers but also to accommodate the climate of purification (as distinct from Puritanism) in which we find ourselves living.

Another regular *Review* contributor I spoke to felt that Hederman would be thinking, “It’s time we appointed a woman,” overlooking Barbara Epstein’s 43 years. Epstein and the other cofounders—her husband Jason, Robert Lowell, Elizabeth Hardwick, and Silvers—would surely expect the owner to exercise independent judgment, not to make a politically correct appointment according to some right-thinking calendar. But the ironies pile up as this story continues to unfold. It would be a fine one if the *Review* were to be made into an intellectual safe space.

“The whole town had known since the night before that Lucas had killed a white man.” From the tenor of Faulkner’s opening declaration, it is obvious that Lucas had done no such thing. He was not guilty of any crime except being black and intractable in the face of a rotten system. His saviors were of a surprising sort: an elderly white woman and two teenaged boys, one black, the other white. The themes of moral debt and the inescapable bonds of blood course through this underrated novel—forces more powerful even than the High Voltage of mob justice. Nothing is simple in Yoknapatawpha County. Nor was it in the era of the McCarthy witch hunts, though true believers in the red menace tried to persuade the public that it was. Those of impeccable virtue always do. They are always “beyond appalled” at the presence of a dissenter in the room. ♦

What's in a Name?

The 'progressive' problem. BY STEPHEN MILLER

Progress is our most important product," Ronald Reagan used to say in the 1950s, when he hosted *General Electric Theater*, a popular television drama series. Praising progress is like praising motherhood. Who is against progress in science, medicine, and technology? If at a social gathering I said "I'm for progress," most people would yawn. But if I said "I'm a progressive," I'd get a very different response. I'd be admired by liberals and looked at with disdain by conservatives.

For Democrats, *progressive* has become the go-to word in recent years, replacing *liberal*. The old-school liberal columnist E.J. Dionne talks approvingly of "American progressives." Chris Murphy, the Democratic senator from Connecticut, says, "We have some work to do to explain to progressive voters why the courts should matter to them as much as it matters to conservatives."

For those on the right, *progressive* is now a pejorative term. In a fundraising letter for the Cato Institute, George Will calls Woodrow Wilson "the first progressive president." This is not a compliment. Victor Davis Hanson, the classicist who writes for *National Review*, speaks scathingly of "the progressive street," which he says is "leading fossilized Democrats into a sort of collective madness."

Though Democrats proudly wear the label progressive, they strongly disagree among themselves about what it means. For some Democrats, all members of their party are progressives. For other Democrats, a progressive is

someone who supports a radical political agenda, usually including curbing the power of corporations near the top of the list. More liberal Democrats say they belong to the "progressive wing" of the Democratic party.

A sign of the times in the party is the recent announcement by Yasmine Taeb, a left-wing human rights law-



yer, that she will challenge Richard L. Saslaw, the Democratic leader of Virginia's senate, in next year's Democratic primary. Saying she wants "to champion a progressive agenda in the General Assembly," Taeb promises to reject corporate campaign donations, favors a \$15-an-hour minimum wage, and opposes the death penalty. In a dig at Saslaw, who has received campaign funds from Dominion Energy, the state's largest utility, Taeb said: "Some elected officials are more interested in siding with powerful corporations than the people they represent." Saslaw claims that he too is a progressive—and he sees nothing wrong with getting campaign funds from Dominion Energy, which charges the lowest electricity rates in the region.

For more than a century, *progressive* has been a vague term that usually signifies someone who favors big government. The *Oxford English Dictionary* quotes a British political writer in 1892 who says: "There were Progressives who are not Liberals, but I think there are no Liberals who are not Progressives." In the 19th century, of

course, a liberal was someone who was strongly in favor of a market economy.

The *OED* also quotes George Orwell, who disliked the progressives of his day because they usually were pro-Soviet. In "Inside the Whale," Orwell writes: "There are the 'progressives' . . . the Shaw-Wells type, always leaping forward to embrace the ego-projections which they mistake for the future." Writing about H.G. Wells in the *New Yorker*, Adam Kirsch says Orwell's 1984 "reads like a dystopian rebuttal to Wells's sinister utopian fantasies."

"The program Wells hoped to implement," Kirsch writes, "was socialist and progressive." Wells's progressive agenda included eugenics. "He could write with disconcerting eagerness about which categories of human beings would be put to death in his utopian state," says Kirsch. Wells was also a great admirer of Stalin, writing, "I have

never met a man more candid, fair and honest, and to those qualities it is, and to nothing occult and sinister, that he owes his tremendous undisputed ascendancy in Russia."

It would probably be wrong to say that contemporary American progressives are as foolish as Wells, but it is fair to say that they have a tropism towards big government and a deep suspicion of the corporate world.

Conservatives undoubtedly relish intraparty quarrels that roil the Democrats, but they too have a progressive problem: They don't have a good word to describe their anti-progressive stance. The antonyms for "progressive," *Merriam-Webster* says, include "backward, primitive, retarded, rude, rudimentary, undeveloped."

The *New York Times* recently spoke of "the progressive fervor sweeping national politics." To counter that fervor, conservatives must try to persuade voters that the progressive agenda—a preoccupation with diversity, proportionality, equity, identity, and affirmative action—is in fact an impediment to progress.

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BETTMANN / GETTY

The second “progressive” problem conservatives face is that President Trump is in some respects a progressive. His micromanagement of the economy—protecting the steel industry in the same way that Obama protected the auto industry—is the sort of thing good progressives have always tried. George Will thus criticizes Trump’s “industrial policy, with government picking winners and losers. . . . We now have a trade czar in the White House who says he wants to repatriate our supply chains—which is a good way to make an iPhone cost \$3,000.”

In our volatile political climate,

Will is on the same page as the leftist economist Paul Krugman, who points out that “Trump has imposed tariffs on about \$300 billion worth of U.S. imports, with tariff rates set to rise as high as 25 percent.” This is “a tax hike on America,” says Krugman.

“We are all Keynesians now,” Richard Nixon reportedly said. Are we all progressives now? No, but anti-progressives have become a weak force. The former movie actor who said on *General Electric Theater* that “progress is our most important product” would be deeply dismayed by this turn of events. ♦

Kurds of the northeast, the Arabs of the southeast, and even possibly the Turkish-speaking Azeris, who may represent as much as 25 percent of the country’s population and dominate the four provinces of Iranian Azerbaijan and the southern environs of the national capital, Tehran. When appropriately Persianized, Azeris move easily within the clerical regime’s elite, and yet “proper” Iranians when among themselves never fail to distinguish who is *Irani* and who is *Turk*. Azeris exercise the same precision. And religious differences often sharpen these ethnic/linguistic divisions: The Baluch are overwhelmingly Sunni and the Kurds are probably majority Sunni. The Iranians *de souche*—the inhabitants and descendants of the Iranian plateau, *Parsa* in Old Persian—may even be a minority in the lands that now comprise the Islamic Republic.

“Proper” Iranians, of course, want to believe that Persian culture transcends all the divides. The Persian language and literature and the pride that went with them withstood the 7th-century Arab invasion and its magnetic tongue, eventually absorbing most of the Arab settlers into the Persian *oikumene*. Then appeared the Turks, who first came as slave soldiers and then as all-conquering horse-mounted dynasties. The centripetal eminence of Persian culture absorbed them, too. Ditto the Mongols. (The stunning survival of Persian as a spoken and written language deserves comparison to that of English, another indefatigable and innovative language.)

For the Iranians *de souche*, the geography of modern Iran is settled. Any ethnic irredentism is illegitimate if it threatens the sovereignty of the boundaries that have held since Persians stopped losing territory to Russians in the early 19th century. Go into any Western foreign-language broadcasting company—for example, the BBC or Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty—and watch the Persian service eye Azeri broadcasters warily. When Azeri journalists try to get footage of Iranian Azerbaijanis illegally singing Azeri nationalist songs at soccer matches in Iran onto Persian-service broadcasts,

Iran’s Enemies

Many of them are within its borders.

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

The Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Al-Ahwaz has claimed credit for the recent terrorist attack at a military parade in Iran’s Khuzestan Province that killed 25 people and wounded 60. It should surprise no one that this occurred in the heavily Arab province. Separatist Arab groups have regularly struck at the clerical regime, killing regime officials, allied locals, and civilians. An autonomous region until the coming of Reza Shah Pahlavi, who squashed independent tribal confederations throughout Iran in the 1920s, Khuzestan is oil-rich but poor. Although Sunni Arabs may be on the cutting edge of anger against the central government, many Shiites, who are the overwhelming majority of the Arab denizens of the region, appear to be similarly inclined to remonstrate violently against their Iranian overlords. As in Iraq, where Shiite Arabs are becoming

more openly hostile to Iranians and the Iraqi militias allied to them, the ancient “Arab-Ajam” divide in Persia can transcend Shiite fraternity.

In modern times, Iran has had a stubborn, often violent minorities problem that goes far beyond the Arabs. Kurdish leaders and oppositionists have been assassinated at home and abroad, most famously by an Iranian hit team at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin in 1992. Periodically, large swaths of Iranian Baluchestan become no-go areas at night for Iranian security forces, especially when a fierce localism overlaps with the drug trade that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps tries more to control than stop. Ethnic clashes often go unreported and misreported in the Western press. We really don’t know the exact ethnic balance in Iran—census figures in the Middle East, a region of fragile national and competitive religious identities, should never be trusted.

The clerical regime rules over many obstreperous peoples that might well bolt if they were allowed to do so: the Baluch of southeastern Iran, the

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the reception isn't warm. It isn't hard to find Iranian Azeris in former Soviet Azerbaijan willing to talk about the Persian heavy-handedness that they endure. Hang out with Iranian expatriates campaigning for democracy and human rights in their homeland and they can get cagey quickly when it comes to the right of self-determination for the minorities of the Islamic Republic. Iran may be the last of the great Middle Eastern empires but for Persians, a prideful people, it is an indissoluble nation-state.

The accusations of the Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif after the attack in the city of Ahvaz—blaming the Saudis, the Israelis, and behind them the Americans—are a good example of the geographic paranoia that Iranian officials can often indelicately express. Although the regime has become adept at certain kinds of self-criticism so long as nothing cuts too deeply (the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, has certainly turned criticism of his underlings into an art form), this disposition stays far away from questions of ethnicity. Acknowledging some corruption, police brutality, even the occasional ugliness of some *sharia* law practices (child marriage remains a hot button in Iran) is acceptable; confessions about heavy-handed bigotry against the Kurds, Arabs, Baluch, or Azeris are verboten.

To be fair to Zarif: It's certainly possible that the Saudis had a hand in this attack. The Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, has said that he wants to fight Iran inside Iran. It is far more likely, however, that Khuzestani Arabs who hate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps undertook this mission without Saudi guidance and support. Historically, Khuzestani Arabs have had sufficient group identity and anger at Tehran to generate militant underground organizations. They don't need Saudi help to pull off such operations. The Guard Corps, the target of the Ahvaz attack, is the

primary outfit enforcing the writ of the clerical regime. More than any other Iranian security service, it's the guards who thump on the minorities when they organize or express themselves too independently. It is the corps that has done the heavy lifting in Syria, where Iran has been on the cutting edge of a war that has killed hundreds of thousands of Sunni Arabs and driven millions from their homes and homeland. In Iraq, in the deep Shiite south that revolves around Basra, the natives have been openly damning the influence of the Revolutionary Guards and their proxies. Since the fall of Saddam

concealed advanced centrifuges, given the military alliance between Tehran and Moscow and the retrenchment of American power, Sunni Arabs and the Israelis will certainly try to find new, ideally low-cost, means to check, or at least harass, the clerical regime. With Tehran having used the Shiite and militant Islamist cards against the Sunni monarchies and everyone in the Middle East thinking about ethnicity and identity every waking hour, it would be natural for the Gulfies and the Israelis to explore the possibilities of turning ethnic pride against the Persians, hoping that internal discord will weaken the clerical regime abroad.

That may be bad analysis: Legitimacy denied at home, be it among Iranians *de souche* or the minorities, may lead Tehran to seek greater legitimacy elsewhere, especially in its sectarian foreign mission and the continuing struggle against Zionism. But if Iran did experience substantial internal discord (and ethnic disquiet can easily play into the larger,

nondenominational Iranian distaste for theocracy), then it could paralyze the central government. A small-scale version of this—the aftershocks of the nationwide December demonstrations, the American withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and the scary Donald Trump “he-might-just-bomb-us” factor—may have temporarily paralyzed Iranian foreign policy on the nuclear issue. It may well have caused Khamenei so far to avoid unleashing allied Arab militias against Americans in Iraq.

It costs little for Saudi Arabia and Israel to investigate how to support “national” grievances inside the Islamic Republic. It's a decent guess that if Persian nationalism is rising in the Islamic Republic (and the increasing rot of the revolution's Islamic idealism appears to be amping-up the non-Shiite part of the Persian identity), its ascent may well increase the national consciousness of Iran's other peoples. Call it complementary



Iransians seek cover during an attack on a military parade, September 22.

Hussein and the opening of the Iran-Iraq border, Mesopotamian Arabs have again become kissing cousins. Iranian intrusion into Iraqi society likely has an obverse that has so far gained little attention.

It may only be a matter of time before the Saudis, the Emiratis, and the Israelis start thinking programmatically about ways to make Iran's ethnic divisions bloody fissures. Iranian Shiite imperialism—the willful use of religious sectarianism to extend Tehran's influence throughout the Middle East—is deeply threatening to the Sunni Gulf monarchies, and to Israel because of the clerical regime's implacable hatred of the Jewish state. (Anti-Semitism is creedal among Iran's revolutionary elite, especially the Revolutionary Guards.) Given Iran's development of a deployable foreign legion comprised of Shiite Arabs, Afghans, and Pakistanis, given its ever-improving missiles, given the continuing development of easily

friction. And dream up all the worst-case scenarios of Iran fracturing along ethnic lines or just exploding violently in a spasm against the mullahs, and it's hard to see how any of these eventualities are bad for Saudi Arabia or Israel. Loose nukes would be a problem, but the clerical regime without the JCPOA is still years out from developing atomic weapons. A vengeful Revolutionary Guard military operation aimed against the Saudi oil industry undoubtedly would worry Riyadh, but such attacks would immediately trigger the U.S. Navy, which could be life-threatening for the Iranian military. The clerical regime probably isn't stupid enough to allow its outrage to open itself up to American firepower.

The Saudis do have to fear Iranian mischief among the Saudi and Bahraini Shia. But the Iranians haven't been passive bystanders in attempts to exploit enormous Shiite grievances against the Sunni royal families in the peninsula. Saudi and Bahraini security services appear to have gotten pretty good at handling Shiite unrest and Persian mischief—better than Iranian services currently trying to squelch violent discontent among Iran's Arabs. In Saudi Arabia, the government has literally built walls and trenches around the towns where Shiite radicalism and rebellion may have taken hold in the Eastern Province. Whether from the bold, reckless temperament of the Saudi crown prince or a larger consensus within the royal family that traditional Saudi timidity towards Iran is no longer viable, Riyadh just might have the guts (or the hubris) to think that it can go head-to-head against the Islamic Republic in covert operations.

But reality will likely intrude into any Saudi, Emirati, and Israeli gaming of possible ethnic tumult. Beyond sending money to insurrectionists in Iran, which isn't hard, Riyadh and Jerusalem may discover that there really isn't much potential in such projects. Covert logistics is always a pain in the tush. With the possible exception of the Arabs in Khuzestan, Iran's minorities are pretty hard to reach efficaciously. Arming Iranian Kurds, for example, when Iraqi and

Turkish Kurds may not want to be helpful (intra-Kurdish politics are fluid, mind-bending, and, for everyone involved, frustrating) would be challenging. The Pakistanis—that is the Punjabis, Sindhis, and Pashtuns who dominate the Pakistani military and intelligence services—have zero reason to aid Baluch separatism in Iran given the spillover potential in Pakistan. And we have seen no evidence that the Azeris, the Achilles' heel of the Iranian regime, want to make their grievances violent. The Sunni Gulfies and the Israelis could try the “shit-against-the-wall” theory of covert action—keep trying things until something sticks. But that could lead to just sending money, which would probably rule out the Israelis, who run the cheapest foreign intelligence service in the West.

Which brings us to the Americans and the speculation that the Trump administration might try something beyond sanctions to heighten internal unrest in Iran. By far, Washington is the weakest player in this mix, since the age of lethal covert action—barring another national trauma on the scale of 9/11—is over. Even if the Trump White House wanted to, and there is scant evidence that the president has any intention of adopting a muscular containment or regime-change strategy against the clerical regime, any lethal covert action would require the buy-in of both the leaders of the national-security establishment and the bipartisan leadership of the concerned committees on Capitol Hill. That isn't likely. Defense secretary James Mattis would have no part of this, and Democrats would leak like crazy, effectively killing any program. There are lots of good reasons why the United States shouldn't support a clandestine policy of ethnic friction in Iran (American interests and ideals do not align perfectly on this issue with the Israelis' and Saudis'), but those reasons are irrelevant given the larger reluctance of the Trump administration, particularly the White House, to commit itself to a meaningful containment policy.

Once upon a time, Washington had a pretty solid bipartisan consensus on the Islamic Republic. Differences of

opinion and style certainly existed, but the kind of strategic approach advanced by Barack Obama—a sustained attempt to draw near the Islamic Republic, which led in 2009 and 2010 to willful distancing between Washington and the millions of protesters who'd hit the streets in Tehran against tyranny and in 2015 to a short-term nuclear deal that guaranteed the theocracy a vast nuclear-weapons-capable infrastructure—would have been unthinkable. The most determined and “successful” American president on Iran policy since 1979, Obama, sensing that unsatisfying wars had opened new possibilities, shattered fundamental attitudes about the Islamic Republic and the bipartisan will to resist Iranian aggression. What is striking is that Donald Trump, who also exuberantly ran on a foreign policy of retrenchment, has halted, for now, the Republican retreat on Iran. Republicans remain, more or less, where Republicans and Democrats were in 1996, after Tehran bombed the American military in Saudi Arabia at Khobar Towers. This could change rapidly, of course, if the president flipped. Although Trump is adjectivally incontinent, his recent tweet about Iranian president Hassan Rouhani being “an absolutely lovely man” leaves open the possibility that Trump could follow Obama.

The Iranian regime, however, isn't likely to work through the covert-action limitations of its enemies. The paranoid ruling elite, always thinking that the Americans, the Gulfies, and the Israelis are driving their internal problems, will likely crack down even harder on the minorities since they may fear that a bit of foreign aid could make the volcano explode. Can the Islamic Republic's security services keep a lid on all the unrest? A betting man would say “yes.” They have survived severe tests by mixing extreme brutality, bribery, controlled elections, and clever neglect to neutralize popular disgust from effectively organizing against the theocracy. But a perfect storm may be brewing in Iran. “Proper” Persians are in an agitated state. So, too, it's a decent guess, are the peoples of the Iranian periphery. ♦

The One-Party State

Are California's Democrats really charting a future path for the rest of the country?

BY MICHAEL WARREN

Sacramento

NO one can agree exactly how California became a one-party state. For decades after World War II, Republicans regularly won statewide and local races. Between 1952 and 1988, Californians preferred the Republican candidate in every presidential election except Lyndon Johnson's 1964 landslide. The state has elected six Republican governors and six Republican U.S. senators since 1950. Republicans commonly served as mayors of California's major cities—Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Fresno, Oakland. Democrats dominated the state legislature and the House delegation, but if the term “San Francisco Democrat” evoked a defined political archetype, so too did “Orange County Republican.”

But the Golden State is now deep blue. It hasn't voted for a Republican for president since George H. W. Bush in 1988. Since 1993, both of California's senators have been Democrats. Republican Meg Whitman lost the 2010 race for governor by 13 points despite spending \$144 million of her own money on the campaign. The only truly competitive statewide race today is for insurance commissioner, and the last Republican to win that office, Steve Poizner, is campaigning for it in 2018 as an independent. Voters who list “no party preference” now slightly outnumber registered Republicans, at around 25 percent. Forty-four percent of registered voters in California identify themselves as Democrats.

So what happened? A common answer is demographics. Republicans were increasingly seen as hostile to Latinos during the 1990s, culminating in the passage of Proposition 187, a GOP-backed initiative that targeted illegal immigration but was widely perceived as anti-Hispanic. It turned the state's growing Latino population

sharply toward the Democrats. The steady influx of immigrants, not just from Latin America but from Asia as well, only bolstered the Democratic party. So did the national shift of educated whites away from the GOP—a shift accelerated by the rise of Donald Trump, who is exceedingly unpopular in California.

But Dan Walters, a longtime political journalist in Sacramento, will tell you it was the end of the Cold War that really brought about Democratic dominance. He points to the decline of the defense and aerospace industries, major employers in Southern California, which prompted an exodus of Republican voters—middle-class, white, and suburban—to cheaper states. Los Angeles County regularly went for the GOP in elections. It's simple arithmetic, says Walters. When the GOP lost Los Angeles, it turned California over completely to the Democrats.

Today, the state is a liberal's dream. It's multicultural. It's largely urbanized. It is socially and environmentally progressive. People here frequently boast, without a trace of smugness, that if you want to see America in 10 years, look at California.

What you see, though, is not what you might expect in a true blue state.

California is extremely wealthy—if it were its own country, it'd have the fifth-largest economy in the world—and the center of some of the world's most important technology, financial, and entertainment industries. But the wealth is concentrated at the top, and the squeezing of the middle class out to Nevada and Utah and Arizona and Texas has left a bifurcated state of the very rich and the relatively poor.

The state has the most liberal environmental laws and regulations in the country, which hamper the development of affordable housing. A *San Francisco Chronicle* investigation in 2017 showed rising housing costs driving lower-income Californians out of their homes and into the streets. Homelessness has skyrocketed in both the cities and the rural areas of the state. While 12 percent of the U.S. population is in California, 25 percent of the country's homeless



Jerry Brown in May

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live there. From Sacramento to San Diego, you can't help but notice the multitudes of people living on the street.

Look at the housing shortage and homelessness, the decline of manufacturing and other blue-collar jobs, and the growth of a tech economy that rewards disruption over predictability, and you see why some are suspicious of the California way. Others just see potential: Without the middle classes to object, progressives think, the wealth can be redistributed to help those who need food, health care, and housing. California can be a place where social progress is achieved and immigrants are welcomed with open arms, no questions asked. It can be the picturesque center of a movement to reverse the effects of climate change and save the entire world.

Gavin Newsom is almost certain to be the next governor of California, and he'll be the first Democrat to succeed a Democrat in the job in more than 130 years. The current occupant, 80-year-old Jerry Brown, is at the end of a long career that includes two eight-year stints as governor (1975-83 and 2011-19). Newsom, 50, is hungry and ambitious—for California, for the progressive agenda, and for national office. Progressives see in him a chance to finally realize their dreams in the country's biggest laboratory for democracy.

"I'm not a profligate Democrat," the lieutenant governor told a small group of reporters during a bus tour this past May. "I have bold ideas, I want to be audacious in terms of the goals, but I'm not reckless." What Newsom was implying is that *some* Democrats are reckless and profligate: the starry-eyed progressives in the legislature, the public-sector unions that would like to see more returns on their political investments, the activist base that would be fine busting the state budget to get its wish list fulfilled. That's not what Newsom is about.

But don't think for a minute he isn't bold, that he isn't audacious. Put another way: Don't think Newsom is Brown, who was elected governor in 2010 as a budget-conscious liberal pledging to right the state's sinking fiscal ship. The man who earned the moniker "Governor Moonbeam" for his representation of California's liberal idealists in the 1970s will leave Sacramento next year with a budget surplus and a reputation for setting the state on course after the disastrous Arnold Schwarzenegger years. "If you ask anyone what is his major accomplishment, what has he spent

his time on, it's all been to ensure that he left the state from a fiscal perspective in a much better place than when he started," says Gale Kaufman, a veteran Democratic strategist. "And he has been dogged."

That doggedness has rankled progressives, who grew more frustrated with every stroke of Brown's veto pen on hundreds of bills passed by the overwhelmingly Democratic legislature. He recently nixed a bill that would have funded a state "advisory group" to look into how fake news spreads on social media. In 2012, amid the moral outrage over neighboring Arizona's anti-illegal-immigration law, Brown issued a late-night veto on a bill that would have limited how much California police who stop illegal immigrants could cooperate with the feds. Another bill, passed by the legislature last year, would have required large businesses to post their median and mean salary data for both men and women on a public website, in the name of transparency on the gender pay gap. Brown vetoed that one, too. There were plenty of bills Brown did approve, but he's given every interest group on the left something to grumble about. Progressives wonder: What's the

point of having control of the levers of power—and a booming economy to boot—if you don't make some big changes?

Newsom is aware of the simmering impatience, which explains why he cast himself in this summer's jungle primary as a champion of progressive causes. He outflanked his top Democratic competitor, former Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, by embracing the party's left wing on health care, gun control, and social issues. Newsom cast Villaraigosa as an opponent of the influential teachers' union (easily done, since the L.A. mayor had fought hard for education reform) and took advantage of the fact that his rival's bases of support—Southern California and Latinos—are less likely to turn out in a primary than his own multicultural, highly educated Bay Area-based supporters. Villaraigosa only managed third in the June primary, which means Newsom will face Republican John Cox in the November election. There's little belief anywhere in the state that Cox can pull off an upset.

It will be a generational shift for California Democrats. Besides Brown, there have been only two other Democratic governors in the last 75 years. One was Jerry's father, Pat, who lost in 1966 to Reagan. The other was Gray Davis, who was recalled in 2003. Even Democrats prefer to forget him.



Gavin Newsom at a rally in Burbank, May 30

The Democratic party of the two Browns, of Gray Davis, and of Senator Dianne Feinstein is reflective of the national party in the postwar era: split between its less ideological white, working-class base and an emerging coalition of young, liberal, and minority voters. Democrats who won statewide office in California were standard-issue liberals, not radicals. Feinstein has had a reliably progressive record in the Senate but cultivated a reputation for bipartisanship on intelligence and national security. The elder Brown ran for governor in the late 1950s as a “responsible liberal” and spearheaded the big infrastructure projects that created modern California. His son campaigned as both an environmentalist and a budget hawk.

But Newsom’s ascent won’t be a political revolution. For such a large party in such a large state, California Democratic leadership is remarkably incestuous. The Brown and Newsom families have long-standing ties. William Newsom II, Gavin’s grandfather, ran Pat Brown’s local campaigns in San Francisco. Gavin’s father, Bill Newsom, was appointed to the state appellate court during his friend Jerry Brown’s first term as governor. One of Bill Newsom’s sisters, Carole, was an adviser to Brown. Another, Barbara, was once married to Ron Pelosi, the brother-in-law of House minority leader Nancy Pelosi.

Another family important to this story is the Gettys. J. Paul Getty’s vast oil fortune is the unifying thread in the political fortunes of the Newsoms and the Browns. Getty’s son Gordon, a philanthropist and composer, is a friend of Bill Newsom’s going back to prep school (St. Ignatius in San Francisco, which Jerry Brown attended a few years later). Brown was unmarried during his first stint as governor, and Gordon Getty’s wife often performed the first lady’s official duties. Before joining the appellate court Bill Newsom was an attorney for Getty Oil and later left his judicial seat to run the multibillion-dollar Getty family trust, which Gordon Getty controls. The trust provided the seed money for PlumpJack, the winery and restaurant group started by their two sons, William Getty and Gavin Newsom. The success of PlumpJack laid the groundwork for Newsom’s political career in San Francisco, first on the board of supervisors and then as mayor, which he was elected in 2003. Newsom briefly ran for governor in 2010 before being big-footed by old family friend Jerry Brown. Prepared to bide his time, Newsom ran for lieutenant governor.

The top of California’s greasy pole may be full of familiar names, but the state’s dominant political party is a very big tent. There are still moderate Democrats in the legislature, big-city mayors with green

eyeshades on, and socially conservative minority voters. Without partisan competition from the GOP, the typical rifts and conflicts of politics are all within the tent—with interesting results.

Dan Walters dubs an unofficial group of centrist Democratic legislators in Sacramento the “Mod Squad.” This coalition curbs the excesses of the Democrats’ supermajority (they hold 55 of the 80 seats) in the assembly, halting everything from stricter and costlier emissions standards to tax increases. “Mod Squad influence is rarely demonstrated in showdown votes on specific bills,” Walters wrote in a 2016 column. “Rather, legislation that fails because of their presence is usually placed on the shelf without votes after legislative leaders count noses and come up short.” Democratic primaries for legislative seats in recent years have turned on issue-based turf wars between labor-backed progressives and business-friendly challengers. In 2016, the unions defeated San Bernardino assemblywoman Cheryl Brown—dubbed “Chevron Cheryl”

because of donations the Democrat received from the oil company—with their own Democratic candidate. But in an open assembly seat in the East Bay region that same year, the teachers’ union-supported Mae Torlakson lost to pro-education-reform Democrat Tim Grayson.

California’s looming public-pension crisis reveals another way Democrats are divided. The generous benefits public-sector unions in California have extracted from state and local governments are prompting cutbacks in school funding and services—or, more typically, tax increases and more bond issuances. A 2017 Stanford University study by former Democratic assemblyman Joe Nation examined 14 governmental agencies in California from the state government itself to cities, counties, and school districts. Nation concluded that “public pension costs are making it harder to provide services that have traditionally been considered part of government’s core mission” and that government contributions to pensions would have to double by 2030. And this is in a booming economy with rock-bottom interest rates.

But billions of dollars in campaign contributions from organized labor, plus the strict collective bargaining and compulsory unionization laws in California, mean it’s difficult for reformers to make headway in Sacramento or elsewhere. “The public-employee unions control the state and control the Democratic party,” says Will Swaim, the president of the conservative California Policy Center.

One Democrat who wasn’t under their control was

Without partisan competition from the GOP, the typical rifts and conflicts of politics are all within the Democrats’ big tent—with interesting results.

Chuck Reed, the mayor of San Jose from 2007 to 2014. Reed is a good liberal and a staunch environmentalist, but he couldn't ignore the budget dilemma. "In about 2010, San Jose was going into the tenth year of cutting services to balance the budget," Reed tells me. "Our spending was about \$800 million a year and our shortfall was around \$115 million. We were facing service-delivery insolvency." With the city council, Reed developed a plan to close that gap, which included significant entitlement reform. The proposal would have replaced San Jose's defined-benefit health plan with a leaner one and opened up the benefits of current employees to renegotiation.

The plan was put on the ballot in 2012, and 69 percent of San Jose voters approved it. But the unions were infuriated and challenged the measure in court. Reed's proposal was mostly upheld, but the "California Rule," an interpretation of state law that protects current benefits from renegotiation, meant that the key provision of the proposal was thrown out. San Jose is appealing. Jerry Brown, recognizing the threat of the unfunded liabilities of the state employee pension program, joined an amicus brief against the California Rule. But there's little to suggest the rest of the Democratic party is ready to get on board with pension reform any time soon.

Even Donald Trump, who unifies national Democrats in resistance, has opened up splits within the California state party. Dianne Feinstein, for instance, drew the left's ire after making a relatively innocuous comment about the president at an event last year. "Look, this man is going to be president, most likely for the rest of this term. I just hope he has the ability to learn and to change. And if he does, he can be a good president. And that's my hope," the 84-year-old Democrat said. It was boilerplate senator-speak that wouldn't have raised an eyebrow in Washington, but it elicited boos from the audience at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco. Her chief Democratic challenger in this summer's Senate primary, the ultra-progressive state senate president Kevin de León, jumped on the remark, calling Feinstein "complicit" in the Trump administration. It was a perfect example of the left's argument against giving Feinstein a fifth term: She was out of touch with progressives and the #Resistance.

But Feinstein remains a formidable political figure and easily won the crowded Senate primary with 44 percent of the vote. De León finished second, but got just 12 percent, suggesting the November runoff between the two would be more of a snooze than the battle for the heart of the party many were predicting. He has had trouble raising money, and his lack of name recognition even in his hometown of Los Angeles doesn't help. Still, the activist Democratic base isn't deterred by Feinstein's strong position. In July, the state party voted to endorse de León. The endorsement did

little to boost de León in the polls but guaranteed him party money and headaches for other Democrats. "It was one of the stupidest things they could have done," said one experienced party operative. "There's a lot of candidates who don't want Kevin on the same materials they're on."

Newsom recognizes where the energy is among California Democrats. The lieutenant governor has few official duties, so he took on the role of cheerleading progressive initiatives. He claims partial credit for a number of victories, including the legalization of mari-



A homeless man sleeps in downtown San Francisco.

juana and same-sex marriage, as well as a new law requiring a background check for the purchase of ammunition. During a staged interview at the Outside Lands music festival in San Francisco this August, Newsom hinted that the ammo law is just the beginning for guns in California.

"We have a unique obligation to step up and step in where others have stepped away, and I really feel passionately that when we prove this paradigm and when we begin to apply these rules and when we begin to advance these background checks, that is going to ignite a debate anew across this country and will raise the bar of expectation on gun safety," he said.

He is skilled in delivering this kind of pabulum. Asked by reporters in May how he would approach the state's housing shortage and growing homeless population, Newsom promised "to be a lot more intentional on the housing and homeless issue, which is not just about more resources but resourcefulness."

What progressives care most about, though, is a single-payer health-care system, and they expect Newsom to be more than just "intentional" with getting it passed into law. The powerful California Nurses Association is the lobbying force, and the state senate passed a version of it last

year. Despite the big Democratic majority in the assembly, speaker Anthony Rendon declined to hold a vote on the bill, which had no funding mechanism and read more like a wish list than a serious reform. Rendon took the brunt of the criticism from the left for scuttling progressive dreams, but Jerry Brown has long expressed skepticism that single-payer is feasible for California. “Where do you get the extra money? This is the whole question,” he told reporters in 2017. Even if the assembly had passed the senate bill, Brown would almost certainly have vetoed it.

Newsom has said countless times he supports single-payer. While he was mayor of San Francisco, the city implemented a subsidized medical-care program (paid for by taxing companies and so raising the cost of doing business in the city). All are eligible, no matter their citizenship, immigration status, employment, or preexisting condition. San Francisco has had near-universal insurance coverage for more than a decade.

“We can do this all across the state and all across this country,” Newsom promised at Outside Lands. “I am committed to it, and we can make it happen, and we have an obligation to do that,” he told the approving crowd, adding that he has “long believed in a single-payer financing system” and “Medicare for all.” Then Newsom asked essentially the same question Brown did, but with a more positive tone: “Can a state do it?”

His answer sounded like yes, but it wasn’t quite: “In my humble opinion, there is no other state better positioned to do it than a state that already spends \$367.5 billion a year on health insurance, a state that has one of the most robust health-care delivery systems of anywhere in the world, and with all our remarkable ingenuity, capacity, and human capital,” he said. So is that a commitment to pass a single-payer bill? “I am committed to advancing that principle, advancing that paradigm, and seeing how far we can take it,” Newsom said. “The job of the next governor is to get in the ‘how’ business.”

What astute political observers, including supporters of Newsom, wonder is just how quickly the “how” question for single-payer and other big progressive agenda items will be shunted aside. As governor, Newsom’s first task will be negotiating a budget with the legislature. Those close to the candidate say he’s absorbed Brown’s public and private warnings about a recession wiping out the surplus so carefully built up. On August 6, Brown told reporters a recession is “going to happen” and predicted “we maybe have two years if we are lucky.”

Perhaps Newsom would be lucky to get a recession. The realities of an economic downturn would make initiatives like single-payer health care tough to justify and remove the impossible political challenge of wrangling the progressive wing and the Mod Squad into agreement. A downturn

would allow him to do what his Democratic predecessors have done and what many Democrats in California suspect Newsom would really like to do: tack to the center on fiscal issues while focusing on things like guns, criminal justice, and, yes, resisting Trump. If there’s one thing progressives can count on from Newsom, it’s that he’ll be loud on the national stage where Brown has been relatively quiet.

At Outside Lands, Newsom positioned himself as the anti-Trump—not just an angry resister but a counterargument to the Trumpian vision for the country. “Here we are in San Francisco, one of the most diverse cities in one of the most diverse regions in the most diverse state in the world’s most diverse democracy,” he said. “Those are values worth protecting. Those are values worth standing tall for, and those are the values under assault by not just the Trump administration, but by the Laura Ingrahams of the world, by the Tucker Carlsons of the world. By Trumpism more broadly.”

All of this suggests White House ambitions. Comparisons between the handsome Californian and JFK have swirled for 15 years. In 2001, Newsom married Kimberly Guilfoyle, a former model turned assistant district attorney in San Francisco. (Her father, Tony Guilfoyle, was one of Newsom’s top political advisers until his death in 2008.) A 2004 profile of the San Francisco power couple in *Harper’s Bazaar* was titled “The New Kennedys” and featured a photograph of the two splayed out on an oriental rug, hands clasped together, staring broodingly at the camera. Out of the window behind them you can see an ornate balustrade on a balcony overlooking the San Francisco Bay. The photo was taken in a mansion owned by Gordon Getty.

Newsom and Guilfoyle divorced in 2006. The next year, it was reported that he had been having an affair with the wife of one of his top aides, and soon after, the young mayor announced he would get treatment for alcohol abuse. He went on to win reelection in 2007 and, the following year, married actress Jennifer Siebel. They have four kids, and by all accounts, the former party boy has cleaned up his act. (Guilfoyle, for her part, went on to a career as a Fox News star and is now dating Donald Trump Jr.)

Could Newsom challenge Trump for the presidency? A run in 2020 isn’t likely given that he would have to start running for president almost immediately after being sworn in as governor of California in January. But he’s likely to give it a run in 2024 or even 2028, when he’ll only be 61 years old. By then, the country will be more secular and socially progressive. It will be more ethnically diverse. It will have a more automated and tech-driven economy. It will be looking down the barrel of the entitlement crisis. It could be on the cusp of adopting a single-payer health-care system. In other words, 10 years from now, America really could look like California does today. ♦



How the GOP Became Trump's Party

The tribalization of conservatism

BY CHARLES J. SYKES

Late on the afternoon of October 7, 2016, I texted an old friend, fellow Wisconsinite Reince Priebus. The *Access Hollywood* videotape had just been released, showing the GOP presidential nominee describing his approach to seducing and perhaps assaulting women. “You know I’m automatically attracted to beautiful—I just start kissing them,” Donald Trump said on the tape. “It’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait. And when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab ’em by the pussy. You can do anything.”

In the course of his campaign, Trump had insulted POWs, women, disabled reporters, members of minority groups, and his opponents without derailing his candidacy. But this felt like it might be different, and events were moving quickly.

Trump was due to visit Wisconsin the next day for a rally with Speaker Paul Ryan, their first joint appearance of the campaign. Relations between Trump and Ryan had been fraught, with the speaker accusing his party’s nominee of “textbook racism” while Trump derided the speaker

as “our very weak and ineffective leader.” The Wisconsin event was the culmination of Priebus’s peacemaking efforts. Like other members of the GOP mainstream, Priebus had been a Trump skeptic, but as chairman of the Republican National Committee he had embraced Trump’s candidacy with apparent enthusiasm. He was also one of Ryan’s best friends, so the joint event would be a symbol of his efforts to normalize Trump’s candidacy and rally the disparate wings of the GOP behind the erratic billionaire.

But now all of Priebus’s friends and colleagues from Wisconsin would have to stand on stage with their pussy-grabbing nominee. It would be the photo-op from hell, a month before the general election.

Despite our deepening political differences, Reince and I had kept in touch throughout the campaign. At lunch in Milwaukee in September, we had talked about our lives after the election. He wanted to stay on as RNC chair to pick up the pieces before returning to law or perhaps a cable television deal. I told him that I was writing a book; he said we should stay in touch because, unlike Trump’s campaign staffers, he had never signed a nondisclosure agreement.

So that afternoon when the tape was released, I texted Priebus. He wasn’t going to allow Trump to drop a bomb on Wisconsin Republicans, was he?

Priebus responded quickly: “I am the guy trying to fix this!” he texted. “I am in tears over this.”

Within a few hours, Ryan withdrew the invitation to

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JASON REDMOND / AFP / GETTY

Trump. For a moment, it seemed like a turning point. But it wasn't, or at least not in the way that I thought it would be. As we later learned, Priebus told Trump he should drop out of the race (for which Trump never forgave him). Across the country Republicans rescinded their endorsements. Ryan announced he would no longer defend Trump.

But one by one, they drifted back. After Trump's improbable win, Priebus became White House chief of staff. Ryan, who had so often expressed his disgust with Trump's comments, became his most important ally in Congress. A year after Trump's election, Ryan declared: "We're with Trump. That's a choice we made at the beginning of the year. That's a choice we made during the campaign; . . . we merged our agendas."

In retrospect, the *Access Hollywood* video foreshadowed the degree to which the right was willing to surrender its remaining principles and enable many of Trump's worst impulses. So it should not have come as a surprise when the GOP stuck with Trump as he became embroiled in a growing series of scandals, fired the FBI director, and tried to obstruct the special counsel's investigation into his conduct. Nor should it have come as a surprise when evangelical Christian leaders gave the president a pass on reports he had an affair with a porn star and paid her hush money. They were merely reprising the moral compromises they had made during the campaign.

The right's rolling acquiescence to Trump's hostile takeover also foreshadowed the metamorphosis of the conservative movement on issues ranging from personal character and public ethics to fiscal conservatism, crony capitalism, free trade, immigration, global leadership, and human rights.

In April 2018, Ryan, who had once been the party's rising conservative star, announced that he was stepping down as speaker. "Ryan's departure is not some kind of inflection point," wrote Stephen Hayes, editor of this journal, "it is an exclamation point."

It is Trump's party now, marked not only by the GOP Congress's rituals of sycophantic abasement but also by poll numbers suggesting the degree to which the conservative base has made itself over in Trump's image. In February 2018, in the wake of the passage of tax reform, 90 percent of Republican voters told Gallup pollsters they approved of Trump's performance. The approval of GOP voters seemed to extend beyond his policies to his personal

qualities as well. In January 2018, a Quinnipiac poll found that the overwhelming majority of Americans—71 percent of independent voters, 67 percent of male voters, and 68 percent of female voters—had come to the conclusion that Trump was not setting a good example for children. The one glaring exception? Seventy-two percent of Republican voters said they thought that Trump "is a good role model for children." Even after a year of juvenile taunts on Twitter, 82 percent of Republicans said that Trump shared their values, and four out of five believed he "provides the United States with moral leadership." The percentage of Republican voters who thought sexual misconduct by a president was an important issue dropped from 70 percent during Bill Clinton's presidency to just 25 percent under Trump's.

Since Trump's election, we have heard the same question again and again: What will it take? What has to happen for Republicans to break with their Mad King? The honest answer is: Who knows?

NORMALIZING TRUMP

In early 2016, *National Review* devoted an issue to essays gathered under the headline "Against Trump." By February 2018, the same magazine's cover featured a smiling President Trump and the headline: "A Year of Achievement: The Case for the Trump Presidency."

Indeed, many Republicans insist that they support the Trump agenda and policies, rather than the man. Tax cuts, they reasoned, were worth ignoring a few tweets, even the ugly ones. They convinced themselves that their cynicism was savvy realism. There was uneasiness about his chaotic style, his management by humiliation, and his penchant for surrounding himself with a remarkable menagerie of misfit toys. But many conservatives rallied around Trump in reaction to media bias and the hostility of his critics and opponents. Anti-anti-Trumpism has proven a powerful glue among conservatives seeking a reason to stick with the president; the more he is besieged, the tighter his supporters cling to him and the deeper they dig in.

Other Republicans told themselves that if you squint hard enough, Trump can look like a somewhat normal Republican president who has delivered a series of conservative wins. Under Trump, they point out, the GOP has been able to pass sweeping tax reform, eliminate the individual mandate for health insurance, roll back the regulatory state,

It is Trump's party now, marked not only by the GOP Congress's rituals of sycophantic abasement but also by poll numbers suggesting the degree to which the conservative base has made itself over in Trump's image. In January, 72 percent of Republican voters said they thought that Trump 'is a good role model for children.'

toughen immigration enforcement, fund the military, and install conservative judges throughout the federal judiciary, including, most notably, the Supreme Court. The stock market has gone up, unemployment down. In any case, the choice remains binary; whatever his flaws might be, Trump is still preferable to the ghastly alternative of Hillary Clinton or the progressive left.

In this telling, Trump's lack of any fixed principles and invincible ignorance on policy means that he is an empty vessel that the establishment GOP can fill with many of its dearest objectives. "Trump has governed so far as more of a Republican and conservative than I expected," *National Review* editor Rich Lowry wrote in 2017.

But claims that Trumpism had delivered major conservative wins were undermined by the GOP's dramatic abandonment of even the pretense of fiscal conservatism, adding trillions of dollars to the national debt. Rather than draining the swamp, they fully funded it.

In a series of votes on tax cuts and spending, Trump and the GOP Congress blew through spending caps imposed during the Obama years. After Trump signed a massive \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending bill in March 2018, economists estimated that it would add \$2 trillion to the national debt over the next decade. Within a decade, debt payments alone could approach \$1 trillion a year. The GOP's abandonment of fiscal prudence was followed by its retreat from free trade. Trump threatened to derail the booming economy and set off a trade war by imposing tens of billions of dollars of tariffs (taxes) on imports. Free-market conservatives denounced Trump's protectionism, but again the GOP failed to push back in any meaningful way. This, however, has been only part of the story.

WAS IT WORSE?

So has the Trump era turned out better or worse than I expected? Back in May 2016, on what I'm pretty sure was my last appearance ever on Fox News, I said:

Donald Trump is a serial liar, a con man who mocks the disabled and women. He's a narcissist and a bully, a man with no fixed principles who has the vocabulary of an emotionally insecure 9-year-old. So no, I don't want to give him control of the IRS, the FBI, and the nuclear codes. That's just me.

Nothing that has happened since has changed my opinion one bit. Even so, it has been worse than I thought, but not because of Trump. Nothing he has done as president should come as a surprise to anyone who paid attention to his career or his campaign in 2015 and 2016. He is who we expected him to be; there was never going to be a pivot. Conservatives have, unfortunately, been a different story. The 2016 election dramatically highlighted the role of tribalism in American politics; but since the election

we have seen the degree to which conservative politics has become not merely tribal but transactional.

Trump secured the GOP nomination with only a minority of the primary votes. During the general election many conservatives voted for him reluctantly because they saw the election as a binary choice. But the GOP submission since Trump's election has a different feel: Now that it is in power, the Trumpian right often feels more like a personality cult than a political movement.

It is one thing to support tax cuts (a staple of GOP politics for decades), quite another to cheer his attacks on the special prosecutor, the Department of Justice, and the FBI. The House Intelligence Committee became a virtual extension of the Trump White House, issuing reports that sought to discredit findings of the intelligence community about Russian interference in the election. The Republican National Committee took the lead in attempts to discredit former FBI director James Comey even before the publication of his memoir, setting up a website with the Trumpian title "Lynin' Comey." Of course, this had nothing to do with conservative principles or even making America great again, but it has become the new normal for the GOP; Republicans have grown accustomed to the politics of rationalization and a daily diet of codswallop.

The president's many rationalizers often insist that objections to Trump are merely matters of taste or style or the president's personality. But that is an obvious dodge because Trump's presidency is a reflection of his character and his judgment, and the consequences are substantive. Trump did not adjust to the responsibilities of the presidency, so conservatives adjusted to him.

When Trump retweeted racist videos from a British fascist group, Republican leaders ignored it. As Trump's lies became more flagrant, they shrugged. His conflicts of interest generated little attention, his juvenile taunts and ignorance and indifference to policy hardly a blink.

Sheriff Joe Arpaio was a caricature of law enforcement—living up to every stereotype of a lawless, brutal, racist cop who ignored fundamental rights and reveled in calculated cruelty. When Trump used his presidential authority to pardon him, most Republicans shuffled their feet and changed the subject. Trumpists doubled down. In an appearance in Arizona in May 2018, Vice President Mike Pence gave a shoutout to Arpaio, who was now running for the U.S. Senate, calling him "a great friend of this president and tireless champion of strong borders and the rule of law."

Early in his presidency Trump falsely accused Barack Obama of ordering the wiretapping of Trump Tower and insisted that millions of illegal votes had denied him a victory in the popular vote. There was no evidence for either claim.

At the same time, he bullied critics, attacked and threatened the media, and used his office to enrich himself and his family. Ushering in a new era of crony capitalism, he rewarded his political allies while using his bully pulpit to vindictively attack successful businesses, like Amazon, in part because its owner also owns the *Washington Post*, which has been critical of his presidency.

As the #MeToo movement gathered momentum, critics noted that he had been credibly accused of harassing or assaulting women. His response has been to call them liars and threaten to sue them. Throughout his first year in office, he stoked racial animosity by picking fights with prominent African-Americans, including NFL players, and suggested that neo-Nazi protesters in Charlottesville included many “fine people.”

His refusal to sign the G7 summit’s final communiqué, his repeated questioning of the value of NATO, his attacks on the European Union, and his disdain for traditional allies risk isolating the United States while undermining the international order built up on a bipartisan basis over more than seven decades. Trump’s bitter attacks on allies like Canada’s Justin Trudeau contrast sharply with his fawning praise of global thugs like North Korea’s Kim Jong-un and Russia’s Vladimir Putin.

Perhaps inspired by their example, he has repeatedly suggested prosecuting or jailing his political opponents. In the weeks leading up to Trump’s first State of the Union speech, the man who had begun his campaign by lashing out at Mexican “rapists” derailed negotiations over immigration reform by objecting to refugees from “shithole countries.”

There were dissenting voices, including former President George W. Bush and senators John McCain, Bob Corker, and Jeff Flake, but they found themselves routinely derided by the loudest voices in the conservative media. Flake took to the floor of the Senate to challenge his colleagues. “We must never regard as ‘normal’ the regular and casual undermining of our democratic norms and ideals,” he said. Even though other Republicans shared Flake’s views, few were willing to speak out, and Flake’s decision not to seek reelection highlighted his isolation.

A TOTAL MAKEOVER

By any measure, the makeover was remarkable. Until Trump, Republicans were members of a party that insisted that character matters. But goaded into a tribalism that treats ideas, facts, truth, and basic decency as expendable, the GOP seems a party blanched of any fixed principles. “It’s more than strong; it’s tribal in nature,” Corker told the *Washington Examiner*. “People who tell me, who are out on the trail, say, ‘Look, people don’t ask about issues anymore. They don’t care

about issues. They want to know if you’re with Trump or not.’” Republican voters shifted so far that loyalty to Trump in the days after the release of the *Access Hollywood* tape became a litmus test in GOP primary elections in 2018. Campaign ads excoriated Republicans who had withdrawn their endorsements after the release of the tape.

Because the GOP has cast its lot so thoroughly with Trump, he has succeeded in a remarkably short period in moving the window of acceptability in our politics, especially on the right. As a result, the rules of the game have changed in ways that are still hard to grasp, as conservatives accept behaviors and ideological shifts that would have been unacceptable a few years ago. Although optimists continue to insist that our system of checks and balances is holding up well, many of our norms turn out to be based on an honor system rather than hard and fast rules. And when we no longer have honorable people in power, those norms turn out to be more fragile than we had imagined.

Conservatives ought to have been alarmed by demagogic indifference to democratic norms, and to be sure, some were. But if anything, pressure to get on board the Trump train has grown over time. While some commentators have tried to maintain their independence—mixing criticism with praise—the tightrope has been treacherous. In conservative circles, the failure to go full #MAGA carries the risk of irrelevance and exile. Shortly before my book *How the Right Lost Its Mind* was published in the fall of 2017, I was fired by a conservative Wisconsin think tank for which I had edited a magazine for 27 years. The group’s president, a longtime friend, had also been a Trump critic, but told me that I was no longer consistent with their “brand.” Others paid a much stiffer price. Friendships have ended and careers foundered.

The consequences of the right’s capitulation are likely to be far-reaching and of long duration. Tainted by association with Trump, Republicans are shedding support among young voters, who disapprove of the president by a margin of more than 40 points in one poll. For many of those voters, the face of conservatism will continue to be ignorant, bigoted, and cruel, and polls suggest that the right could face a generational political tsunami as a result. At the same time, Republicans are embracing hardline immigration policies (travel bans, deportations, a wall) and nativist rhetoric that alienate moderates and drive minority voters away from the party, perhaps for a generation or more.

We do not yet know whether Trump’s presidency will be farce or tragedy, but it is hard to imagine that it will end well. So this might be a good time to remember that in a Faustian bargain you can indeed get your heart’s desire, only to find out that the price is far higher than you imagined. ♦

Pipeline Dreams

*Eastern Mediterranean gas creates new allies—
and deepens old enmities*

BY JOHN PSAROPOULOS

Athens

On January 30, the deepwater drillship *Saipem 12000* sent its drill bit into a cavern beneath one-and-a-quarter miles of water and a mile of rock in the eastern Mediterranean. The Italian oil and gas company Eni, which had contracted the ship, announced a week later that the cavern, called Calypso, was “an extended gas column,” containing an estimated six to eight trillion cubic feet of natural gas. The gas deposit lies under Cyprus’s exclusive economic zone—the area off a country’s coast where it has sovereign rights to exploit, manage, and conserve natural resources. Seismic studies suggest that the Calypso find is only a small fraction of the island’s future hydrocarbon wealth.

Meanwhile, ExxonMobil and the Qatar Petroleum Company are embarking on their own exploratory drilling off Cyprus’s southern shore in October. “We know the size of the structures and the possible hydrocarbons in them,” says geologist Konstantinos Nikolaou of the intended drill sites in an allotment called Block 10. “The sum of the deposits may amount to more than Zohr. . . . It is very promising,” he says.

At 30 trillion cubic feet, Zohr is the eastern Mediterranean’s largest known gas deposit, discovered three years ago offshore Egypt. Egypt plans to be energy self-sufficient by the end of 2018, doing away with \$3 billion a year in oil and gas purchases. Similar deposits would make Cyprus not only self-sufficient, but an exporter.

Egypt and Cyprus are blessed with proximity to the petroleum-rich Eratosthenes Seamount, now almost half a mile below sea level. Eight million years ago it was an island surrounded by coral reefs. “These provided the biomatter that rotted and created the gas,” says Nikolaou.

John Psaropoulos is an independent journalist who has covered Greece and the Balkans since the fall of communism. He writes and broadcasts for, among others, the Daily Beast, the Washington Post, the American Scholar, and Al Jazeera English. His blog is thenewathenian.com.

These are just the latest in a spate of gas discoveries that are changing the strategic value of the eastern Mediterranean. The gas rush began in earnest in 2009 offshore Israel, which has to date found about 35 trillion cubic feet of gas—enough to power the country for a century at current rates of consumption.

This has satisfied a decades-long quest for energy security amid hostile neighbors—Israel now produces 60 percent of its electricity from its own gas—while also powering Israel’s regional diplomacy. It has already signed agreements to sell gas to Jordan and Lebanon, which previously relied on Egypt and Syria. Thanks to the speed with which it is attracting investment, Israel has eclipsed them as an exporter.

The United States Geological Survey estimates that the marine basin divided between Egypt, Cyprus, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria may ultimately yield 350 trillion cubic feet of gas and 3.5 billion barrels of oil. That’s enough to power the region for decades or the European Union for 20 years. It is this latter prospect—of exporting energy to a wealthy and strategically important region—that is creating a new commercial and diplomatic alignment in the region.

BIRTH OF A PIPELINE

In the autumn of 2014, European Commissioner Maros Sefcovic, responsible for the European Union’s energy security, met with the energy ministers of Israel, Cyprus, Greece, and Italy in Rome. The subject of the meeting was an aspirational project: a 1,200-mile pipeline that would convey gas from Israel and Cyprus, via Greece and Italy, to the European market.

The pipeline, dubbed East Med, was the brainchild of Greek energy minister Yannis Maniatis. Greece’s Public Gas Corporation (DEPA) and Italy’s Edison had formed an alliance the previous summer to build it, but they needed E.U. support.

“The Israeli minister was due to speak before us,” says Maniatis, recalling the occasion. “And he suddenly launched a verbal assault on the commissioner and the other Europeans present, saying, ‘I don’t understand why you are not more actively promoting East Med, which will convey natural gas from my country and Cyprus. Don’t

you want cheaper natural gas for your citizens?’ [Cypriot energy minister Yiorgos] Lakkotrypīs and I looked at each other, thinking that Israel had just emerged as our strongest ally. We had prepared a little speech of our own, but we said nothing. We did not need to. Israel had just discovered Leviathan, so we were effectively being supported by the biggest gas supplier in the area.” Leviathan is the biggest of Israel’s gas fields, containing two-thirds of its known reserves.

Israel is a relative newcomer to hydrocarbons, but it is a pivotal player because its discoveries prompted the new explorations offshore Egypt and Cyprus. After a string of Israeli discoveries in 2009-11, Egypt put up 15 offshore exploration zones for tender. And it was an American company operating in Israel, Noble Energy, that discovered Cyprus’s first offshore gas field, Aphrodite, in 2011.

Suddenly having found more gas reserves than they could use domestically, Israel, Cyprus, Greece, and Italy proposed creating a physical and diplomatic umbilical cord of sorts, to pump the East Med gas to the E.U. The proposal could not have been more timely, because Europe’s main source, North Sea gas, is beginning to dwindle, and Europe had just rediscovered the dangers of reliance on Russia.

RUSSIA’S LONG REACH

In January 2009, the political tensions between East and West came to a head over Ukraine, which was then seeking closer ties to the E.U. and the West. Ukraine’s and Russia’s state gas monopolies, Naftogaz Ukrainy and Gazprom, played a game of brinkmanship over Naftogaz’s payments for gas deliveries. On January 7, Gazprom shut off supplies to Ukraine for a fortnight.

The E.U. relies on Russia for a third of its gas, and Ukraine is one of two transit countries for pipelines carrying Russian supplies. A complete cutoff had never happened since the building of the pipeline system in Soviet times, and it caught Europe unprepared. Domestic production and deep reserves kept western Europe warm; but southeast Europe, lacking infrastructure and entirely reliant on Russian gas, suffered industrial shutdowns and frozen homes.

The Ukraine crisis was a turning point in E.U.-Russia relations. The European Commission sought to punish Gazprom for abusing its dominant position in the gas market. In 2015, a three-year investigation found that Gazprom had contravened the E.U.’s free movement of goods policy by prohibiting member states from reselling surplus gas to each other. Gazprom was forced to renegotiate its contracts. Gazprom was also accused of making exports to Bulgaria and Poland conditional on their allowing new pipelines to be built across their territories. The E.U.’s actions against Gazprom effectively killed the South

Stream pipeline, which would have carried Russian gas across the Black Sea to Bulgaria.

The supply disruptions of 2009 and the subsequent cancellation of Russian pipelines refocused E.U. efforts on creating a so-called Southern Corridor to transport gas to Europe from the Shah Deniz field of Azerbaijan, through Turkey and Greece. Sponsored by a consortium of European oil giants, the Trans Adriatic Pipeline, or TAP, has now nearly completed a pipeline that will carry gas across northern Greece to Italy, while a Turkish-Azeri consortium is completing the Trans-Anatolian pipeline across Turkey that will connect with TAP. The gas is on schedule to start flowing in 2020.

But Russia, which still supplies about 35 percent of E.U. gas, is proving hard to sideline. “Now gas production from Shah Deniz I has fallen, and no one knows whether Shah Deniz II will produce enough to make up the shortfall in its initial phase,” says Kostis Stambolis, executive director of the Institute for Energy for Southeast Europe. “The result is that TAP is now in advanced discussions with the Russians about taking gas that the Russians want to send to Europe. . . . So the whole European narrative about differentiating its gas supply—which was the point of the Southern Corridor—goes out the window.”

Russia has meanwhile relaunched its canceled pipeline across the Black Sea under the name TurkStream and is building it to Istanbul instead of Bulgaria. A sister pipeline, TurkStream 2, is in the offing. DEPA and Edison may now revive the idea of a second pipeline from Turkey to Italy, via Greece, to complete the journey of TurkStream gas to Western Europe. Events seem to be vindicating the Russians.

“The vision was always that there will be enough gas discovered proximate to a corridor of three pipelines coming through Turkey, and that would constitute a supply counterweight to Russian gas, and would happen by 2020,” says Jonathan Stern, distinguished research fellow at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies. Since that E.U. vision arose, however, Russia and Turkey have become close allies in Syria. Russia now supplies two-thirds of Turkey’s gas and is building Turkey’s first nuclear reactor.

Stern believes the Russian-Turkish energy alliance is going to prove durable, because it is based on hard-won experience in the region. “The Russians are very effective at making pipelines happen, and the Turks have found in this massive negotiation with everybody—the Iranians, the Iraqis, the Turkmen . . . —that you can negotiate with everyone, but the only ones who are going to deliver are the Russians. Russians have got the gas, the finance, the partners, and the desire to get these pipelines done, and everyone else are basically time wasters.”

The four countries backing East Med are thus hoping to take advantage of waning European enthusiasm for Turkey

as an alternative to Russian gas. In their proposition, the next major leg of the Southern Corridor would be entirely E.U.-owned and would source its gas in or near the E.U. “I’m not going to say [officials in Brussels] have given up on Turkey as a transit route, but they’re less enthusiastic,” says Stern. “They’re kind of caught between not wanting to take Russian gas and saying, ‘If we’ve got to take Russian gas . . . then we’d rather take it through an E.U. country where we have more control.’”

COMMERCE VERSUS GEOPOLITICS

Not everyone is convinced that bringing East Med gas to the E.U. is viable in purely commercial terms. “Unless considerable additional quantities of gas are found in the eastern Mediterranean . . . I don’t think that this pipeline is commercially feasible,” says Sir Michael Leigh, who runs a program on the implications of eastern Mediterranean gas discoveries at the German Marshall Fund.

Gina Cohen, a university lecturer and consultant in the East Med gas market, agrees. “Such a pipeline between Israel and Italy would be 2,000 kilometers long and would have to be laid in extreme depths of over 3,000 meters of water, especially between Crete and mainland Greece. The project would need to have four landfalls and at least three compressors, all adding to complexity and costs.”

Cohen estimates the pipeline’s cost at \$10 billion, which would put Mediterranean gas at a higher retail price than Gazprom’s. “For the project to be viable, the E.U. would have to provide billions of dollars of subsidies,” she says.

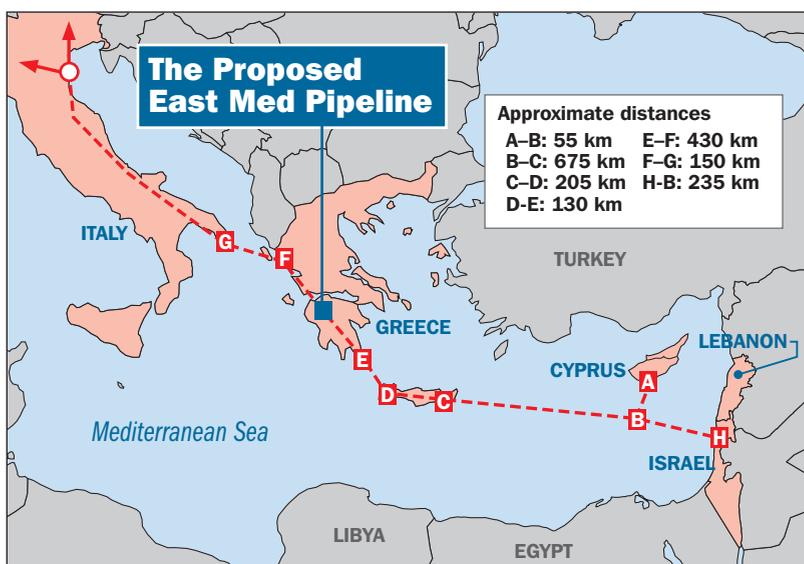
Key players, however, see those subsidies as legitimate. “It’s not enough to see [East Med] as a commercial project that will sell at prices comparable to Gazprom,” says Mathios Rigas, who formed Energean in 2007 for the express purpose of extracting Eastern Mediterranean gas. The Russian state monopoly “is producing on land using existing infrastructure,” he explains. “Someone starting out now at depths of two to three kilometers will never be able to compete with that.”

Instead, he sees East Med very much like the interstate highway system—an “entirely necessary” public-private investment that causes private enterprise to spring up alongside it. “The installation of pipelines allows companies like ours to seek opportunities,” he says. Energean is building the eastern Mediterranean’s only floating production, storage, and offloading platform as part of a massive investment in two large Israeli gas fields, Karish and Tanin. But

it has also, in an Israeli bidding process, won the right to explore five smaller blocks, which remain unconnected to any infrastructure and together could contain about 5 trillion cubic feet of gas. “They may be smaller [than the major Israeli fields], but the new infrastructure would allow these structures to be commercially viable.”

The head of Greece’s exploration licensing body, Hellenic Hydrocarbon Resources Management, believes that an E.U. subsidy will be an easy sell given the pipeline’s political importance. “We’ll raise the price of gas a few cents, and we won’t even feel it. That’s how it’ll work. That’s how it always works,” says Yannis Bassias.

The E.U. seems to be seriously considering the project. In 2013 it listed East Med as a Project of Common Inter-



est, one possibly worthy of E.U. funding. Two years later, it put two million euros into a pre-flow study, and this year approved 34.5 million euros to help draft a detailed marine survey of the route the pipeline would follow on the seafloor and an engineering design study.

DEPA, which has drafted the only existing feasibility study, insists that “East Med is technically viable, commercially competitive, and economically feasible,” although it won’t say at what gas price these things hold true. Kostas Karayannakos, its executive director of gas supply, considers it “slightly more attractive” than piping the gas through Turkey or liquefying and shipping it.

The key attraction of East Med is stability. It would be a risk-free, intra-E.U. route carrying committed volumes of gas to Europe for a quarter-century. Europe would in turn be a reliable client, in contrast to cash-poor regional economies. “We used to seek out investors in East Med. Now they are seeking us out,” Karayannakos says.

For Karayannakos, the pipeline brings tremendous

geopolitical advantages, rendering Greece “the E.U.’s ‘bridge’ to the important resources of the Levantine while it is already Europe’s ‘gateway’ for Caspian gas,” making Greece “an integral part of Europe’s energy security chain” and “ending the isolation of Cyprus.” The combined flows of TAP and East Med would make Greece the conveyor of 6 percent of the gas the E.U. consumes.

TURKEY’S REACTION

It is precisely this vision—of a pipeline that circumvents its exclusive economic zone, turns Cypriot energy interests into European energy interests, elevates the importance of Greece in the E.U., and offers Greece and Cyprus a leading role in the E.U.’s relations with the Middle East—that concerns Turkey. Its displeasure has already caused one high-seas standoff.

On February 9, shortly after discovering Calypso, the *Saipem 12000* drillship homed in on a body of water east of Cyprus known as Block 3, where Eni also has exploration rights. Its intention was to bore a hole into a deposit known as the Cuttlefish prospect. It never reached its intended coordinates. Five Turkish navy frigates blocked its path. The drillship trod water until February 23, when it attempted to circumnavigate the blockade. One of the frigates threatened to ram it. The drillship turned and sailed for Morocco. During the same period, a Turkish coast guard vessel rammed a Greek one in the Aegean—an unprecedented event many analysts attribute to the discovery of Calypso.

Since the discovery of Calypso, “alarm bells have been going off in Turkey, and officials have been saying, ‘the Greeks are going to take advantage of this situation,’” says Angelos Syrigos, associate professor of international law and foreign policy at Panteion University in Athens. “Turkey has made a big investment since 2000 in becoming the basic conveyor of gas to Europe, and to a great extent it has succeeded. . . . The discovery of new deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean threatens this position. . . . But [Turkey’s] main concern—and where it faces a strategic threat—is that [the energy deposits] could alter the given situation in Cyprus ahead of a solution” to reunify the island.

Two decades of talks have so far failed to reunify Cyprus, divided by a Turkish invasion in 1974. A Greek attempt to overthrow the government in Nicosia that year led Turkey to believe that the island’s union with Greece was imminent and that under such an arrangement Turkish-Cypriots would have no guarantee of political equality. Since then, Turkey has maintained an occupying force of almost 40,000 troops on the island and supplanted much of the original Turkish-Cypriot population with settlers from the mainland who are more sympathetic to Ankara’s vision of maintaining strategic depth in the Mediterranean. The Turkish Republic of

Northern Cyprus, proclaimed in 1983, remains an internationally unrecognized entity, and the ongoing occupation isolates Turkey diplomatically.

The Cypriot government says it will share its mineral wealth with the Turkish-Cypriots in the north after a reunification deal is struck. Concerned that this increases Cypriot leverage, Turkey insists on the wealth being shared now. To press the point home, Turkey has announced that it will send its government-owned drillship, the *Barbaros Hayreddin Pasa*, to explore for gas in Cyprus’s exclusive economic zone.

Turkey is something of an exception in the region. Egypt, Israel, and Cyprus defined their exclusive economic zones early this century. They ratified these bilateral agreements, sold concessions to major oil companies, and found gas. Israel and Egypt are already extracting it.

Turkey is the only country in the eastern Mediterranean that has so far found no proven and probable resources even though, in Syrigos’s estimate, it has spent at least \$560 million on acquiring two seismographic research vessels and a drillship. It is also the only country that hasn’t defined its exclusive economic zone with neighbors, and disputes theirs. In 2004, Turkey suggested drawing a line midway between its coast and Egypt’s, riding roughshod over the rights of the countries in between. Egypt politely refused.

In 2011, Turkey agreed on an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The zone claimed by the TRNC sits almost exactly on top of the zone the Republic of Cyprus had already settled on with its neighbors to the east. The zone claimed by Turkey sits on top of much of the zone Cyprus has agreed on with Egypt to the south. On the same day this agreement was signed, the TRNC signed over the rights in its zone to the Turkish state petroleum company, thus pitting Cyprus directly against Turkey in virtually all its hydrocarbon explorations.

“Turkey’s problem is that it sees that it has been left out of the bonanza, because all the interesting areas lie outside its territorial waters and EEZ,” says energy expert Stambolis. “It’s trying to create problems for Cyprus because its only hope is to take something from Cyprus. . . . So it’s very irritable right now.”

The Southern Corridor is bound to give both Greece and Turkey added importance to the European Union, and that creates a common interest; but in Cyprus their interests clash, and it will be up to their allies to help bridge differences. Regional governments are pushing for East Med, and the size of deposits may eventually advocate in its favor. This makes East Med a political as much as a commercial project. “If the E.U. and the four governments [Israel, Cyprus, Greece, Italy] are aligned behind it, it can find financing,” says Energean’s Rigas. “There will be more discoveries in the region. We’re still at the beginning.” ♦



Jeanine Pirro—Fox News host and booster of President Trump—takes a selfie with his son Eric and her bestselling book.

The Groaning Shelves

We read Trump-era bestsellers so you don't have to. BY ANDREW FERGUSON

I seldom look at the *New York Times* bestseller list, and when I glanced at it a couple of months ago I remembered why. Aside from a pop-science book by the astronomer Neil deGrasse Tyson, there wasn't anything on it I would want to read, ever. I paged through the top 10 on the bestseller shelf at my local Barnes & Noble. There was a memoir by a writer in her thirties about her long struggle to do something worth writing a memoir about; a plump sermon on national piety called, of course, *The Soul of America*; a book about opioids. And six books about Donald Trump. Evidently Trump has swallowed up

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the book-publishing industry the way he has swallowed up everything else. I bought all six, along with another by Ann Coulter, whose new book about Trump has failed to make the list. I like Ann and she looked lonely.

Once upon a time, it was common for TV shows, their plots and stories, to be spun off from books. Today books are just as likely to be spun off from TV shows. This is particularly true of political books, which follow the protocols laid down by the chat'n'grunt fare of cable news. The book buyers are mainly TV watchers, and the books they buy are meant to be rewarding in the way they must find cable news rewarding: They're fast-paced, personal, one-sided, exaggerated, confident, dubious. They are well suited for an era superin-

tended by a man who is both the chief consumer and most notable creation of MSNBC, CNN, and, preeminently, Fox.

1. THE VILLAIN

When I got home with my big, very heavy bag from Barnes & Noble, I started at the top with that week's number-one seller, *Unhinged: An Insider's Account of the Trump White House*. The nominal author, Omarosa Manigault Newman, acquired what fame she has—she thinks it rivals Trump's, others disagree—on the first season of Trump's own reality show, *The Apprentice*. She was cast as a selfish, unscrupulous knife-fighter. From the book it's clear the producers knew what they were doing.

ROB RICH / WENN.COM / ALAMY

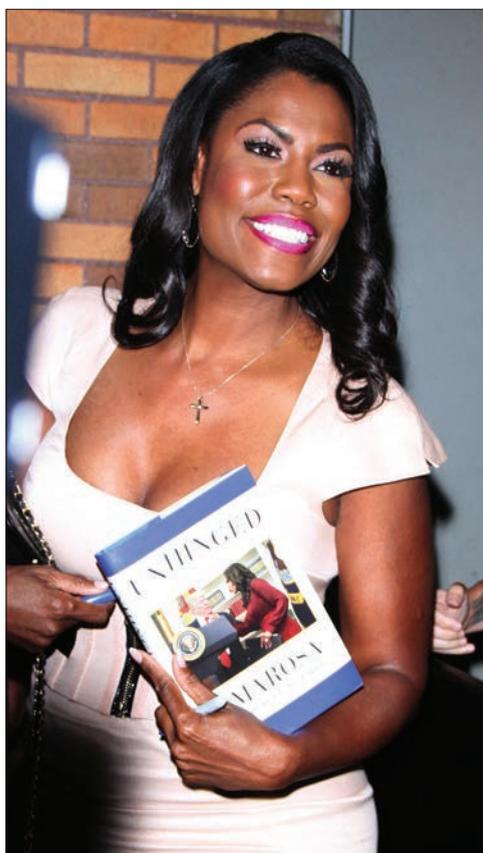
Omarosa (she prefers the solo name, like Napoleon and Cher) stayed in touch with Trump over the years, trying to stoke her fading fame with appearances on syndicated afternoon talk shows and more reality TV. She calls her relationship with Trump “symbiotic”; I think she means to say “parasitic.” Many of her post-*Apprentice* jobs were connected in some way to Trump, including a stint as “West Coast editor” of the company that owns the *National Enquirer*. Trump arranged a backroom deal for her to get the job when she agreed to drop a lawsuit against the company. Seeing the work of the *Enquirer* up close, she takes the line of Captain Renault in *Casablanca*. “I’m stunned”—stunned!—“that I was involved in this kind of shady dealing.”

As a liberal Democrat, Omarosa was originally for Hillary Clinton as the 2016 campaign approached. She volunteered to raise money for Clinton’s campaign. “As a celebrity my networks were vast.” But Clinton proved herself unfit for high office in mid-2015 when her campaign declined to hire Omarosa as an outreach director to African-Americans. Clinton, you’ll remember, lost. There’s a lesson in there somewhere.

Trump hired Omarosa and—*nota bene*—won. In her book, she spends too much time on the 2016 campaign, rehashing events that will be familiar to anyone unlucky enough to have been alive at the time. Much of what she thinks will be news to her readers, isn’t. She thinks she’s the first one to discover that the pivotal moment in Trump’s decision to run for president was President Obama’s pitiless mockery of him at the White House Correspondents’ Association dinner in 2011—a theory that’s as common as dirt. There’s a “Yuh think?” observation every few pages. She suspects Dennis Rodman, an *Apprentice* costar, is high a lot of the time. Gary Busey has poor hygiene. “Donald was not a student of history.”

These are minor shortcomings. *Unhinged* is otherwise pure pleasure. The impress of Omarosa’s personality on the page is indelible and mes-

merizing. There’s a reason her first book was titled *The Bitch Switch*. She says she’s a lot like Trump, and it shows in the vanity, the thin skin, the relentless quest to settle scores. Her treatment of Betsy DeVos, to cite one instance, is brutal. She insists her differences with the secretary of education were matters of principle. The alert reader will find a more compel-



Omarosa met Donald Trump on *The Apprentice* and worked in his White House in 2017.

ling motive in the time DeVos’s traveling entourage stranded Omarosa at their hotel because she was late. They told her to call an Uber. Nobody tells Omarosa to call an Uber. As a consequence, DeVos’s educational reforms will destroy the nation’s schools. “Be afraid,” Omarosa tells America’s parents. “Be very, very afraid.”

After the election, Omarosa lobbied for a high-ranking White House job. Already she was beginning to suspect Trump was a lying racist—the evidence piled up pretty quick—but when friends asked why she didn’t hop off the

train, her answer, she says, was always the same: “Trumpworld needed me and I didn’t want to let them, or the nation, down.” She was blocked from the position she craved, director of communications. Reince Priebus slow-walked and double-talked her, but Omarosa soon discovered the real saboteur: Paula White, the freelance pastor who is often described as the president’s “spiritual adviser,” which must be something like Trumpworld’s version of the Maytag repairman.

White, it turns out, wanted to install her own candidate in the communications job. This calls for one of Omarosa’s drive-by insinuations: “I could not stop myself from contemplating whether her position as his spiritual advisor had ever been missionary.” In time Omarosa settles for another job as White House liaison to the African-American community—one thinks again of the Maytag repairman—and she reconciles with White after what Omarosa calls a come-to-Jesus meeting. The heart hiccups at the very thought of a come-to-Jesus meeting with Omarosa. Jesus wouldn’t come to a come-to-Jesus meeting with Omarosa.

She takes her place in the new administration. “As soon as I took my seat at my desk,” she writes, “I... was filled with awe at the magnitude of the responsibility of running the government. What I would do from this desk, and beyond it, would impact many lives and make a difference for families.” It didn’t work out that way, of course. Trump never did let her run the government. Instead

he used her as a kind of cowcatcher on the Trump train, pushing aside nettlesome African-American critics whenever they appeared, as Trump huddled in the caboose. “Don’t leave me alone with these people,” she says he whispered when she escorted him into a room with a group of pastors. Soon her bands of loyalty began to fray, and when John Kelly fired her not long after he became chief of staff, they snapped altogether. At once her eyes were opened to the Trump reality.

If Kelly hadn’t fired her, or if she’d left the White House under her own

RW/MEDIA PUNCH/ALAMY LIVE NEWS/ALAMY

steam with a suitable bon voyage party and a presidential pinch, this book wouldn't exist; or rather, it would be a much different book, and a much lesser one. *Unhinged* is such a pleasure to read because it is unashamedly, thrillingly vindictive. Yes, she makes feints here and there toward principle and policy, as in her demolition of DeVos, but Omarosa isn't really here to argue income inequality or abortion rights; she's here for character assassination. The cartoon villain Omarosa has played since *The Apprentice* comes vividly alive. For this we have to credit the consummate skill of her ghostwriter, a have-pen-will-travel veteran named Valerie Frankel. In her epic acknowledgments—Omarosa seems to thank everyone except the lumberjacks who chopped down the trees to make the paper—she commends Frankel for helping her relive the “painful subject matter” of her time in Trumpworld. Pain? I'm not buying it. I bet she loved every minute of it.

2. THE JUDGE

Among the many figures Valerie Frankel has served as wordsmith are Ivana Trump (*Raising Trump*), *Jersey Shore*'s Snooki Polizzi (*Baby Bumps*), and Fox News's “Judge” Jeanine Pirro (*He Killed Them All*). As it happened, the next bestseller from my B&N grab bag was Judge Pirro's *Liars, Leakers, and Liberals: The Case Against the Anti-Trump Conspiracy*. For a couple decades now, the judge has been, as Trump once was, a third-tier demi-celebrity in her native New York, where standards for celebrity are notably lax. She has fallen in and out of politics, in and out of TV. The “Judge” appellation used in the name of her TV show and emblazoned on the cover of her book refers to her two years as an elected judge on the Westchester County Court a quarter-century ago. For the moment she anchors a weekend show with Fox, which her publisher has now re-created in book form.

Given the alliterative scheme of her title, it's a mystery why Judge Jeanine didn't include another of the president's favorite epithets, *Losers*. Maybe she decided not to violate the Rule of

Three; probably not. In any case, she misses the steady hand of Valerie Frankel. Her honor gets off to a rocky start and never quite recovers. “We know what the liberal media think of Trump voters,” she writes on page 2. “They're deplorables, idiots, rednecks, and people who cling to God, guns, and religion. To those charges, I plead guilty—guilty and proud!”

Having pleaded guilty to being an idiot, she then proceeds to present her evidence—14 chapters' worth, most of them seething with alliteration: “Lying and Leaking to Fix an Election,” “Lying Liberal RINOS,” and so

Judge Jeanine Pirro believes, as so many Trump supporters do, that there is a thing called ‘the media.’ Treating the media as a unitary object can be a convenient shorthand but it can also make you sound dumb.

on. When any of those titular words appears in the text, it is capitalized for emphasis. “LIAR Obama liked what he saw in LIAR Brennan.” “LIBERALS, you have a decision to make.” However questionable her legal skill, this judge knows from branding.

The book is marred by various stylistic tricks that I believe are meant to make her sound as frightening as she looks in the cover photo. This too is branding. The judge's ex-husband lawyered some of Trump's real estate deals, and she had Thanksgiving dinner at Mar-a-Lago, so she claims a special intimacy with her leonine, lubricious LEADER. She's taken on the cadences of his speech, and her arguments have the meandering quality we expect from the president.

So there we are, just reading along, minding our own business, when suddenly, out of nowhere, she falls into

using the second-person pronoun. Readers will wonder why she's addressing them this way—and then they'll realize she's decided to talk directly to Michelle Obama or Hillary Clinton or Meryl Streep or Robert De Niro or any of several other people who would rather be waterboarded than pick up her book and read it. “Meryl, you say you didn't know about Harvey [Weinstein]'s predatory behavior. Really?” She can't wait for an answer because De Niro has come into view. “Bobby, I think you're taking your roles too seriously.” Whoops, here's Hillary. “Hillary, could it be you said nothing because you have experience with pedophiles?” Then she collars Michelle and gives her a tongue-lashing about feminist hypocrisy.

It's terribly unnerving, like eavesdropping on a schizoid outside the subway shouting at the people inside his head. “I don't know about you,” she writes in summary, meaning *you* the reader, “but I've had it with all of them” meaning *them* her imaginary enemies.

Them includes “the media” too, who are the foot soldiers of the anti-Trump conspiracy she mentions in her subtitle. The judge believes, as so many Trump supporters do, that there is a thing called “the media,” much in the way that economists believe there is a thing called “the economy” or environmentalists talk about the thing called “the environment.” If there weren't such a thing, if there weren't this unitary object to concentrate on, they wouldn't have much reason to get out of bed in the morning.

In truth, there are all kinds of media—print, digital, radio, TV, unfortunately Twitter—and there are many ideological shades within those media: liberal, left-wing, conservative, right-wing, even moderate. It's a gorgeous mosaic! In the current usage, however, “the media” is just a term for any person we encounter in print or on TV or NPR that we find objectionable. Treating the media as a thing can be a convenient shorthand but it can also make you sound dumb. The judge has a news talk show on a news network surrounded by dozens of journalists who think the way she does, but you can be

sure when they trash the media they're not looking in the mirror.

Distinctions are not helpful in a made-for-TV book, so she avoids them. It's certainly true you could throw a brick through the newsroom of the *New York Times* or NPR—who hasn't been tested in this way?—and never hit a Republican, except maybe the IT guy. And you'd have a fair chance of knocking off several social justice warriors moonlighting as editors or reporters. But distinctions must be made. A careful and responsible reporter like Maggie Haberman at the *Times* or John Dickerson at CBS should not get tossed in with a much less responsible reporter like Philip Bump at the *Washington Post*, who is nevertheless a great improvement over the hysterical showboat Jim Acosta at CNN, who, hard to believe, is superior to a frothing youngster at ThinkProgress. This myth of the unitary media is irresistible because it allows you such wide latitude. Pirro says that the “media” don't give Trump a fair shake, which is 90 percent true if you're talking about the editors and reporters of the liberal media. Then she says the “media” routinely make fun of Trump's 12-year-old son, which is not true at all unless you're talking about a commenter at the *Huffington Post*.

Worse, she doesn't have the courage of her anti-media convictions. Her chapter on the LYING RINOS goes after Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell for sucking up to the LYING media. She gets all her facts lined up and commences firing. The chapter has 20 footnotes. Sixteen of them rely on articles in the *Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Time* magazine, CNN, *USA Today*, etc. I'm not sure she's even paying attention. “The Fake News,” she writes in disgust, “won't tell you much about the amazing women who hold senior positions in the Trump administration.” She then lists Nikki Haley, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Betsy DeVos, Gina Haspel ... all of them victims of a shameful media blackout.

LLL is a work of anger but also adulation. “As a Christian,” she writes of Trump, “he took on those who made believers uncomfortable for stating their Judeo-Christian beliefs. He stood

for the hardworking, forgotten men and women. ... He reignited the flame of liberty ... a man whose views were most like the moral vision of the framers of the Constitution—a man whose philosophy was based not on politics, but reason.”

Pirro's little lies and omissions are instructive. She praises Trump's performance and his “epic destruction” of Jeb Bush at a pivotal debate in 2016. “Can you imagine any other Republican—

Rick Wilson seems much more comfortable with liberal cant than conservative cant. His sources range from Nicholas Kristof and Michael Wolff on the left to Vogue and the Huffington Post on the left.

any other politician—having the balls to say the Iraq war was a colossal mistake in front of a hostile crowd in South Carolina?” In fact, Trump went much further. “We should have never have been in Iraq,” he said that night. “They lied, they said there were weapons of mass destruction. There were none and they knew that there were none.” Which is effectively an accusation that George W. Bush and his advisers are guilty of monstrous crimes—mass murder and treason, just for starters. Now *that's* balls. Judge Jeanine doesn't quote this or any of a hundred other examples of Trump's verbal incontinence. In a pro-Trump TV book, you'll never find mention of his famous dismissal of John McCain's heroism or of his insults to a Gold Star family.

But they don't call me Little Mary Sunshine for nothing; my unconquerable optimism leads me always to see the bright side. It is indeed reassuring that Trump supporters like our judge have let these repulsive episodes and others like them slide down the mem-

ory hole (they need a pretty big hole). Some of Trump's behavior is so indefensible that even his fans prefer to forget it. At least they recognize it as despicable. So we've got that going for us.

3. THE CONSULTANT

Guess who I found lying underneath Jeanine Pirro in my book bag? Rick Wilson. He's a frequent contributor to MSNBC and a longtime Republican political consultant. He's also a prominent member of the Never Trump movement, which holds its regular meetings in the spare bedroom at Evan McMullin's house. Wilson's book is called *Everything Trump Touches Dies*. With my own Never Trump sympathies, I wanted very much to like it. But the author kept getting in the way.

Like the judge, Wilson lets his readers know right from the start that he's one tough hombre. How tough?

“Sure, I want to save the Republic from Trump and Trumpism,” he writes in the introduction, “but I don't mind telling members of my party to f— themselves on the way there. ... I'm not some hand-wringing do-gooder, and if you've fought either by my side or against me, you know I'm down to scrap.”

Pretty goddamn tough.

When he stops strutting, Wilson writes with the zippy, rat-a-tat-tat patter of a first-rate adman—a political adman, at that. Political consultants tend to be vastly entertaining talkers. His tone is slangy, sarcastic, and abusive, and he manages to keep it going for the entire book even though you wish he wouldn't. Imagine a “lightning round” of cable-news pundits that lasts for six hours, without a tape delay to bleep the bad words. Wilson is overfond of the word “f—.” His enemies aren't just insufferable; they're “utterly f—ing insufferable.” Also, he needs to find a synonym for “shitty,” another of his go-to descriptors. (I suggest *crapulent* because it looks the part. It's not a synonym for shitty but none of his readers will check.) In fact, he needs to steer clear of that anatomical region altogether. We think of the author and not Stephen Miller when he writes that

a nonplussed Miller, a Trump staffer, looked like he was going “to crap out a kitten.” (We don’t think of the kitten either.) Freud taught us we would outgrow the anal stage of psychosexual development by the age of 3. Freud was wrong about a lot of things.

Wilson says he’s criticizing Trump from the right, and I think this is mostly true, but he also shows signs, like many Never Trumpers, of marching right past anti-Trumpism on into

and “purge America of the brown people.” “Not every Trump supporter is a racist,” he concedes. “However, every racist ... is a Trump supporter.” Just so. And not every liberal calls the immigration ban a “Muslim ban,” but everyone who calls the immigration ban a “Muslim ban” is a liberal.

As with Judge Jeanine, the intensity of Wilson’s hatred pushes him into errors of fact and logic. It’s simply not true that Paul Ryan will “defend any

Trumpers do the cause no favor by pretending this isn’t so.

Tu quoque isn’t exactly a logical fallacy, though the people who use it in argument—which includes every political partisan today—think it amounts to one. Really, it’s more a rhetorical trick. Veterans of the schoolyard wars remember the clever retort: “I know you are but what am I?” Lately it’s been referred to as “whataboutism.” It comes in handy as Republicans and Democrats switch places on issue after issue: the importance of character in politics, the probity of the FBI, the value of special counsels, the evil of government debt and overspending, the geopolitical ambitions of Russia, the need for civility, and on and on.

Wilson devotes many pages to trying to trap Trump voters in his *tu quoque*. They hated Barack Obama’s cult-like following, but what about their own Trump cult? They hated Obama’s “empty promises” about job creation in the solar industry, but what about Trump’s empty promises about job creation in the coal industry? They hated Obama’s Ivy League credentialism but love Trump’s boasting about his Wharton degree. Too true! But so what? Nearly every *tu quoque* can be easily reversed: Liberals were awed by Obama’s elite education and mock Trump’s degree from Wharton. They mock the Trump cult while gazing adoringly at the official portraits of Barack and Michelle. Whataboutism doesn’t get us anywhere. It’s not argument, it’s self-pleasuring.

I wonder if either Wilson or the judge, the Never Trumper and the Forever Trumper, see any of the other in themselves, assuming they give one another any thought at all. You wouldn’t have to worry about seating them side by side at your dinner party. They could discuss how much they hate Paul Ryan for being a sellout; after an hour or so of that they could start in on the sellout Mitch McConnell—indeed the entire Republican “establishment,” they both believe, has relinquished the right to call itself Republican. Wilson thinks he’s the *real* Republican around here; the judge believes she and her fellow Forever Trumpers are the vessel of true Republicanism.



Republican consultant Rick Wilson at Washington’s Politics and Prose bookstore

anti-conservatism. The sheer size of his contempt for Trump voters, not merely Trump, forces him in that direction. When he writes that “MAGA-hat fans” “revile” elites, he feels compelled to add: “‘Revile’ means hate. Sorry. I know you’re in an oxy stupor much of the time, so I’ll try to move slowly and not use big words.” So I guess *crapulent* is out too.

One clue to his ideological direction is that he seems much more comfortable with liberal cant than conservative cant. Wilson’s sources, to judge by his footnotes, range from Nicholas Kristof and Michael Wolff on the left to *Vogue* and the *Huffington Post* on the left. And so: The Republican tax bill last year was a sop to the rich; Trump’s ban on immigration from a handful of majority-Muslim countries was a “Muslim ban”; Trumpers are trying to suppress the free speech rights of NFL players

outrage” from Trump. He says Ted Cruz “responded meekly” when Trump insulted his wife and slandered his father. That’s not true either. He thinks “the GOP is the party of big government, and it’s all Trump’s fault.” Alas, Trump arrived rather late to that party: So far as I know, Fred Barnes coined the term “big government conservative” to describe Jack Kemp and his allies in the late 1980s, and he didn’t mean it as an insult. A decade later, Robert Novak accused the Republican congressional leadership of big government conservatism, and he *did* mean it as an insult. The administration of George W. Bush was big government conservatism par excellence. In fact, most of Trump’s agenda, from environmental deregulation to education policy, is far less statist and more respectful of liberty than Bush’s self-described compassionate conservatism could ever be. Never

Another trait they have in common is that they're both wrong about this. If the last 30 years have taught us anything, it is that there is no ideological core around which the Republican party revolves. There is no *real* Republican. There's just Republicans, corralled together for reasons they're increasingly uncertain about. The chief thing that holds each party together is contempt for the opposite team. And many Never Trumpers are losing even this binding glue of ill will for the other party—understandably, I guess, since they and Democrats share a common enemy. Wilson wanders off into several digressions about the political ineptitude and overreaching of his former adversaries, but these read like fraternal criticisms. He insults Trump Republicans with a zest, bordering sometimes on cruelty, that he would never direct against any Democrat, no matter how bovine or credulous.

4. THE HISTORIAN

Partisan animus is the starting point, the very foundation, for Dinesh D'Souza's fascinating *Death of a Nation: Plantation Politics and the Making of the Democratic Party*. It's a Trump book that's more than a book about Trump and, among my pile of bestsellers, all the more refreshing because of it.

D'Souza wants to usher his readers through American political history from the origin of our political parties to the present moment. Much of his history is accurate and well-told. D'Souza may revile—it means “hate”—progressives, with their fantasy of history's inevitable upward march to utopia. But his own view of American history also shows a steady direction and end point: It climaxes with the appearance of Donald Trump on the world-historical stage and the subsequent vanquishing of the Democratic party and its “plantation politics.”

His argument—and it is an argument—reminds me of those Victorian-

era “ascent of man” charts that would trace the evolution of humanity in silhouette, from chimp to knuckle-dragging Neanderthal to club-wielding caveman to, at the final phase, a Victorian gentleman with splendid posture. The chart was meant to demonstrate scientifically that all human history had reached its perfection in the people who invented the chart. D'Souza's chart would show the chimp and the Neanderthal and the caveman evolving

tion of families, and the ... um ... slavery. From its slave-owning founder, Thomas Jefferson, to the identity politician Barack Obama, the political bloodlines of the Democratic party remain unbroken, having survived the Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the civil rights era. “Racism,” D'Souza writes, “is the defining characteristic of progressives and the Democratic party.”

For D'Souza's target audience this is a deeply satisfying thesis, and there's enough truth in it to allow Republicans the same holier-than-thou preening they find so utterly f—ing insufferable in Democrats. And it's a common theme in works of right-wing revisionism like *The Politically Incorrect Guide to American History*. But if you're crazy enough to jump down the rabbit hole of his footnotes, you'll see that D'Souza's apparently fastidious method covers a lot of hedging, speculation, and misinterpretation.

To take one small example: Lyndon Johnson is a pivotal figure in D'Souza's tale. Johnson, he writes, “is a man who, according to a memo filed by FBI agent William Branigan, seems to have been in the Ku Klux Klan.” He was? “This memo was only revealed in recent months, with the release of the JFK Files. Progressive

media ... have largely ignored it, trying to pretend it does not exist. Branigan cites a source with direct knowledge.” D'Souza then treats LBJ's Klan membership as settled fact and a building block in his case against the Democrats.

I've got to side with the progressive media on this one. The FBI memo that D'Souza is using to misinform his readers was written in early 1964. It was released last year in the (presumably) final dump of government documents about the Kennedy assassination. It is a piece of raw intelligence, unverified, repeated with no assessment of its credibility. Branigan, the FBI agent, writes that a “confidential informant” told him that the editor of a magazine



Dinesh D'Souza and his wife Debbie at the premiere of *Death of a Nation*, the film version of his latest bestseller

into a tall, well-fed figure with Dream-sicle hair, wearing an unbuttoned suit coat and long tie. We have, in other words, arrived.

D'Souza's tone is all business: solemn and pedantic and ostentatiously careful. The plantation politics of the subtitle is a nearly 200-year-old strategy of the Democratic party to maintain the power of its elite by keeping the lower classes, particularly black people, docile and dependent. A few things have changed since the antebellum South, he acknowledges. The welfare state is the new plantation; identity politics and government handouts are the new slavery, albeit without the violence, the degrading labor, the enforced separa-

published by the Citizens' Council of Louisiana, himself a Klan member, had told the informant that he, the editor, had seen documented proof that Johnson was a member in the 1930s.

No proof was provided. Even the website D'Souza cites as his source for this damning nugget, thehayride.com, says the claim of Johnson's Klan membership amounts to nothing more than a rumor.

D'Souza's embrace of rumors is selective. Another FBI memo in the same document dump, for example, reported that the KGB thought Johnson had plotted to kill Kennedy. By D'Souza's standard of historical evidence, this memo should be enough to write, "Lyndon Johnson seems to have plotted to kill his predecessor." Wisely he keeps this bombshell from his readers.

Johnson is a pivotal figure for D'Souza because he presided over the period in which the party of racism somehow became the party of the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, and the Fair Housing Act. In an ingenious and completely unsupported argument, D'Souza tells us that these legislative landmarks constituted a spectacular feat of misdirection.

As white racism dimmed following World War II, D'Souza says, Johnson knew the party of racism would start losing white voters to the non-racist Republican party, which already claimed a large number of black members. Political doom awaited Johnson and his friends unless he could replace those white voters as they fled. He decided to steal black voters from the Republicans. The Great Society, including civil rights legislation, was constructed as a snare to draw them in. When the trap was sprung at last, black Americans found themselves confined to LBJ's new "urban plantation" (which in fact had been designed by Martin Van Buren in the 1840s—don't ask). The civil rights bills thus prove the Democrats' undying commitment to racism, which has been demonstrated by their commitment to passing racist civil rights bills, which were passed as a racist plot, which proves Democrats have an undying commitment to rac-

ism. History is full of little ironies.

A dark and sinister story, yes, but as an experienced marketer, D'Souza knows the value of a happy ending. A new Lincoln, he tells his readers, by way of bucking them up, has come to rescue Republicans. The similarities between the two men are eerie indeed. "Trump, like Lincoln"—when a sentence starts like that, you've just got to keep reading—"came out of nowhere; both men were outsiders." Both won close elections. The opponents of both men portrayed them as dangers to constitutional liberties. Both men were hamstrung by a "befuddled Republican party." Both men set out to smash the plantation and free the oppressed.

And this time, D'Souza suggests hopefully, Trump might just do it. "Trump somehow knows all this, either through learning or just intuitively," he writes. (I think I'll go with "intuitively.") "With our support," he continues, "Trump can bring to an end the vicious train of exploitation that the Democratic Party has wrought for nearly two hundred years."

Death of a Nation is as thoroughgoing as a political polemic can be, malice from start to finish. If his political opponents are truly as depraved as D'Souza asserts, then it follows—as he would say in his pedantic mode—that they are probably unfit for the rewards and obligations of democratic self-government. "The Democrats are like the Corleones," he writes. They're running a criminal operation, not a political party. It is a small step from *Lock her up!* to *Lock 'em all up!*

5 & 6. THE RUSSOPHILES

I wish I had Dinesh's gift for an upbeat ending. But I don't. At the bottom of my bestseller pile—and you thought we'd never get there!—is a dispiriting sight: two fat books about Trump, Russians, and the slow-moving attempt by Robert Mueller to wrap them all around each other's throats. Gregg Jarrett's *The Russia Hoax: The Illicit Scheme to Clear Hillary Clinton and Frame Donald Trump* is, as you will guess, an attempt to exonerate the president by accusing his accusers. Craig

Unger is on the other team. His *House of Trump, House of Putin: The Untold Story of Donald Trump and the Russian Mafia* is built on the assumption that Trump is guilty as charged, whatever the charge is.

The books are premature, to state the obvious. Nobody but Mueller and his associates knows what information he has collected or where it points. But these are TV books. You never hear a pundit say "I dunno" on TV, do you? Ignorance is no excuse not to publish.

Anyone with the patience to wait for Mueller to finish his investigation will read the books with diminished enthusiasm. Since Watergate we have seen so many promising scandals collapse under the weight of their own expectations: BCCI, Iran-contra, Whitewater, the Plame affair, Uranium One—so many timelines to construct and memorize, so many minor characters to keep straight, so much testimony to parse, so much smoke and so little fire. The Russian scandals, whatever they are, are beginning to have the anticipatory feel of a letdown.

By my count *House of Trump, House of Putin* is the fifth volume in Craig Unger's ongoing series on the depravities of the Bush family, neoconservatives, and Republicans generally. He's a freelance scandalmonger. I've often wondered from afar how he does it—how he keeps his blood up under the mass of tedious details he collects and savors and arranges and rearranges in sinister patterns. Now, having read *House of Trump*, I have an answer: He suffers from a case of permanent overstimulation.

In his introduction, Unger promises "explosive allegations," which are different from explosive facts; in the telling they don't offer much bang for the buck. For instance, he says Russian intelligence operatives "studiously examined the weak spots in America's pay-for-play political culture." It would be an explosive allegation if he said they didn't. Also, "millions of dollars have been flowing from individuals and companies from, or with ties to, Russia to GOP politicians, including ... Mitch McConnell, for more than twenty years." This awkward sentence refers to donations from Len Blavatnik, an

American citizen born in Russia. His explosive donations were finally uncovered, like the purloined letter, in filings with the Federal Election Commission! Those Russians are tricky bastards.

And even when one of Unger's allegations does explode, it promptly fizzles. He promises his book "will show that President Trump ... was likely the subject of one or more operations that produced *kompromat* (compromising materials) on him regarding sexual activities." Now we're talking! Then the explosive allegation goes unmentioned until page 128, where we read: "According to Oleg Kalugin [a Russian defector], Trump likely had his first taste of sexual *kompromat* in 1987. There were similar reports, unconfirmed, about possible comparable incidents in 1996." "Likely"? There's no footnote and only one more reference, on page 214: Unger mentions an interview with an unnamed American mobster who told him two of his buddies in the Russian mafia have "talked about" Trump's *kompromat* but hadn't seen it. Kaboom.

The ultimate explosive allegation, of course, is that Trump is actually a Manchurian candidate, "implanted" in the White House by the Russian government—"a willfully ignorant or an inexplicably unaware Russian asset in the White House as the most powerful man on earth." Unger proves no such thing and almost certainly never will. It's hard to believe that even the Russians are incompetent enough to leave a trail that could be pieced together by an American freelance, no matter how caffeinated he is.

Still, in its paranoia and credulity, *House of Putin* offers a sense of why Trump's opponents are so eager to believe the Manchurian candidate phantasm. Unger gathers in one place what we know about Trump's dealings with Russians beginning in the late 1970s. One thing is beyond doubt: As a businessman on the make in 1980s New York, Donald Trump didn't mind hanging out with very ripe characters, mobsters in particular. The surprise isn't that a New York City real estate developer is as sleazy as Trump. The surprise is that a New York City real estate developer got elected president. For lib-

erals, the surprise has been so great that they'll believe anything to account for it—even a fantasy lifted from the plot of a Frank Sinatra movie.

Gregg Jarrett, an analyst with Fox News, also warns us of the enemy within. But he's found a different enemy: not Vladimir Putin, a former KGB spy with a murderous background, but Robert Mueller, a former Marine with a Bronze Star.

Jarrett's book is breezier than Unger's book. Its narrative will be familiar to anyone who has jogged past a television playing Fox News in the last six months. Faced with theories

Both books stretch the facts past the breaking point and caulk the holes in their story with pure speculation. Both authors appear to be consumed with paranoia. Neither book is worth your time.

about Trump and Russia, plausible and implausible, Jarrett and his colleagues have adopted a strategy long known to defense lawyers: If a story looks incriminating, create another one and distract the jury with that.

Jarrett's story is studded with facts that MSNBC viewers have probably never been exposed to: 13 of the 16 lead lawyers on the Mueller investigation are registered Democrats, none is Republican, and most of them have given money to Democratic candidates and causes; except in antitrust law, there is no such crime as "collusion"; there is such a person as Bruce Ohr, who works for the Department of Justice and whose wife worked for Fusion GPS, the research firm that wanted dirt on Donald Trump and hired an intelligence agent named Christopher Steele with money funneled from Hillary Clinton's campaign; Steele was friends with

Bruce Ohr; James Comey appointed Andrew McCabe as his deputy to help handle the investigation into Hillary's emails a few months after Terry McAuliffe, the governor of Virginia and a friend of the Clintons, persuaded McCabe's wife to run for the state senate and came bearing \$675,000 for her campaign fund.

You'll notice that none of these facts, pointed though they are, has anything to do with the Russians or whatever else Mueller is investigating. For a curious reader the most frustrating thing about Unger's and Jarrett's books is that they seem to have been written in different universes. A book by a Trump supporter that addressed even the milder claims in Unger's confetti machine would be a genuine public service; a Never Trump response to the Jarrett/Fox scenario would be nice too. Instead the two books here, though ostensibly on the same general subject, talk right past each other.

And yet, like Judge Pirro and Rick Wilson, like Lincoln and Trump, the two books do bear similarities. Both authors say they are defending "the rule of law," an unavoidable catchphrase these days. Both overstate their themes; Jarrett, after making an unsupported assertion, writes sentences like "no other conclusion is reasonably supportable." Both stretch the facts past the breaking point and caulk the holes in their story with pure speculation. In the acknowledgments, one author thanks two hatchetmen who work for the Clintons, Sidney Blumenthal and Cody Shearer; the other author thanks two hatchetmen who work for Trump, Sean Hannity and Lou Dobbs. Both authors appear to be consumed with paranoia brought on by the uncontrolled emotions President Trump generates in his fellow citizens. Neither book is worth your time.

And voilà! Ta-da! *Fini!* After weeks of reading, all my TV books, dog-eared and spine-cracked, are back in the book bag, destined for Goodwill, assuming Goodwill will have them. As I put them away, though, my heart sank. I had forgotten Ann Coulter. There she was, still looking lonely, still unread. Maybe another time. ♦

The Fun Tournament

The new Laver Cup competition is a blast—but will it last beyond Roger Federer's reign? BY TOM PERROTTA



The winners of this year's Laver Cup competition—Team Europe, including Roger Federer and, at right, captain Bjorn Borg—are joined by the cup's namesake, Rod Laver.

From their home in Ohio last week, John and Karen Granby drove five hours to Chicago, unpacked in a hotel, and prepared to watch a three-day tennis tournament featuring their favorite star: Roger Federer.

Federer, 37 years old, is more popular than ever and—at least for now—shows no signs of retiring. But like music fans who mob their beloved performers during a final tour, Federer fanatics now want to see him every chance they get. This was Federer's first competitive appearance in Chicago, a memorable moment for a city that hasn't had a professional tour-level tournament since a women's competition in 1997 (the last men's pro event was in 1991). Karen, 68 years old, couldn't have been more excited.

"Oh my God, he's like Mikhail

Baryshnikov on his feet," she said. "And he's such a nice, nice guy. He's just—what can I say, he's the best, he really is. That's why I'm trying to see him any chance I get."

The event, known as the Laver Cup, was conceived four years ago by Federer and his longtime agent, Tony Godsick, and named in honor of Rod Laver, the best male tennis player in the last century, as Federer is in this one. The competition cycles between locations in Europe—the first edition, last year, was held in Prague—and outside Europe. This year's tournament brought many well-known players to Chicago, including star Novak Djokovic, the wild Nick Kyrgios, young talent Alexander Zverev, and Americans John Isner, Jack Sock, and Frances Tiafoe. They were split into two teams: Europe versus the rest of the world. At Chicago's United Center, home of basketball's Bulls and hockey's Blackhawks, most of the seats were full from Friday afternoon, when the event began, until it ended early

Sunday evening. Attendance averaged over 31,000 per day—just shy of Wimbledon's daily average of 36,000.

There's really only one question about this event's success: Will it continue once Federer leaves the professional tour and no longer performs as much or at all? Many, including Karen Granby, said they would follow Federer even if he just came to a Laver Cup to coach or clap. "Oh yes, I'm interested in anything that he's involved in," she said.

John Granby, a 72-year-old vice president of government relations at Lion, a company that makes protective clothing for firefighters, said the couple spent about \$4,000 for close seats for all five sessions. Seats in the front row cost more, and there are other features for customers to buy, like the 200 Club, named for Laver's 200 singles titles, the most in history. Fans in the club on Thursday watched Federer practice on a court in their private section, as nearly 1,000 others lined up in the free Fan Zone just to get a glimpse of him.

Lisa Robeson, a 49-year-old who drove the two hours from Champaign, Illinois, is a Federer lover, too, but said that seeing him was just part of the attraction of the Laver Cup. "I'm a big tennis fan in general and I was also excited that Björn Borg and John McEnroe were the team captains," Robeson said. "Federer has done a lot to promote the game and I think he has a vested interest in keeping the excitement in tennis and generating even more excitement."

Federer told the press that he doesn't know yet what he will do later in life, but the point of the Laver Cup was to build an institution bigger than himself. "Of course I hope I will be involved in some shape or form, but at the same time it's not something I plan for," Federer said. "This is more something for legends—and legends down the road—that everybody can connect here and have a great time. That was the idea behind it."

It may have been a great time but the players sure didn't hit just for fun. All the players were paid a fee, based on ranking, just for attending. But only the winners received prize money, a total of \$250,000 for each player on the team.

Tom Perrotta writes about sports for the Wall Street Journal, FiveThirtyEight, and other publications.

The losers won zip. They didn't try to make their shots entertaining and flashy rather than effective, as often happens in exhibitions. They served hard (some over 130 mph) and sprinted to retrieve drop shots. If two sets were split, the opponents played an extended tiebreak (first to 10 rather than 7). When Sock lost his singles match against Britain's Kyle Edmund in a tiebreak, he slammed his racket on his bag and walked off the court without signing any autographs. One point, in doubles, caused shock in the crowd when Djokovic crushed a forehand that hit Federer, his partner, in his lower back. (Federer laughed as Djokovic gave him a massage.)

match with a forehand winner and pumped both of his fists in the air.

"He's a poet-warrior," said John Key, a 59-year-old Brit who flew in from his current home in Vancouver to see his tennis hero. "It's not just his play, it's his outlook on tennis. He's a gentleman. As an Englishman we respect that."

The tournament ended when Zverev came back from a set down against South Africa's Kevin Anderson. When Zverev won the match, he dropped to the ground and was soon covered by his teammates, who celebrated in a pile on the court. Eight of the 11 matches in the tournament ended in a tiebreak

much bigger than any other event, with loads more prize money, while some smaller events, now mostly filled by low-ranked players, are struggling. The Davis Cup, which began in 1900, is in the last year of its traditional format. Historically, the event was divided into several stages, which gave teams alternate at-home advantages. Starting next year, players from the top 18 countries will arrive in Madrid in late November and compete for the title over a week. While many players and observers have applauded the new design, it has also been criticized—especially in Australia, where Davis Cup captain Lleyton Hewitt said it was nothing more than a money-grab. Australia, for its part, will host a new ATP World Team Cup for men's tennis pros in the first week of January 2020, before the Australian Open begins. It feels like the ideas are battling one another, not meshing with and complementing one another. It's a worry for everyone, but Federer feels the Laver Cup is a separate issue.

"I have a small concern that, you know, especially the Davis Cup and the World Cup that Tennis Australia and ATP are trying to organize," Federer said. "It's hard to see those two coexisting. ... I think the good thing is, and I mentioned this together, is that everybody has to get to the table and think a little bit what's best for the game. Can we come together as a tour and figure it out? I do believe Laver Cup's a different situation ... because it's not just one country."

The U.S. Tennis Association and Tennis Australia both supported the Laver Cup, each having invested a little more than \$5 million, according to people familiar with the matter. There are other partners, too, and Godsick said this year's event has made a profit.

"There's no risk that this will not keep going, at all," Godsick said. "Our goal is to build and invest in the brand for the long run."

As for Karen and John Granby, they hope to see Federer at the Laver Cup next year, too, in his home country, Switzerland.

"I'm already talking to John about going to Geneva," Karen said. ♦



Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic playing doubles

The best part of the competition: Victories are worth more points each day, so the drama builds toward a climactic finish. On the first day, wins are worth a point, followed by two points on the second day and three on the third. The team of European players headed into Sunday with a 7-5 lead, but the opposing team, with players from five countries, had a chance to come back. In a tense and entertaining doubles match, Sock and Isner beat Federer and Zverev 11-9 in the final tiebreak, while saving 2 match points. The crowd cheered as Isner and Sock jumped and hugged teammates. About 15 minutes after the match ended, Federer and Isner returned for a singles match. Federer saved 3 match points and went to a 10-point tiebreak. He ended the

after splitting the first two sets. The final score was 13-8 to Team Europe.

Federer and Godsick were among those who cooked up the scoring system. "We had a whiteboard and we kept going through things and making changes, trying to come up with a format that we thought could easily be digested by the fans," Godsick said.

"I think maybe my idea was to play the doubles first on Sunday, I just thought that would be a nice reverse situation, and it gets four guys out on the court early," Federer said. "It feels like you're never safe until two matches are basically played on Sunday, which I think the spectators enjoy."

It's a time of change in tennis, the most dramatic in the last few decades. Grand Slam tournaments have become



Murphy's Thaw

The '90s sitcom makes a creaky, predictable return.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ



Candice Bergen returns as TV journalist Murphy Brown.

Murphy Brown, which returns this week to CBS, debuted in 1988 three weeks after the other sitcom sensation of that year—*Roseanne*, its polar opposite. Murphy Brown (Candice Bergen) was a high-flying singleton TV news icon living in a Georgetown manse perpetually under renovation. *Roseanne* was the matriarch of a struggling working-class family in the Midwest. *Murphy Brown* featured what might be called name-drop humor, its jokes usually concluding with a punch line involving a then-famous Washington grandee or two, kind of like this: “The last time I laughed that hard was when Sam Donaldson did the kazatsky at Joe Lieberman’s wedding!”

Now it’s back, only six months after *Roseanne* debuted to precedent-busting ratings and a fresh perspective in 2018—the perspective of the Trump voter. And once again *Murphy Brown* is *Roseanne*’s polar opposite, only this time due to ideology rather than class.

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD’s movie critic.

While the new *Roseanne* blended nostalgia with something unexpectedly fresh—until its star destroyed her revived career with disgusting tweets and snuffed out her own reanimated sitcom—the new *Murphy Brown* proves to be just the same-old, same-old, a mouthpiece for liberal Hollywood pretending to be liberal Washington.

And with the same-old joke structure: “Don’t tell me,” Murphy responds when someone says something surprising happened. “Paul Ryan’s finally taken a stand on something?” Her old colleague Jim Dial, who has left the news business, “had the right idea: Buy a boat, sail away, forget you ever heard the name Hannity.” I can maybe imagine Jennifer Rubin giggling here at the confirmation of her priors, but anyone else?

The septuagenarian Murphy is simply Samantha Bee for the AARP, complete with the humorless lectures. You’ve never seen anything quite so witless as Bergen attacking a Steve Bannon stand-in (David Costabile) at a bar, with the faux Bannon simply sputtering impotently as she calls him (wait for it) a dinosaur. “You’d better hurry,” she cries as he flees her presence and

the studio audience erupts in cheers, “Jurassic Park closes in an hour!” I’m no Bannon fan, but I think he’d be able to deliver a retort.

The first new episode begins with the retired Murphy expressing her horror on election night 2016, marching on inaugural weekend, and returning to television in order to combat the “fake news” movement. Series creator Diane English doesn’t even want to pretend Murphy Brown is anything but ... Diane English. In that sense, the new *Murphy Brown* is inadvertently honest about the nature of the 2018 news business in a way it surely doesn’t understand it’s being.

The dramatic situation the sitcom presents is that Murphy’s new show is in competition with another new show on the “Wolf Network” (get it—the Wolf Network? See, because a wolf is kind of like a fox). That show’s anchor is her son, Avery. But of course Avery couldn’t possibly actually be Trumpy himself. No, he’s gone on Fo—I mean Wolf—in order to straighten things out there. So there will be no conflict—conflict being the essence of comedy. There will be no political arguments that aren’t stacked so that the person on the other side is anything but impotent.

And here’s the thing. If you want denunciations of Trump and Republicans, you’ve got so many options, why would you take this one? You could watch Samantha Bee herself. Or Stephen Colbert. Or Jimmy Kimmel. Or John Oliver. Or MSNBC. Any second of any of these is more interesting.

Demographically, the show makes no sense. And what is the commercial argument for bringing *Murphy Brown* back anyway, except that people who liked it 25 years ago would want to revisit it now? Well, what if those people are now 72, like Candice Bergen? CBS is basically the old white person’s network, and its crime procedurals are among the shows Trump voters are most likely to watch. According to the 2016 exit polls, white people over the age of 45 voted for Trump about 60-40, and CBS’s audience is disproportionately within that 60 percent. The numbers suggest the audience CBS wants to hug *Murphy Brown* to its bosom would prefer to watch the Wolf Network instead. ♦

JOHN PAUL FILO / CBS BROADCASTING, INC.

“Twice Wednesday, President Donald Trump pointed to a Chinese government-backed advertising insert in the Des Moines Register as evidence Beijing is trying to interfere in the U.S. midterm elections.”
— Des Moines Register, September 26, 2018

PARODY

4 ❖ THE DES MOINES REGISTER ❖ SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2018

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