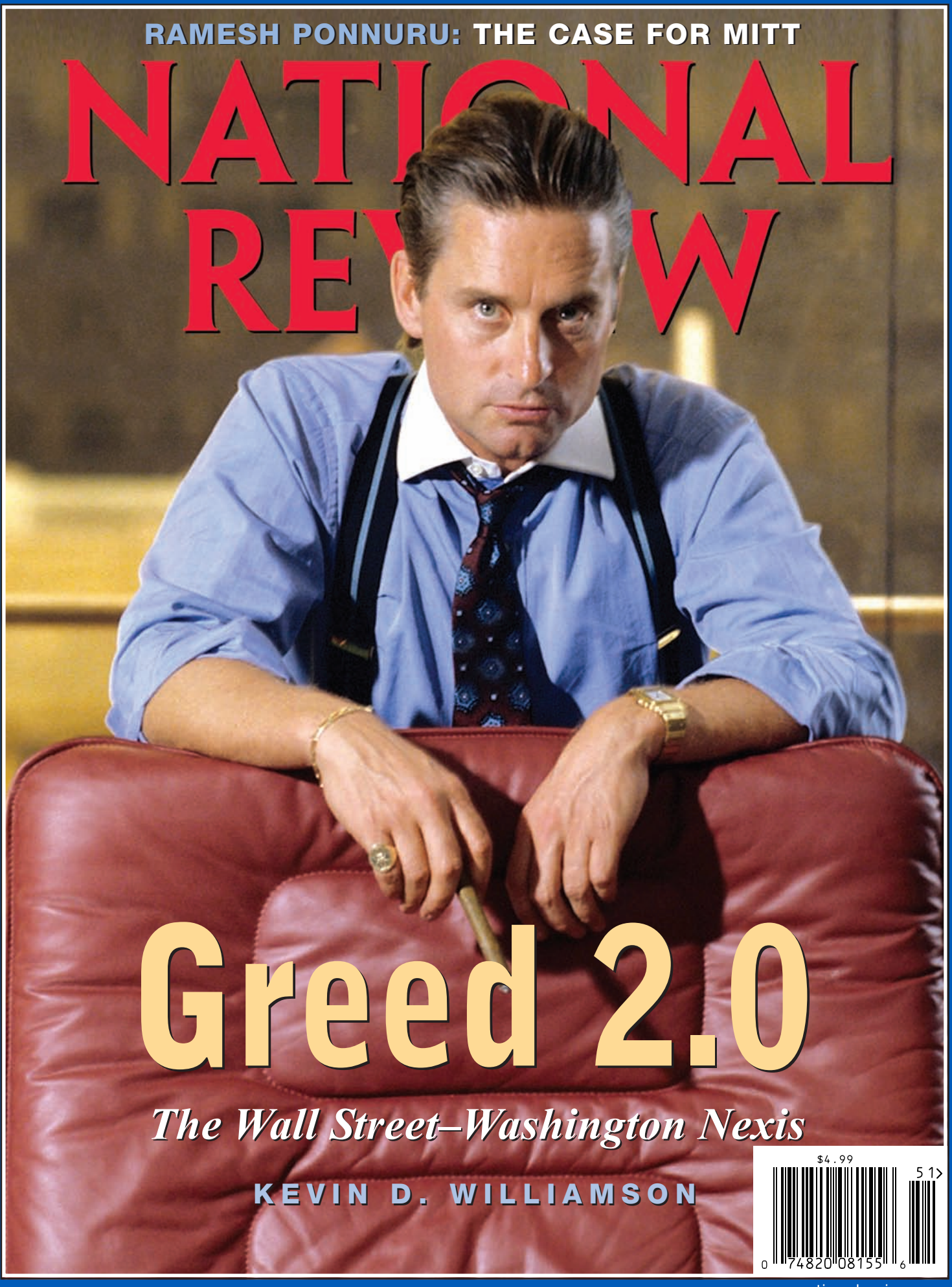
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Contents

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Andrew Stuttaford on Europe
p. 18

COVER STORY Page 39

Repo Men

Wall Street wants an administration and a Congress—and a country—that believe what is good for Wall Street is good for America, whether that is true or isn't. Wall Street doesn't want free markets—it wants friends, favors, and fealty. *Kevin D. Williamson*



COVER: HO/RTR/NEWSCOM

ARTICLES

18 **EURO MELEE** *by Andrew Stuttaford*
It's Europe vs. the Europeans.

20 **JUSTICE FOR LIBYA** *by John R. Bolton*
It requires blocking the world court's overreach.

24 **RETREAT—BUT WHOSE?** *by Jamie M. Fly*
Now is no time for more force reductions in Afghanistan.

26 **THE STATE CAN BULLY, TOO** *by Robert VerBruggen*
A well-intentioned New Jersey law does more harm than good.

30 **FAST TRACK TO NOWHERE** *by Samuel Staley*
China's experience with high-speed rail provides a cautionary tale.

32 **REGULATED UNTO DEATH** *by Travis Kavulla*
How the EPA is killing America's energy industry.

36 **THREE WINNERS** *by Jay Nordlinger*
The Nobel peace committee divides its 2011 prize wisely.

FEATURES

39 **REPO MEN** *by Kevin D. Williamson*
Beware Wall Street efforts to reoccupy the Republican party.

42 **ROMNEY'S THE ONE** *by Ramesh Ponnuru*
Why the former Massachusetts governor deserves the GOP nomination.

44 **BUCKEYE FOR PROMOTION** *by John J. Miller*
A 34-year-old GOP star eyes an Ohio Senate seat.

46 **IRANIAN END GAME** *by Michael Rubin*
The U.S. must settle for nothing less than checkmate.

BOOKS, ARTS & MANNERS

51 **SCHOOL FOR FIGHTING**
Victor Davis Hanson reviews Conquered into Liberty: Two Centuries of Battles along the Great Warpath that Made the American Way of War, *by Eliot A. Cohen.*

52 **BE NICE!**
John Derbyshire reviews The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined, *by Steven Pinker.*

54 **THE GONZO FILES**
Kyle Smith reviews Fear and Loathing at *Rolling Stone*: The Essential Writing of Hunter S. Thompson, *edited by Jann S. Wenner.*

56 **IVY LEAGUE LOVE**
Randy Boyagoda reviews The Marriage Plot, *by Jeffrey Eugenides.*

58 **FILM: MISCASTING PEARLS**
Ross Douthat reviews The Descendants.

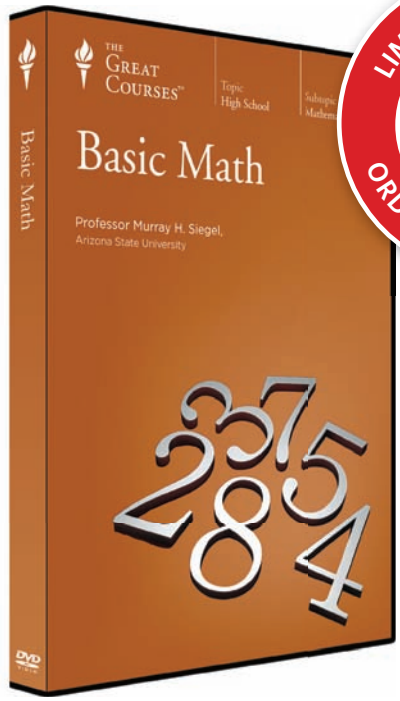
59 **CITY DESK: BUYER'S REMORSE**
Richard Brookhiser tours his stores.

SECTIONS

4 **Letters to the Editor**
6 **The Week**
49 **Athwart** . . . . . *James Lileks*
50 **The Long View** . . . . . *Rob Long*
56 **Poetry** . . . . . *Len Krisak*
60 **Happy Warrior** . . . . . *Mark Steyn*

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Letters

What Is Progressivism?

For Yuval Levin to point to Teddy Roosevelt's J. P. Morgan–financed 1912 Bull Moose party as the original progressivism ("What Is Constitutional Conservatism?" November 28) does a serious injustice to the authentic progressives of that era.

The quasi-fascist "progressivism" of the centralizing, elitist, Jefferson-despising Teddy Roosevelt and Herbert Croly was a far cry from Bob La Follette's authentic Wisconsin progressivism, which preceded it. It was also different from the short-lived Conference for Progressive Political Action–endorsed independent La Follette candidacy of 1924 (whose elderly candidate refused to run on the sponsoring organization's socialist platform), the Communist-backed Henry Wallace Progressive campaign of 1948, and the current "progressive" irruption based on Marxist redistributionism.

By far the best of these "progressive" offerings was La Follette's of 1900, built on private property, small business, fair competition, the rejection of crony capitalism, and expertise in the service of the people.

John McClaughry
Kirby, Vt.

YUVAL LEVIN REPLIES: I pointed to the Bull Moose party only as an example of the progressives' simultaneous appeal to both populist and technocratic ideas, and in that respect (as in many others, including their attitude toward the restraints of our constitutional system) there was little distance between the Progressive party of 1912 and La Follette's progressivism. Indeed, La Follette's "Wisconsin Idea" was the epitome of technocratic populism, and clearly informed the Progressive party's advocacy of both expert rule and direct democracy. There were, to be sure, different varieties of progressives, but they did not differ much on the point raised in my essay—and La Follette and the Bull Moose platform did not differ at all on that point.

Swearing in Style

Robin E. Black (Letters, November 14) wonders whether there is any governing principle behind NATIONAL REVIEW's asterisk use in "f*****g", "mother****er", "p****y a*s," and "muthaf***in'."

In lexical forms of simple nouns, NR omits all but the first and last letters. "Mother****er" is a compound noun, so the entire profanity can be expunged, as the intact modifier and suffix make explicit the meaning without further difficulty. The typographically unorthodox "muthaf***in'" is a phonetic rendition of a spoken colloquialism. The second syllable of "mother" is obscured to a quick grunt in speech and assimilates to the following consonant, making the word syllabically mu-thaf-f*-kin. The second element of the compound is censored as in the more usual "mother****er" as a kind of courtesy accidental.

Stephen Twentyman
Alexandria, Va.

THE EDITORS REPLY: But note the difference in spelling between your "mu-thaf-f*-kin'" and our "muthaf***in'." The crucial point is that the absence of "er" requires the presence of "f" for clarity.

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The Week

■ The case for Newt is that he's nothing like that guy who used to be governor of Massachusetts. The case for Romney is very similar.

■ After having been written off last summer when most of his aides quit, Newt Gingrich is rising in the polls and has won the Manchester *Union Leader*'s endorsement. If he goes on to win the nomination, the parallel to John McCain's 2008 campaign will be uncanny. The *Union Leader* argued that Republicans should look not just for a candidate who can beat Obama but for one who has innovative ideas. Primary voters may place more weight on electability. But it's certainly true that Gingrich does not need to prove that he is a creative thinker. What he needs to prove is that he is capable of a maturity and steadiness that he did not show either in his time as Speaker or in the early days of this campaign. Admirers of his intellect and energy must certainly hope so.

■ Rep. Michele Bachmann, among others, has assailed Gingrich for saying that the only "humane" policy toward illegal immigrants is to give legal status to those with deep roots in their communities—those who have been here "25 years," he said illustratively. But none of the candidates has categorically excluded offering a limited amnesty after we are sure that the inflow of illegal immigrants has largely stopped. Bachmann herself has been open to the idea. The real flaws of Gingrich's policy lie elsewhere. His proposal for a program to import "temporary workers" assumes, implausibly, that we will not grant U.S. citizenship to their children and that we will maintain a large legal labor force with no right to vote. His amnesty would be administered, he says, by local community boards deciding which of 11 million illegal immigrants should stay. We await the day when Gingrich's thoughts turn as serious as his instincts are humane.

■ When Bachmann walked onstage to greet Jimmy Fallon on NBC's *Late Night*, the house band played a 26-year-old pop song whose title suggested that she was a spiteful or lewd woman, dishonest to her fundament. Memo to conservatives: They hate you, and this will happen forever—not every time, maybe, but every so often. We have four options: Avoiding their shows is self-ghettoization; appearing and saying nothing is self-dhimmitude; fighting snark with snark is the high-wire act, perfected by WFB but open to few of us. Option four is to do what Bachmann did: protest, which prompted apologies from Fallon and an NBC veep. N.B.: Kudos to Bachmann colleague Rep. Nita Lowey (D., N.Y.), who called the musical ambush "insulting and inappropriate."

■ Barney Frank will be remembered as the first House member to reveal voluntarily that he was gay, as the man who demanded that we "roll the dice" on the housing-market shenanigans of



ROMAN GENN

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and as one half of the defective duo behind the Dodd-Frank financial-reform legislation. If they were seeking a symbol of normality, gay Americans could have done better: Representative Frank was reprimanded by the House after it was discovered that a male prostitute he patronized was running a prostitution ring from congressman's home. But Representative Frank's sexual shenanigans cost the nation little; his role in protecting the government-sponsored mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac from the restraint and oversight they so obviously needed contributed to a financial meltdown and recession that have cost us trillions. (The fact that he was dating a Fannie Mae executive while enabling the agency does not look good, either.) His last hurrah in the House was the Dodd-Frank bill, which meddles with the pettiest of issues but does little or nothing to address the underlying causes of the mortgage bubble, meaning that the same congressman who played a role in creating the last financial crisis may end up playing a role in the next one. His retirement is welcome.

■ Occupy Wall Street was cleaned out of Zuccotti Park in lower Manhattan, not with a bang, but with a whiff. "I pick up garbage" for a living, one sanitation man told the *New York Post*, "and these were some of the worst smells I've ever experienced." But the aroma followed the encampment into memory. The Occupiers were becoming a drag on their own movement, hence their tacit willingness to be moved along. The gropes, the disease, and the disorder will linger in the minds of

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the impressionable as rites of passage, like the brown acid at Woodstock. The hard Left enjoyed a national two-minute drill (remember the shutdown of the Port of Oakland, and the sit-in at the Israeli consulate in Boston). After two years of casting about, liberals finally have a tea party of their own: unsatisfactory in many respects, but capable of being revived as the unions or the 2012 election require. And underlying all is America's economic malaise, which Obama doesn't understand, congressional Republicans alone can't fix, and drumming or ending the Fed won't solve.

■ The day after a Republican debate, CNN reporter Dan Lothian had a question for President Obama: Are the Republicans "uninformed, out of touch, or irresponsible?" Funny, that's our question about the mainstream media.

■ The Supreme Court has agreed to decide several constitutional questions concerning Obamacare. Justice Elena Kagan ought to recuse herself from the case. As a member of the Obama administration, Kagan was involved in planning the legal defense of the law, even if we do not know, thanks to administration stonewalling, just how involved. As Carrie Severino notes in a memorandum for the Judicial Crisis Network, a conservative group, what we already know requires recusal under existing case law—and, we would add, requires it for good reason. Her impartiality is in doubt. Worse, it appears quite possible that Obama nominated her in part because her involvement in the case made it likely she would uphold the law. Liberals have responded to calls for her recusal by saying that Justice Clarence Thomas is obliged to recuse himself as well because his wife, a conservative activist, has opposed the law. But

Correlating the Candidates

For months, pundits have been eyeballing poll numbers and spinning the story that Mitt Romney has a solid, unchanging base of support, and that the other candidates are taking turns being the "Non-Romney" of the day. This consensus view is based on a faulty premise. If eyeballing of the data were enough, God would not have given us econometricians.

To an econometrician, the consensus is testable. If it is correct, then changes in poll numbers should be highly negatively correlated among the Non-Romneys: If Newt Gingrich goes up, Rick Perry goes down. But the changes should be uncorrelated with movements in Romney's poll numbers.

The nearby chart explores these links. It is based on every poll reported by the website RealClearPolitics since the beginning of June 2011, and analyzes how the ups and downs of the different candidates correlate. To make the large amount of information digestible, the chart identifies for each candidate the relationship between changes in his poll numbers and changes in those of his competitors. A negative and statistically significant relationship is denoted by an arrow, and no significant relationship by a zero. There were no cases of a statistically significant positive correlation between two candidates.

For example, the first row of the table reveals (reading across) that Gingrich's support has come at the expense of Romney, Cain, Perry, and Bachmann, but is not related to the swings for Paul, Santorum, and Huntsman.

The table is filled with interesting information. Perhaps most interesting, the data suggest that support for Romney is related to support for Perry and Gingrich but not to support for the others. Romney is not on an island: His voters seem willing to jump to other candidates, provided that the alternative has ample political experience.

Among the Non-Romneys there does appear to be a bit of a game of musical chairs going on. Bachmann, for example, rises and falls at the expense of Perry, Cain, and Gingrich, but not of Romney. The chart also suggests that a number of candidates live in an alternative reality, far removed from the real action. Support for Ron Paul, Jon Huntsman, and Rick Santorum is uncorrelated with support for anyone else.

There are currently two frontrunners, and the correlations help clarify the likely future scenarios.

First, if Gingrich and Romney stay strong, and others drop out, then it looks as if Gingrich would gain the most support, since Romney stands to gain only from Perry, who barely has a pulse.

In the second scenario, Gingrich goes down in the polls, and his supporters spread out to many candidates. This would redound to Romney's benefit, but not necessarily decisively.

Finally, if Romney goes down, most of his supporters will fan out between Gingrich and Perry. Given his large lead over Perry, that could be enough to put Gingrich over the top quickly.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT

Correlation Between the Poll Standings of Presidential Candidates[1]

	Gingrich	Romney	Cain	Perry	Bachmann	Santorum	Huntsman	Paul
Gingrich		↓	↓	↓	↓	0	0	0
Romney	↓		0	↓	0	0	0	0
Cain	↓	0		↓	↓	0	0	0
Perry	↓	↓	↓		↓	0	0	0
Bachmann	↓	0	↓	↓		0	0	0
Santorum	0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Hunstman	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Paul	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

SOURCE: REALCLEARPOLITICS 2012 REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION POLLING DATA

[1] A "↓" DENOTES A NEGATIVE AND STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP; NO SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP IS DENOTED BY A "0".



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Mrs. Thomas is not involved in the case, as the recusal standards require. Liberals have not found a real parallel, just a way to sidestep the question of judicial integrity.

■ The science of climatology has always involved a considerable amount of art. To determine temperature trends over a period of decades or centuries, raw data (in many cases deduced from ice cores, tree rings, and the like) must be adjusted to account for assorted variables and run through computer models. Even small differences in the relevant parameters can affect the results greatly, so they must be chosen with scrupulous impartiality—but scientists wouldn't slant their data to prove a point, would they? Sorry, stupid question. The latest batch of leaked e-mail exchanges among climatologists, dubbed Climategate 2.0, shows members of the discipline's inner circle discussing how to fudge calculations to achieve the desired results by, for example, selecting the most favorable time periods for comparison and adding correction factors to smooth over inconvenient results. When some researchers expressed uneasiness ("the figure you sent is very deceptive," "the science is being manipulated to put a political spin on it"), they were shouted down or threatened. Real progress on climate science requires that charlatans feel a little heat.

■ Housing interests are cheering a bill passed by Congress that would empower the Federal Housing Administration to insure mortgages as high as $729,750, up more than a hundred grand from the current level. The Obama administration, per usual, is talking out of both sides of its mouth on the issue: first saying that the government should ease back from such loan guarantees, and then protesting that, because the housing market remains weak, it may go along with the increase. We prefer the first side of the administration's mouth: The decision to finance a house costing nearly three-quarters of a million dollars should turn on the value of the property and the borrower's ability to repay the loan, not on a federal guarantee. And what is true of a house costing $729,750 is true of a house costing $72,975 or $7.29: The federal government is not a bank and ought not to insert itself in the consumer-finance business. The ineducable classes in Washington helped to create a worldwide financial calamity with their attempts to manage the American real-estate and mortgage markets but remain convinced that, if we will only increase their credit limit, they'll get it right this time. Somebody should send the FHA the telephone number for Gamblers Anonymous; admitting you have a problem is the first step.

■ As Robert VerBruggen has written in these pages, the National Labor Relations Board is a systemic force for instability and endless litigation in dealings between unions and management. It writes and interprets rules for union organization and collective bargaining—supposedly a technical function, but one that can give great advantages to one side or the other. So NLRB members are chosen for naked political reasons (e.g. Craig Becker, a former SEIU and AFL-CIO lawyer who was recess-appointed by Obama), and policy swings back and forth with each new president. Under George W. Bush, the five-member board dwindled to two, as the Democratic Senate refused to consider his nominees. While it now has a bare quorum of three, Republican member Brian Hayes has threatened to resign in order to keep it from enacting new rules easing the path for unions to be certified; at press time, at least a temporary compromise appeared to be in the works. Such tactics show that the NLRB is often merely a shortcut for the dominant party to write its labor wish list into law, often to be undone when the White House changes hands. A better solution would be to leave these important decisions to the people's elected representatives.

■ Robert and Patricia Haynes of Macomb Township, Mich., receive monthly Medicaid payments to help them provide in-home care for their adult son and daughter, who have cerebral palsy. As far as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and its Democratic allies are concerned, that is sufficient to classify the Hayneses as "government workers." Accordingly, the Hayneses and others like them are forced to cough up $30 a month in "dues" to the SEIU, one of the largest public-employee unions in the country, even if they have no interest in joining. This special arrangement, which began in 2006 under former governor Jennifer Granholm (D.), has allowed the SEIU to rake in an extra $6 million to its coffers annually, which it uses to help elect labor-friendly Democrats eager to enact policies like this one. Before we know it, the SEIU will be insisting that the millions of Americans who receive the child tax credit are merely "government child-care providers."

Somebody should send the Federal Housing Administration the telephone number for Gamblers Anonymous; admitting you have a problem is the first step.

■ If the Solyndra scandal showed that the Obama administration values the chimera of "green energy" more than it values taxpayers' money, the Keystone XL Pipeline scandal shows that, for the administration, environmentalist fantasies trump even American jobs and energy security. The State Department was expected to okay a permit for the pipeline—a $7 billion project that would bring in 700,000 barrels of oil per day from Canada, in addition to creating about 20,000 jobs in the U.S.—by the end of 2011. Instead, the department delayed the permitting decision until 2013, conveniently after the elections, ostensibly to give itself time to evaluate a route for the pipeline that avoids a major aquifer in Nebraska. Never mind that an environmental report commissioned by the State Department itself downplayed the risks to the aquifer, estimating (based on a 1979 oil spill into an aquifer in Minnesota) that even if a spill occurred in Nebraska, it "would affect a limited area of the aquifer around the spill site. In no spill incident scenario would the entire Northern High Plains Aquifer system be adversely affected." But the report did

not cover the spillover effect on the president's reelection, which is clearly what was uppermost in the administration's mind.

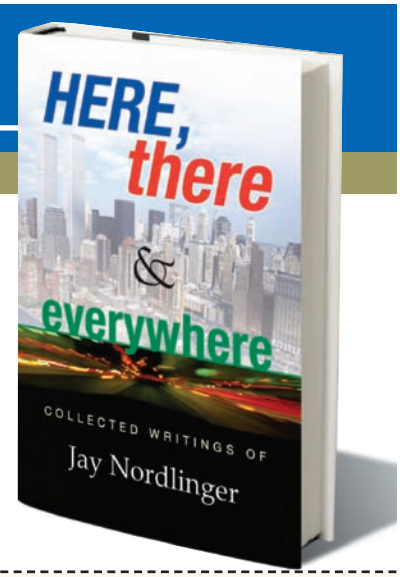
■ While Congress was busy parceling out a measly $700 billion for the 2008–09 bank bailouts, the Fed was acting on its own, on an even larger scale. This has been known for some time, but documents recently released after a Freedom of Information Act request show the true scale of the intervention: The cash infusions, guarantees, and other support proffered by the Fed add up to $7.77 trillion—half of the country's GDP. A single infusion on Dec. 5, 2008, totaled $1.2 trillion—nearly twice what was put up under TARP. While we are inclined to believe that an independent Fed is preferable to a Fed under congressional management, the scale of the Fed's freelance operations during the financial crisis is troubling. Even more troubling is the secrecy with which these operations were conducted, and the Fed's attempt to keep them secret—the Bloomberg news service had to fight in court to get the documents. The Fed should remain independent of political management in its role as the executor of monetary policy, but both democratic values and prudent oversight require a significantly greater level of transparency in its operations. We simply cannot have Ben Bernanke betting 50 percent of GDP on struggling banks without openness and accountability.

■ John Kitzhaber, the Democratic governor of Oregon, granted a temporary reprieve to a death-row prisoner for the duration of his term in office, and said he would do the same for everyone else on death row, based on his "personal convictions about the morality of capital punishment." Those convictions seem to us, as to most Americans, to be mistaken. But even if they are correct, the governor's actions are improper. The governor of Oregon, like most American executives, has an unreviewable power to exercise clemency at his discretion. But he also has a duty to faithfully execute the laws. To use the power of clemency to nullify the law is to abuse it. Opposition to capital punishment loses its honorable character when it is allied to lawlessness.

■ In a provocation that once would have brought British gunboats steaming up the Iranian equivalent of the Yangtze River, thugs stormed the British embassy in Tehran. These "students" must be pursuing advanced studies in international incidents, courtesy of the Basij militia. The regime wanted to take revenge for the new sanctions London just instituted on Tehran's central bank, and besides, Iranians tend to harbor quaint fantasies about how their former colonial master still controls the world order. A week before the embassy attack, French president Nicolas Sarkozy called for further sanctions, freezing the assets of the Iranian central bank and ceasing the importation of Iranian oil. These are measures that would significantly increase the economic pressure on Tehran, and we should be urging their adoption forthwith. The action against the embassy is more evidence that the Iranian regime stands outside of and opposed to the international order—if we needed any.

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■ We have long been in a state of quasi-war with our quasi-ally Pakistan. It harbors our enemies and works to undermine our goal of a reasonably stable and decently governed Afghanistan. In the latest flare-up in a relationship that has been increasingly tense since the bin Laden raid, U.S. troops called in an air strike on a Pakistani military post near the border—almost certainly because they were being fired upon. In response to the incident, which killed two dozen Pakistani soldiers, the Pakistanis forced us to shut down a base on their territory that we were using to fly drones, and cut off our supply route into Afghanistan. In public, we'll have to be contrite; in private, we should tell the Pakistanis that such accidents are the inevitable consequence of their perfidy. Pakistan is a bad seed of a country, built on grievance from the beginning and deeply dysfunctional. We don't have much choice but to stay engaged with it, since the alternatives to the current government are even worse. But we should have no illusions about the treachery and malevolence of our so-called friend.

■ During the president's Asia trip, the administration managed to tweak Beijing on its territorial disputes, deepen security ties with Jakarta and Manila, announce the deployment of Marines in northern Australia, and advance an Asian free-trade deal including Japan. These moves have left the Chinese leadership flat-footed, and convincingly demonstrated to the region that we have no intention of letting China become a hemispheric hegemon. Most of Asia's fence-sitters have little desire to see an unbound China, but they will not risk coming into the U.S. fold if our regional commitment is half-hearted. President Obama's diplomats seem to grasp this clearly. Credit where due.

■ A German bond auction failed in November, meaning that investors simply do not want new debt issued by the government of the country with Europe's most productive economy unless yields go up significantly. Elsewhere in Europe, the situation is as bad or worse: A few days after the failed German bond auction, Italy was forced to pay record yields on an issue of new bonds: 7.56 percent on the ten-year bond, up from 6 percent just a month before. Three-year Italian bonds are going for 7.89 percent. Europe's problems are compounded by the presence of the unwieldy single currency, which necessitates that a highly productive exporter such as Germany share a monetary policy with low-productivity Greece, to the ultimate advantage of neither. They also are compounded by the undemocratic, unaccountable regime in Brussels, which has been eating away at the sovereignty of Europe's nations for many years. But Europe's present problems otherwise are very much like those that the United States will be forced to confront soon enough: spendthrift governments, large deficits, and increased competition from emerging global competitors disturbing the present economic order. And with the national debt at $15 trillion and rising, the United States cannot afford to be paying Italian rates on its bonds.

■ The Arab League has taken a long time to follow the United States and the European Union in imposing economic and travel sanctions on Syria. The Arab League was ostensibly founded to promote Arab nationalism, but in reality it is a forum in which the separate interests of the 22 Arab states clash and no common position can emerge. Extraordinarily, the Arab League gave its approval to the campaign against Libya. The brutality of the Syrian regime of Bashar Assad is far worse than Moammar Qaddafi's, and more flagrant. In the course of this year, Syrian security and military forces have killed at the very least 3,500 people (about 250 of them children) and arrested some 30,000, many of whom have disappeared and some of whom survive to testify of the extreme physical torture they have suffered. The Arabs had plans to send observers to Syria and to devise a political solution for what is becoming civil war. Sanctions followed the flat rejection of all such proposals. Syria is considered the center of Arab nationalism, but its barbarities are converting pride in this identity into shame. Members of the Arab League are also fearful that the West might intervene. Even so, the sanctions are pro forma. Once again, the verbiage of the Arab League outweighs its deeds.

■ Spain's conservatives, after almost eight years in the wilderness, beat the socialists. They not only beat them, they crushed them: It was the conservatives' best showing, and the socialists' worst, since the return of democracy to Spain in the late 1970s. The conservatives now have unchallenged control of the government. And they have some serious work to do: The Spanish economy is a mess, with unemployment over 21 percent. Voters, in their distress, turned to the conservatives, while delivering a "punishing verdict" on the socialists. (The words come from the *New York Times*.) Margaret Thatcher liked to say, "The facts of life are conservative." The facts of life seem to have pushed the Spanish wearily home.

■ Elections to parliament and the presidency have begun in Egypt, and will be repeated at intervals in a complex process until next June. There are dozens of parties, thousands of candidates, and millions of voters, whose inky fingers are evidence that they are responsible citizens. The variety and the novelty notwithstanding, the likely winners have always been the Freedom and Justice party, recruited from the Muslim Brothers, a political body of Islamist militants hostile to everyone else. Controlling the whole electoral experiment, however, is the council of senior army officers that got rid of the former authoritarian president Hosni Mubarak and took his place. This council claims to be willing to devolve power to the people, but in the days prior to the election many voters became suspicious. The young, the secular, the educated, and the activists went to protest in central Cairo, suspecting that the army council and the Freedom and Justice party had reached some agreement to keep power between them. In violent scenes, at least 40 people were then shot, and hundreds wounded. The council's top officer, Field Marshal Tantawi, declared that "the position of the armed forces will remain as it is—it will not change in any new constitution." In that case, the new parliament may have no more legitimacy than previous parliaments in Egypt, all of them rigged. Whether it proves politically skillful, popular, or merely intimidating, the Freedom and Justice party could plunge the country into the Islamist wave now sweeping the Muslim world.



Field Marshal Tantawi

AMIR NABIL/AP



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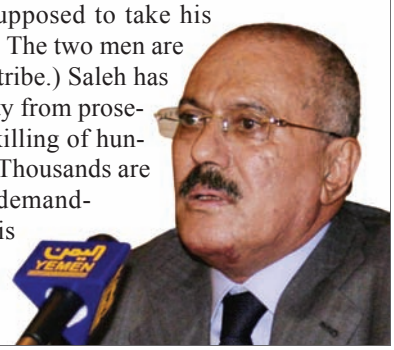
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■ In Moscow, a Russian badly beat an American in "mixed martial arts," a fancy phrase for fighting without rules. Hardly was the bout over when someone jumped into the ring and began speechifying about Russian strength. Vladimir Putin! He loves to play the sportsman, out hunting bears or deep-sea diving, in a display of biceps and pecs. Perhaps this Russian victory made him proud to have suspended Russia's participation in the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, an arms-limitation treaty that had stabilized the continent up to 2007. But what is this? Boos and whistling and catcalls greeted Putin in the ring, and this put-down was shown that evening on national television. Everyone already knows that his party has won the upcoming parliamentary elections, and many are saying that the ringside crowd of 22,000 was showing what it thinks of this fix.

■ Ali Abdullah Saleh has been president of Yemen these 33 years, and what a mess that country has become. Saudi Arabia and Iran, otherwise Sunni and Shiite, have been fighting a proxy war in the mountains, with al-Qaeda and the late Anwar al-Awlaki mobilized alongside. The tribes are at each other's throats. The Arab Spring caught on. Huge protests calling for Saleh to step down were answered with gunfire. Last June a bomb in Saleh's palace almost killed him, and he had to go abroad for treatment. (To give a bit of local color: Anyone walking up the street toward that palace will be shot.) Three times Saleh agreed to sign a deal to abdicate, and three times he revoked it. Expected to stay abroad, perhaps in New York, he returned to Sanaa, the capital, and agreed yet again to step down. The vice president is supposed to take his place. (More local color: The two men are relations from the same tribe.) Saleh has granted himself immunity from prosecution for ordering the killing of hundreds of demonstrators. Thousands are now out in the streets demanding the prosecution of this wily and tenacious old dictator.



YEMENI PRESIDENCY OFFICE

■ The Pakistani government is on top of what seems to be the country's No. 1 peril: rogue texters. The communications ministry has told cellphone providers that they will be expected to filter words and phrases deemed indecent out of all text messages. According to an unofficial list being circulated, the banned lexicon includes numerous anatomical, sexual, and excretory terms (in English and Urdu), as well as "Jesus," exotica such as "monkey crotch" (why anyone wants to ban this is as mysterious as why anyone wants to text it), and puzzlers such as "mango," "taxi," "hobo," and "athlete's foot." Also on the forbidden list is "Wu-Tang Clan," a rap group that seems to have gotten on the regime's bad side with its lyric "Terrorize the jam / Like troops in Pakistan," though whether the objection is to Inspectah Deck's geopolitical views or his slant rhyming is unclear.

■ That glow is no pep-rally bonfire—it's the Penn State football program incinerating. Reports that former assistant coach Jerry Sandusky sexually assaulted boys, including an eyewitness account of a shower-room rape, were minimized by coaches and administrators alike. When the story went public, the trustees fired the morally obtuse, including the university president and longtime head coach Joe Paterno. Students rioted in the streets of State College after Paterno's dismissal; the new regime at Penn State should expel all the rioters it can identify. The football program should also be suspended for a year. (Accusations have also been leveled at Bernie Fine, a Syracuse basketball coach; they seem as of this writing to have been better investigated.) College football had a near-death experience a century ago, when Pres. Theodore Roosevelt purged it of brutish violence and defended it against puritanical critics. A new intervention may be needed. Big-ticket college sports field professional teams of unpaid underage players, who learn no more than they would at an OWS drum circle. Could it be a job for former president George W. Bush?

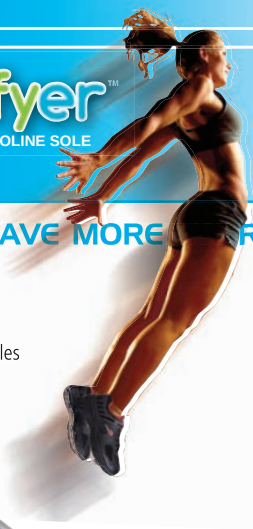
■ On the last Sunday in November, English-speaking Catholics heard something new and refreshing: a revised Mass translation that is more literal in its fidelity to the original Latin texts. The change was greeted by predictable squawking from church liberals: The new translation is "awkward," suffers from the "linguistic infelicities" of "alien verbal flatulence," represents a "slap in the face of the people of God," etc. etc. On literary matters, *de gustibus est*, in fact, *disputandum*. What is more significant is that the new translation amounts to nothing less than a reassertion of one of the central tenets of Roman Catholicism: that the popes and their advisers have a distinct charism of leadership. From this premise follows the idea that it is desirable that worship throughout the Catholic world strive to be faithful to the thinking of these leaders. The new translation, therefore, offers welcome encouragement to those Catholics who strive to "think with the Church" on these essential matters.

■ When Karen Royce signed up for a course in human sexuality at Western Nevada College, she knew the content would get a bit racy, but she never thought she would be ordered to masturbate. In fact, the professor assigned enrollees to double their normal masturbation frequency (when did they ever find time to study?), take notes, and then turn in a journal documenting it all. Royce, age 60, explained that this was not one of her hobbies, and begged off the assignment on the grounds that twice zero is zero—whereupon the instructor demanded that she give it the old college try and report to him on the results. Now she has filed a federal complaint, and while just dropping the class might have been a simpler option, the larger question remains: In what way does pursuing a voyeuristic obsession with students' sex lives benefit the taxpayers and further the college's stated mission to "cultivate creativity, intellectual growth and technological excellence"? Nevada's leaders should work instead on reducing the nation's highest unemployment rate; then the state's residents would not have so many idle hours to fill.

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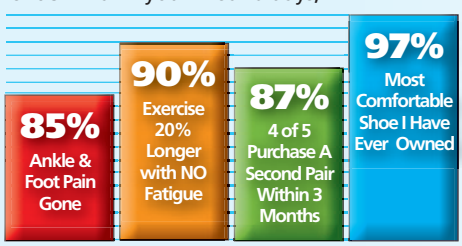
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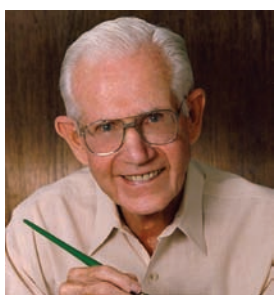
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■ Readers of this magazine will not have to be persuaded that the 1980s were a critical time for America and the world. And a critical player in the Reagan administration was Fred Iklé, an official in the Pentagon. He was both a thinker and a doer, a strategist and an implementer. Like many great Americans, he was an immigrant, coming to this country from Switzerland after the war. He was in his early twenties. He earned a Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Chicago, and held a string of positions in academia and government. Like Reagan, he thought that we could do better than détente: that we could actually push back the Soviet Union and free large portions of the world. Like Reagan, he hated MAD, which is to say "mutual assured destruction." He wrote that this concept "rests on a form of warfare universally condemned since the dark ages—the mass killing of hostages." Therefore, he supported anti-missile defenses, derided by Ted Kennedy and the rest of the Left as "Star Wars." Iklé did all he could to help Central Americans and others who were struggling against tyranny. This Cold Warrior, and warrior for liberty, died last month at 87. What a valuable life. R.I.P.

■ Tom Wicker was the archetypal white southern liberal, using the sins of his region and race as the fuel of his own righteous indignation. Born in a small town in North Carolina, he served in World War II, studied journalism in college, and worked for state newspapers, when the Sixties gave him two breaks: being hired by the *New York Times* in 1960, and being the only *Times* man in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. He made his name thereafter as an opinionator and a holder forth: writing an op-ed column, attempting to mediate the Attica prison riot, flaying Richard Nixon. As blacks represented holiness, so Nixon incarnated corruption; Watergate, wrote Wicker, was the "beginnings of a police state." Tell that to the Syrians. A 1991 book offered a two-edged reassessment of his nemesis: Nixon was, as the title declared, *One of Us*—which also meant, we're all like him. Dead at 85. R.I.P.



■ In an age like ours, when every part of life is thoroughly suffused with irony, the only thing that's stronger is sincerity. No one proved this better than Bil Keane, who drew the *Family Circus* comic strip. His oval-headed scamps made *Dennis the Menace* seem edgy, yet the strip (actually just a panel), now drawn by Keane's son Jeff, has hung on for more than half a century and is still going strong, having achieved the ultimate ironic accolade by becoming a favorite target for hipster parodies. He was a leader in the National Cartoonists Society and maintained warm personal friendships with such sardonic artists as Stephan Pastis (*Pearls Before Swine*), Bill Griffith (*Zippy the Pinhead*), and Scott Adams (*Dilbert*). William Aloysius Keane was also a devout Catholic who gave generously to religious schools, institutions, and causes and, according to one obituary, "illustrated the 1992 book 'Holy Hilarity' from the Fellowship of Merry Christians." He often recalled how Sister Ann, in the sixth grade at St. William School in Philadelphia, launched him on his career path by starting a class newspaper, making him the cartoonist, and praying for his success. Dead at 89. R.I.P.



KEANE: RTR/NEWSCOM KERRY AND TOOMEY: WASHINGTON POST/GETTY

PUBLIC POLICY

The Real Tax Fanatics

In a development that surprised nobody but was treated by the Washington media as a grave crisis, the congressional "supercommittee" has failed to identify $1.2 trillion in deficit reduction that could gain bipartisan support. In the absence of such an agreement, automatic spending cuts are scheduled to go into effect starting in January 2013, half in defense and half in domestic discretionary programs.

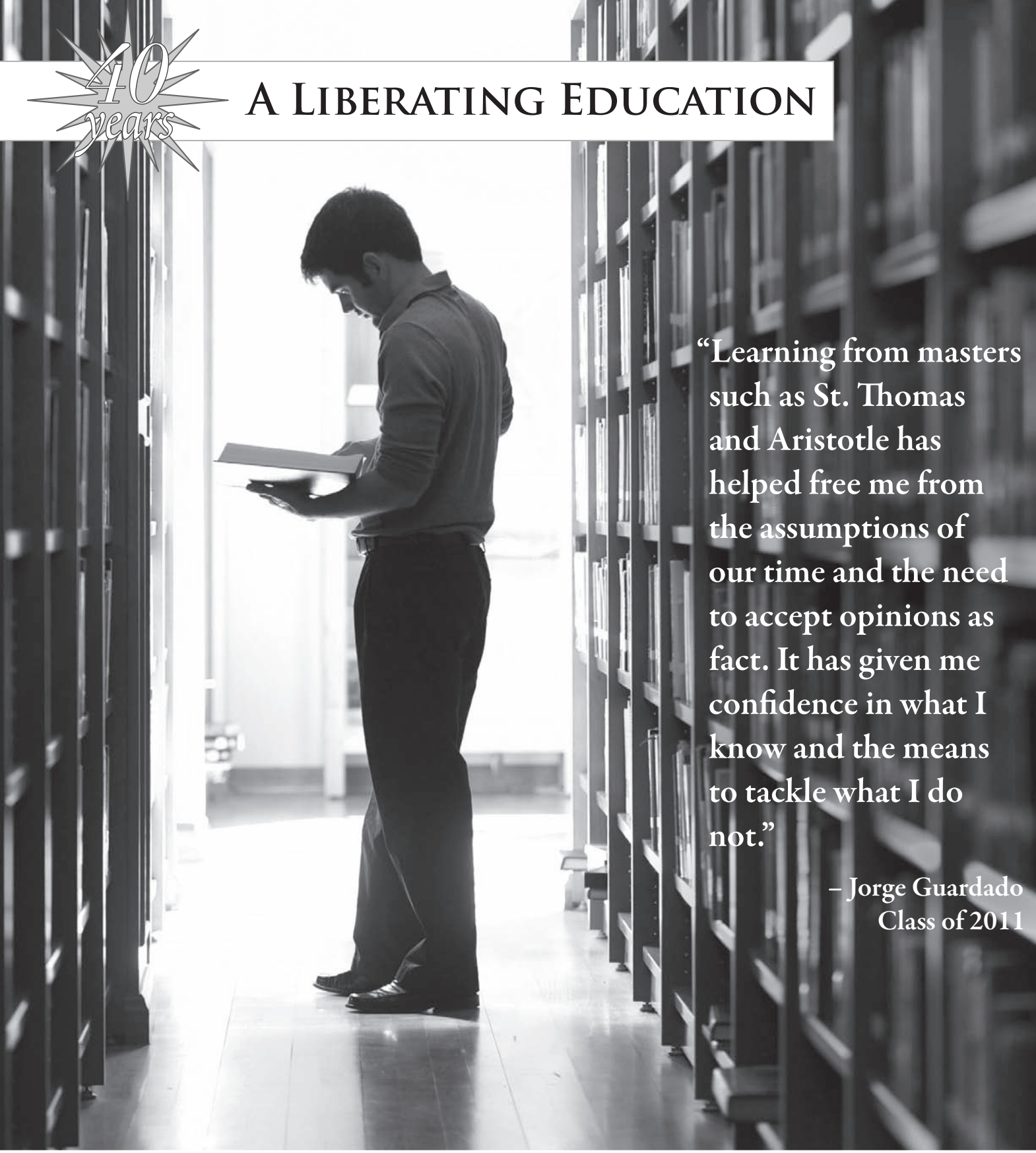
In another development that stuns no one, the parties are blaming each other's rigidity for the deadlock. The Democrats claim that Republicans' refusal to contemplate tax increases on the wealthy prevented any compromise. But the available facts contradict this claim. Republicans apparently offered to scale back tax breaks that disproportionately benefit high earners in order to get pro-growth tax reforms and spending cuts. The effect would have been a net tax increase.

Democrats refused to take yes for an answer. They wanted a larger tax increase. The Republicans say, and the Democrats do not deny, that the Democrats wanted $1 trillion in tax increases—the vast majority of the deficit reduction that the supercommittee was charged with finding. Democrats also wanted the tax increase to take the form of increased tax rates rather than just decreased tax breaks. So it did not matter that revenues would increase, or that most of the increase would come from higher payments by high earners. The top tax rate had to increase as well: the type of tax increase most likely to harm incentives to work, save, and invest, and therefore undermine long-term prospects for growth. This position makes no sense except as the stroking of an ideological totem.

Sen. Pat Toomey (R., Pa.) distinguished himself on the committee through his patient negotiation, displaying just the right mixture of flexibility and firmness and explaining the Republican position in the media with clarity and calm. Republicans should now work to promote growth, reform entitlements, and make sure that any reductions in defense spending are consistent with an intelligent national-security strategy. If the supercommittee could not accept a center-right proposal, perhaps the electorate of 2012 will.

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DARREN GYGI

Euro Melee

It's Europe vs. the Europeans

BY ANDREW STUTTAFORD

The euro may not have brought Europe together, except in shared misery, but it has divided it in previously unimaginable ways. Votes can now be won in Finland by bashing faraway Greece, a place hitherto thought of in Helsinki (if at all) as a helpful supplier of beaches. Europe being Europe, the troubles of the single currency have also given a boost to more traditional antagonisms and, Europe being Europe, revived plans for a nasty new tax.

That tax, the financial-transaction tax, is now being pushed by Germany (with France scampering behind). Britain, already in the doghouse for allegedly not doing enough to help out the single currency it had rejected, is talking veto, while Germany, being Germany, is threatening to proceed regardless. Fleet Street being Fleet Street, there are warnings of a "Fourth Reich." Many Greeks are saying (and shouting) the same thing, much to the fury of those German taxpayers bailing out a nation they see as idle, dishonest, ungrateful, and—old prejudices bubble up—a little too swarthy to be trusted.

It's time to calm down. The financial-transaction tax is a thoroughly bad idea, with a dose of old-fashioned national nastiness thrown in (Britain would pick up a huge percentage of the tab), but Merkel's demands for better budgetary discipline within the eurozone are, in theory, rather more easy to justify. If Germany is, one way or another, to underwrite the common currency, insisting that its money is not frittered away is good housekeeping, not empire-building. Not an empire in any traditional sense.

But Merkel is pfennig-wise but mark foolish (or she would be if such splendidly sound money still existed). She is set on defending Germany's interests, but only within the parameters of the EU's transnationalist, post-democratic agenda, to which, it seems, she subscribes. The appealing idea that Germany should, *for its own good*, quit the eurozone, either alone or in the company, say, of the frugal Dutch, remains off limits, and there is absolutely no prospect that Germany's voters will be given any direct say on that topic. They never wanted the euro, but they got it. Now they are stuck with it.

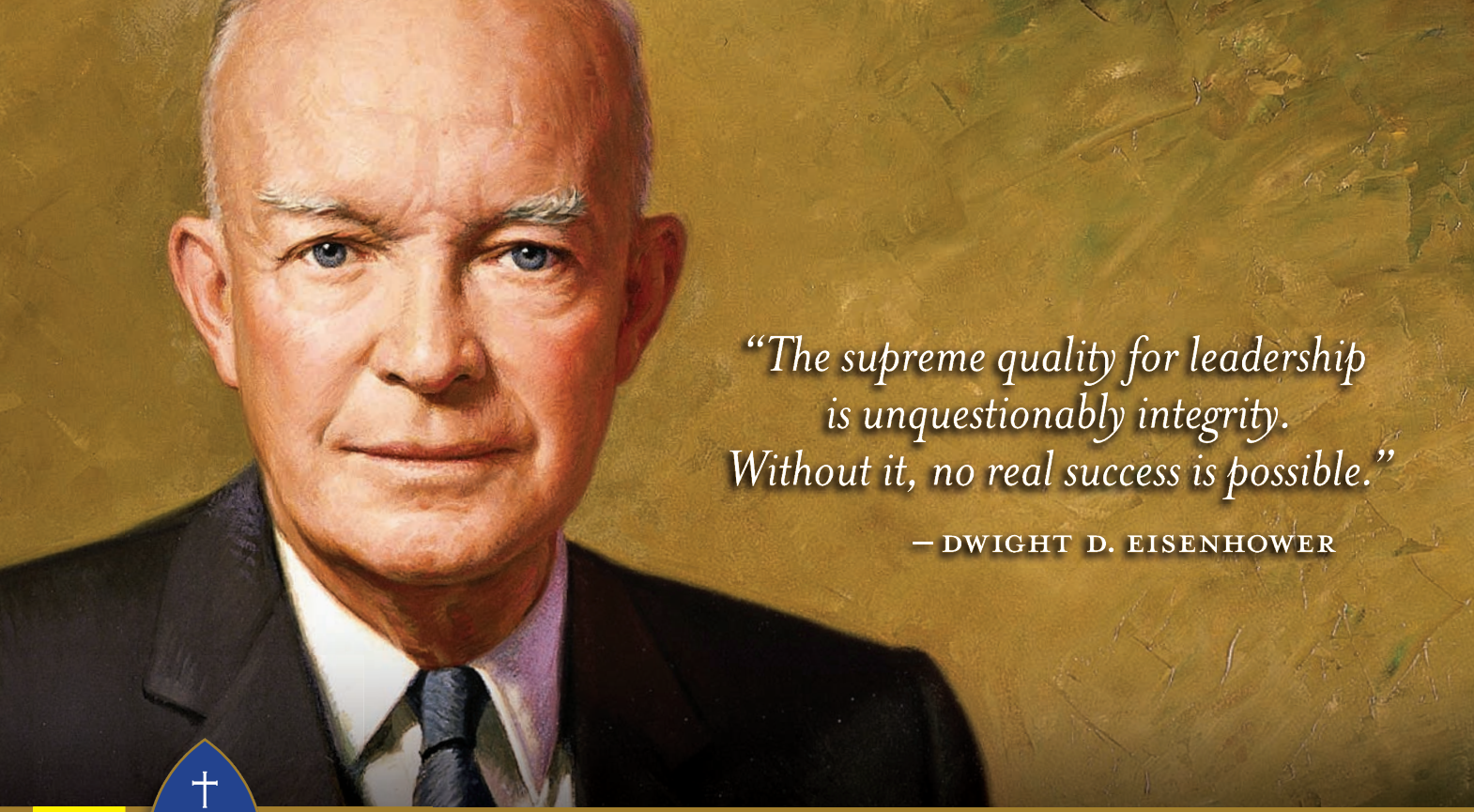
And that's how the EU, born out of a distrust of nation-states and their voters, was always meant to work. The difficulty for Brussels is that this system is now being tested as never before: The eurozone has become the site of a dangerous, chaotic, and half-hidden power struggle between its political and bureaucratic leaderships (which are themselves deeply divided on how far to take deeper integration, but that's mainly a tale for another day), nervous financial markets, and increasingly riled-up voters.

This wasn't on the program. To the extent that Brussels had any strategy at the time of the single currency's launch beyond finger-crossing and prayer, it was that the eurozone's inherently flawed nature (very different economies joined in monetary, but not fiscal, union) would eventually lead to an over-by-Christmas "beneficial crisis." Financial markets would force through the closer fiscal union that politics could not deliver. Once that had been achieved, the zone's individual nation-states would count for very little, and their voters for even less.

That's not how it has worked out. The mechanics of currency union (more on that later) have combined with irresponsible sovereign borrowing and the economic horrors of recent years to foment a financial storm that may be too devastating to be harnessed in quite so "beneficial" a way. The crisis could yet work out (in that cynical Eurocratic sense), but the terrible damage it has already caused has driven home the real costs—political, economic, and financial—of the monetary union to electorates that have long been denied an effective say in its future. Now that they know what they now know, it will be more difficult to keep them on the sidelines.

But over in the PIIGS they are still huddled there for now. In the last few weeks, Prime Ministers Berlusconi and Papandreou have been forced out with shocking ease, replaced by technocrats bearing the Brussels stamp. Italy was issued a former EU commissioner, and Greece a former vice president of the European Central Bank. Neither man had

Mr. Stuttaford is a contributing editor of National Review Online.



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previously been elected to anything. Who cares? The message to Italian and Greek voters was clear—beggars cannot expect to be, so to speak, choosers—and so far surprisingly few of the beggars have objected. So long as it is seen to be better to be in the zone than out, hairshirts and all, this argument will fly. Underlining this, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland have all held elections, and, in each case, the electorate supported austerity. But if virtue's reward is too long delayed, that consensus could easily shift, and if that change in sentiment is not addressed by those in charge, there could well be serious disorder.

A kinder, gentler eurozone, fueled by the printing presses of a looser, laxer European Central Bank and, once fiscal union has been safely set up, significantly higher transfers from the frugal "north" to the PIIGS, might be one way of smoothing the path to some sort of recovery. But the rise of the populist True Finns, the collapse of the Slovak government, and the continuing success of Holland's Euroskeptical Geert Wilders all suggest that growing numbers of northern voters are in not such a generous mood. The only fiscal union they would be likely to support would be more Scrooge than Santa. These voters are signing checks, not receiving them. Their concerns ought to count for far more than those of the pauperized periphery. And they just might.

Even in Germany, there is some evidence that portions of the overwhelmingly Eurofederalist political class are becoming unnerved not only by popular discontent (as a proxy for that, nearly 80 percent of German voters are opposed to the issuance of Eurobonds guaranteed by all the eurozone's members) but also by clear signals of unease from the country's powerful constitutional court over the liabilities Germany may be taking on. Merkel's grudging responses to the bailout requests of the last two years may have been an attempt to maintain financial discipline, but they are also a recognition that her domestic voters once again count for something. And maintaining that tough stance is playing well at home. According to a new ZDF poll, the percentage of German voters who approve of Merkel's handling of the crisis has risen sharply (from 45 to 63 percent) over the last month.

To the extent that Merkel is a fan too of a Scrooge-style fiscal union, this may actually strengthen her hand as the eurozone's bad cop. That's something that alarms another key participant in this drama: the financial markets. Market players are fond of a quick fix. They are not very interested in the plight of the eurozone voter. Most are pushing for closer integration (preferably Santa-style) as the only way to make the single currency work. Merkel has not appreciated this pressure, or the turbulence that has come with it, and she is not alone. The currency union echoes with the rage of a European political/bureaucratic class that prefers to blame the crisis on wicked "Anglo-Saxon" speculators rather than on overspending and the shortcomings of a gimcrack currency union that should never have seen the light of day.

And it's in the operation of the latter that the immediate danger lies. As Paul de Grauwe of Belgium's University of Leuven has noted, if markets panic about one of the eurozone's members, euros will pour out of that country (let's call it Greece), and unless that flow is somehow reversed, that country (unable to print its own money) will simply run out of cash, and it will go bust. As I said, let's call it Greece.

That gives markets the whip hand, and that does not play well on a continent that has never really shaken off its command-and-control traditions. So long as financial markets bought into the euro dream, their exuberance was welcome and, indeed, encouraged in Brussels, Frankfurt, and elsewhere. There were few complaints about ratings agencies, banks, or speculators back then. Now the bubble has burst. The markets have woken up, and, as we all know, the results have not been pretty to see—and they are visible to all.

This has not pleased the eurozone's leaders one bit. They have responded with an onslaught of measures—from bans on certain kinds of short sales, to the financial-transaction tax, and, even, an aborted plan to censor the ratings agencies—all designed to throw sand in the gears of the free market, cut financiers (whose pay, even higher than that of the Brussels elite, has long been a source of irritation) down to size, and, in particular, give those semi-detached Brits, arrogant Yanks, the greedy City, and even greedier Wall Street a very good kicking.

To be continued . . . **NR**

Justice for Libya

It requires blocking the world court's overreach

BY JOHN R. BOLTON

LIBYA'S interim government made a correct, startlingly independent judgment just before Thanksgiving, announcing that Libya, not the International Criminal Court (ICC), would try Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, Moammar Qaddafi's favorite son and once-likely successor. By rebuffing the aggressive efforts of the ICC's prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, to keep control of the case, the National Transitional Council (NTC) surprised many in the international "human rights" community, including the ICC itself.

While an arcane jurisdictional battle over trying and punishing Saif Qaddafi may not be headline material, this mini-drama has significant implications for the United States. Since the ICC's inception, it has been cautious in asserting its jurisdiction, hoping to deny ammunition to its opponents. This strategy is part of an intense but quiet effort to seduce America (and other key countries still outside, including Russia, China, India, and Israel, as well as Libya) into acceding to the Rome Statute, the ICC's foundational treaty. Indeed, the relationship of ICC authority to national judicial systems remains a critical, contentious issue even for states that are already members.

When the Rome Statute was finalized in 1998, its advocates blithely contended that America need not fear an assertive, jurisdiction-expanding ICC because the treaty enshrined the principle of "complementarity." Article 17 provides that a case is generally inadmissible before the ICC if a state has investigated and already made a decision whether to prosecute. But there is a kicker: The ICC *may* assert jurisdiction if that state "is unwilling or unable genuinely to carry out the investigation or prosecution." Most

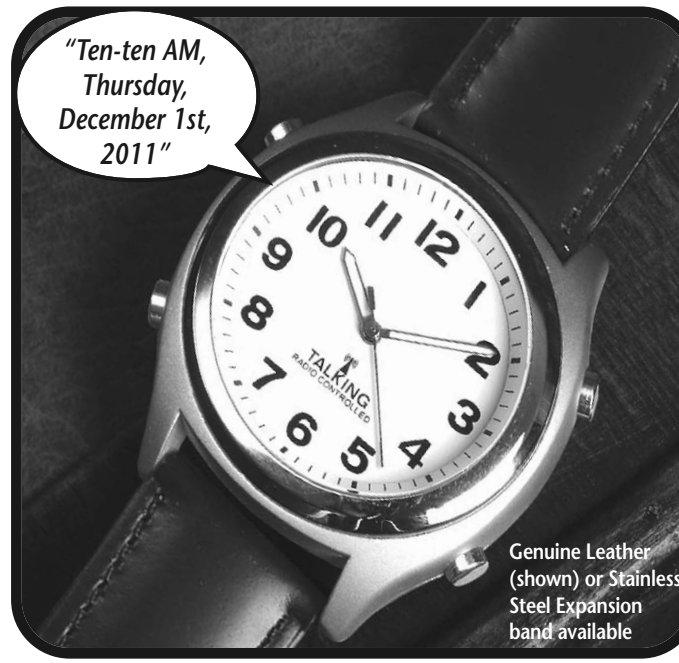
Mr. Bolton, a former U.S. representative to the United Nations, is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. He is the author of Surrender Is Not an Option.

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important, it is the ICC that makes the key decision, without further review, about whether the particular state is unwilling or unable to proceed.

Moreover, the concept of complementarity, deferring to national judiciaries, is an entirely hypothetical protection for sovereignty. Other global tribunals, such as the International Court of Justice, decide disputes *between* states, not within them, and no other has prosecutorial powers directly against individuals. Thus, complementarity has been chimerical from the outset—an unproven assertion, designed to entice America into believing it is safe to join the ICC. Libya is a test case on whether the ICC will continue to proceed warily. While the still-inconclusive outcome is not as threatening as it might have been, the ICC's performance has nonetheless been disturbing, auguring danger ahead for the United States.

Because Libya is not a Rome Statute party, the Security Council had to authorize ICC involvement, which its Resolution 1970 did unanimously on Feb. 26, 2011. Four months later, with hostilities in Libya still intense, the ICC issued arrest warrants for Moammar and Saif Qaddafi, and for Abdullah al-Senussi, the head of Libyan intelligence. All three were charged, under Rome Statute definitions, with crimes against humanity, namely murder and persecution of the Libyan people. (As of now, despite reports that the NTC had captured Senussi, he apparently remains at large.)

The Security Council's action (with full Obama-administration support) and the ICC decision to issue warrants during the fighting were mistakes demonstrating two major problems with legalistic approaches to international conflicts. First, contrary to ICC proponents' arguments, there is no evidence that the ICC warrants in any way deterred Qaddafi or his loyalists from continuing to commit atrocities and abuses. Threat of ICC arrest hardly constituted "shock and awe." Second, the warrants made it harder if not impossible for the Qaddafis to find an exit strategy that wouldn't leave them vulnerable later to being turned over to the ICC. If anything, therefore, the Council and the Court may have contributed to extending and intensifying the Libyan bloodshed.

Moammar Qaddafi's post-capture killing on October 20, conspicuously lacking in due process, created another wrinkle. The "human rights" crowd immediately concluded Libya couldn't be trusted to provide fair trials for Saif and Senussi, doubtless thereby helping convince the ICC it had to retain jurisdiction. Moreover, Libya provides for the death penalty (a no-no for the International High-Minded), which is not available under the Rome Statute.

Saif's November 19 apprehension brought matters to a head. Moreno-Ocampo immediately departed for Tripoli to pressure Libya to defer to ICC jurisdiction. One possible "compromise" retaining ICC primacy, reported in the press, was to try Saif at The Hague for the crimes alleged in the ICC's warrant, then return him to Libya for prosecution for all other crimes he was assumed to have committed in the years prior to Resolution 1970.

Nonetheless, the Libyans stood firm. Moreno-Ocampo retreated, but only partially, saying: "If they prosecute the case, we will discuss with them how to inform the judges, and they can do it, but our judges have to be involved." There is no Rome Statute or Security Council basis whatever for the prosecutor to insert ICC judges into Libya's judicial process, and how this will play out remains uncertain.

Moreover, slapping Moreno-Ocampo's wrist, the ICC's judges did not accept even his partial retreat, issuing a competing press release on November 23. Making the technically correct point that, under the Rome Statute, they, not the prosecutor, decide whether the ICC will defer to Libya, the judges proclaimed: "Therefore, contrary to what has been reported in the media, [the ICC's pre-trial panel] remains seized of the case and the Libyan obligation to fully cooperate with the Court remains in force." (The ICC's propensity to overextend itself is evident even in a relatively small, almost bizarre matter. The ICC took a month to cancel Moammar Qaddafi's arrest warrant "because," it said, "of the changed circumstances caused by his death." In fact, Moreno-Ocampo pressed for DNA evidence to confirm that Qaddafi was dead, rather than accept the continuously recycled visual evidence and the NTC's statements.)



"Who do you think is the greatest person who ever lived—Barack or Michelle?"

In short, Libya is far from off the ICC hook. But it remains entirely correct for the NTC to take responsibility for Qaddafi's depredations, committed as they were in the name of Libya's people. The NTC could do so in several ways, such as prosecution or creating a "truth and reconciliation" process as in post-apartheid South Africa. Libya's decision could well be a cornerstone for a legitimate successor regime, encouraging institutions representative of its people. Asserting that Libya can't be trusted to deal with its past, or lacks the competence to do so, reflects an unacceptably supranational mindset. Political maturity does not arise by taking decisions away from a country and its citizens. Precisely the opposite is true: Maturity grows from citizens' confronting their own past and resolving it through democratic choice.

The NTC or its successor may fail at this task, or not fully meet international "human rights" standards, but those are Libya's mistakes to make. Obviously, creating competent, independent courts is a key NTC responsibility, and some worry that trying Saif too speedily will not afford Libya time to do so with adequate due process. But this too is something Libya should measure for itself; it can hardly be in the NTC's interest to have anything but a fair and transparent trial, lest it simply sow the seeds for renewed civil war by alienating and angering Qaddafi's clansmen and other supporters.

The West obviously wants the NTC to function as a legitimate government. To rebuff it here and force it to accept ICC jurisdiction would be most unwise, and perhaps impossible given Saif's notoriety in Libya. Accordingly, the ICC's hesitancy to press for full control of the case is consistent with its existing wariness of stirring up U.S. opposition. Nonetheless, the prosecutor's efforts to keep inserting the ICC into Libya's processes, and the ICC's own frosty press release about its equities, demonstrate the expansive views that lie just under The Hague's quiet surface. These still-unresolved cases provide ongoing examples of ICC

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Despite all efforts by President Obama, the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) has rejected U.S. diplomatic efforts and a negotiated peace with Israel by requesting a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood at the United Nations. The P.A. also announced a merger with the Islamic terror group Hamas. Currently the U.S. sends some $600 million dollars annually in direct aid to the P.A., plus an additional $225 million in funding through the U.N. Is this the best use of American tax dollars?

What are the facts?

Since 1979, the United States has expended untold diplomatic capital to forge an Israeli-Palestinian peace. Yet every time peace has seemed at hand—including the U.S.-brokered Oslo accords in 1993, and Israel's historic Camp David offer in 2000 of a Palestinian state with a capital in East Jerusalem—the Palestinians have refused to make peace. In 2008, following the Annapolis summit, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert again offered the Palestinians a state based on 1967 borders and a capital in Jerusalem, but P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas walked away without a counter offer. In 2010, in order to bring the parties together for new peace talks, President Obama convinced Israel to enforce a moratorium on building in Jerusalem suburbs for 10 months. Yet for eight months, P.A. President Abbas refused to take part in talks, and when the moratorium expired two months later, Abbas walked out and has refused to return to negotiations ever since.

In addition to its diplomatic investment, the U.S. has over the decades given the Palestinian Authority more than four billion dollars in aid. Today, the United States provides some $825 million annually in direct aid and funding through the United Nations.

Yet despite this generous diplomatic support and financial largesse, Mahmoud Abbas and Palestinian Authority officials have verbally attacked the United States and snubbed U.S. aid. In June, 2011, 28 Palestinian Authority municipalities in the West Bank announced a "boycott of the American consulate, its diplomats, and the American institutions in Jerusalem," adding that Americans "cannot extort the Palestinian people and humiliate it with a bit of aid." Referring to these huge U.S. financial grants, Abbas said, "This does not mean that they [the U.S.] dictate to us whatever they want . . . They demanded that we should not sign the Egyptian reconciliation agreement [with Hamas], but we sent Azzam Al-Ahmed to sign it."

The Palestinian Authority did indeed reject requests by the United States not to form an alliance with Hamas terrorists in May, 2011, knowing full well that it is against U.S. law for Congress to fund any organization with terrorist ties. Remember that Hamas stands openly by its goal to conquer every inch of Palestine, cleanse it of Jews, and establish a fundamentalist Islamic caliphate. Above all, Hamas refuses to accept the state of Israel and condemns any efforts to negotiate peace.

> *"If a Palestinian state were declared today, it would be neither democratic, nor peaceful nor willing to negotiate with Israel."*
>
> U.S. Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

Most recently, in September, 2011, President Abbas rejected pleas by the Obama administration and the European Union to return to negotiations with Israel and refrain from a bid for unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state at the U.N. Instead, Abbas proceeded to the U.N. and made his defiant request.

Time to stop aid to U.S. enemies. Hillary Clinton stated in April, 2011: "We will not deal with nor in any way fund a Palestinian government that includes Hamas unless and until Hamas has renounced violence, recognized Israel and agreed to follow the previous obligations of the Palestinian Authority." In fact, annual U.S. foreign operations appropriations bills expressly forbid funding for "assistance to Hamas or any entity effectively controlled by Hamas or any power-sharing government of which Hamas is a member."

In July, 2011, both houses of Congress overwhelmingly passed resolutions that threaten withdrawal of aid from the Palestinian Authority if it persists in efforts to circumvent direct negotiations with Israel by turning to the United Nations for recognition—which it has done—and if the Palestinian Authority shares power with a recalcitrant Hamas. According to the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, "Despite decades of assistance totaling billions of dollars, if a Palestinian state were declared today, it would be neither democratic, nor peaceful nor willing to negotiate with Israel."

By allying with the terrorist group Hamas, abandoning peace talks with Israel, and taking its case for statehood unilaterally to the United Nations, it's clear that the Palestinian Authority has no respect for the interests of the United States in the Middle East. In this time of financial crisis and soaring budget deficits, isn't time for Congress to stop spending nearly a billion American tax dollars annually supporting the rogue Palestinian Authority?

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overreach that Washington must watch carefully.

More seriously, however, it is not simply the risk of ICC jurisdictional creep, or the ICC's other manifest imperfections, that should disturb us. Instead, it is the Court's fundamental illegitimacy: the multilateral creation of a potentially enormously powerful instrument of governmental authority without any democratic accountability. Like a roving global version of America's now-discredited "independent counsel" concept, the ICC prosecutor is responsible to no one except the ICC judges. In the United States, by contrast, the attorney general, as the Supreme Court has put it, is "the hand of the President" in executing the laws. Since the president is elected, he and his subordinates are constitutionally and politically accountable both to citizens and to Congress, and not to the judiciary.

Our system of both separation of powers and democratic accountability exists precisely because our founders feared untrammeled power, a lesson that the ICC, floating out there in the international clouds, simply ignores. ICC proponents say the Court is ultimately subject to the Rome Statute's member states, now numbering 119. But as anyone familiar with large multilateral bodies knows, oversight by 119 countries is tantamount to no oversight whatever.

It follows that we should reverse the incremental decisions of the Bush and Obama administrations, however minimal they appear, to assist the ICC and thereby provide it some measure of legitimacy. Simply not joining the ICC is insufficient. We should implement a policy I once called the "three noes": no financial support, directly or indirectly; no collaboration; and no further negotiations to "improve" the treaty.

Much more could be done to weaken the ICC and protect American sovereignty. After the ICC began operating in 2002, for example, we negotiated over 100 agreements under which countries agreed to return U.S. citizens accused by the ICC to our custody rather than surrender them to the prosecutor (with a reciprocal U.S. obligation to do the same for their citizens). Such a strategy, of course, is exactly the opposite of what a second-term President Obama would doubtless pursue, thus providing another reason why the stakes are high next November. **NR**

Retreat—but Whose?

Now is no time for more force reductions in Afghanistan

BY JAMIE M. FLY

Amidst spiraling deficits and scandals such as those involving Solyndra and Fast and Furious, it is sometimes easy to forget what the United States is capable of achieving. This is something that repeatedly struck me during a recent week-long trip to Afghanistan with other national-security experts at the invitation of International Security Assistance Force commander Gen. John Allen.

In late October, as we witnessed a medal-pinning ceremony under a clear blue sky in a desolate corner of Kandahar Province, just miles from Taliban leader Mullah Omar's hometown, it was impossible not to be amazed at what America's men and women in uniform are bringing about, with great personal sacrifice, more than ten years after the start of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The three soldiers being honored were lined up in front of rows of their comrades at a small combat outpost surrounded by Hesco barriers. Their lieutenant colonel outlined their feats in combat. Two had displayed courage as their unit was ambushed, putting themselves at risk as they dragged their wounded comrades and the bodies of the dead to safety. The third was severely wounded in a different incident and sent back to the United States, only to recover and insist that he be allowed to return to his unit.

In recent months, despite suffering significant casualties, the members of Task Force Spartan from the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, have cleared Taliban-infested areas of Kandahar. Villagers are now free to walk the streets of Omar's hometown as he likely cowers across the border in Pakistan. Young children ran up to our group, roughhoused with U.S. forces, and posed for pictures in an area in which, just months ago, it would have been unsafe for them (or us) to venture outside.

Mr. Fly is executive director of the Foreign Policy Initiative.

Spending time with America's soldiers and Marines in Afghanistan, I recalled Winston Churchill's words to the British Desert Army in 1943: "And when history is written and all the facts are known, your feats will gleam and glow and will be a source of song and story long after we who are gathered here have passed away."

The recent achievements of our armed forces in Afghanistan are nothing short of extraordinary. Signs of the progress enabled by the surge in forces President Obama announced in December 2009 were everywhere we visited—from Kandahar, where the soldiers of Task Force Spartan have cleared away the Taliban; to remote sites in contested areas, where Army Rangers live among the Afghan people; to Helmand Province, where we spent time with the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines, who have stabilized towns such as Marjah and are giving the people a chance at a better life.

The surge has created the space for these gains, but to consolidate and maintain them, we should ensure that troop levels are not decreased again until the planned transition to Afghan forces in 2014. Success in the south of Afghanistan is already being put at risk because of the so-called surge recovery that President Obama announced in June, which will result in the drawdown of 33,000 troops by the end of September 2012. The risks were summed up by Gen. James F. Amos, commandant of the Marine Corps, who told the Associated Press, "Will it work? I don't know. But I know we'll do our part." These reductions will make it more difficult eventually to shift the campaign's focus to areas in the east that are increasingly restive, as the military has planned to do. Our commanders are doing their best to limit the impact of the drawdown, but it will be essential that we maintain the post–surge recovery force level of 68,000 troops until 2014.

Unfortunately, recent press reports suggest that, at a NATO summit to be held in Chicago in May, the White House may announce that further troop reductions are to take place, in 2013. President Obama hinted as much during his October 21 announcement that all U.S. forces would be withdrawn from Iraq by the end of 2011, saying, "We're beginning to bring our troops home from Afghanistan, where we've begun a transition to Afghan



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security and leadership. When I took office, roughly 180,000 troops were deployed in both these wars. And by the end of this year that number will be cut in half, and make no mistake: It will continue to go down."

There is no military reason, only a political one, for an announcement of additional troop drawdowns next year. Afghan and U.S. officials with whom we spoke suggested that such a drawdown would be disastrous to our effort. They also emphasized that a more robust and assertive U.S. policy toward Pakistan is essential. Pakistan's harboring of insurgents, and in some cases its explicit support for the insurgency, will make it difficult, if not impossible, for the nascent Afghan security forces to maintain the hard-fought gains achieved by U.S. forces as NATO continues to transition areas of the country to Afghan control in the run-up to 2014. Additional drone strikes against insurgent groups such as the Haqqani network and Quetta Shura, as well as cross-border Special Forces raids targeting factories that produce IED components and other elements of the insurgent support networks inside Pakistan, should be considered. If Islamabad does not heed our warnings, more extreme action may need to be taken, including suspension of U.S. military aid. It is morally questionable for us to fund the military of a country that is involved in killing our men and women in uniform as a matter of state policy. Islamabad needs to realize that continued support for groups that are killing Americans and destabilizing Afghanistan will be considered an act of war.

Part of Pakistan's posturing in Afghanistan is driven by its generals' questioning of America's will to succeed—which brings us back to the question of whether troop drawdowns are wise. Despite the Obama administration's implementation of the surge, its repeated talk of timelines and drawdowns has sent the message that U.S. patience is limited, and that there is limited commitment to Afghanistan's stability beyond 2014. This message has been received not only by Pakistani generals, but also by our Afghan allies, insurgents and their sponsors, and regional allies such as India.

The best way to address our perception problem is to ensure that the soon-to-be-concluded U.S.-Afghan Strategic Partnership Agreement includes a strong and clear commitment to a post-2014 U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. But it seems that the White House intends to reprise in Afghanistan its dangerous decision to completely withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq. "We have been very clear that we do not seek permanent bases in Afghanistan or a long-term military presence that would be a threat to Afghanistan's neighbors," a White House spokeswoman recently told the *Wall Street Journal*.

Given Afghanistan's location—bordering key Central Asian states as well as Iran, Pakistan, and China—a long-term U.S. presence in the country is in America's strategic interest. And the Obama administration's obsession with limiting long-term U.S. commitments to Iraq and Afghanistan is completely out of character with how America has fought previous wars. The United States has consistently sacrificed greatly "in the interest of preserving the rights of people," as former secretary of state Colin Powell famously put it, because "that is the kind of nation we are."

I witnessed this quiet, selfless determination repeatedly during my week in Afghanistan—from the special operator on his fifth combat tour since 9/11 who emotionally spoke about the four comrades he had lost this year, to the Marine who said that his fellow warriors were interested only in answering the questions, "What did you do? Where did you go? What did you achieve?"

Our soldiers, airmen, and Marines have much to be proud of. The question now is whether a lack of political will at home will undermine their victories and prevent them from completing their mission. We owe it to these modern-day equivalents of Churchill's Desert Army, as well as the Afghan people, to get this right. The stakes in Afghanistan and the broader region are too high for political considerations to trump sound strategy yet again. **NR**

Given Afghanistan's location, a long-term U.S. presence in the country is in America's strategic interest.

The State Can Bully, Too

A well-intentioned New Jersey law does more harm than good

BY ROBERT VERBRUGGEN

In September of last year, Rutgers University freshman Tyler Clementi jumped off the George Washington Bridge and fell to his death. The reason for his suicide, it quickly became clear, was the relentless bullying he had suffered at the hands of his college roommate—bullying that included surreptitiously videotaping Clementi's kissing another man in the dorm room and then streaming the video online for others to see. Parents of other bullied students, as well as the gay-rights group Garden State Equality, pressured the New Jersey government to do something.

And so it did, with the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights. The idea was to force administrators at K–12 public and charter schools to take bullying seriously. Republicans and Democrats alike loved it: It passed the state's house and senate with a total of one "no" vote and a few abstentions, and Gov. Chris Christie signed it on January 5 of this year. But between the law's vague language and public schools' penchant for bureaucratizing small matters, the act has turned into a case study of how *not* to combat bullying. Other governments should take note of New Jersey's experience—and be mindful of the pitfalls of taking over duties that have traditionally resided with local governments.

The law went into effect only in September, but already the local papers are filled with anecdotes about schools' overreacting to minor incidents and being required to take costly measures. When one teacher overheard a student call his friend a "retard," school officials launched a full investigation that included meetings with both students' parents. A principal reports dealing with ten to 15 "bullying" incidents every day, very few of which are serious enough to result in actual disciplinary measures. Another administrator says that an investigation into a bullying incident that happened over the summer, off of school grounds, took nine hours.

Reading the law and the official guide-

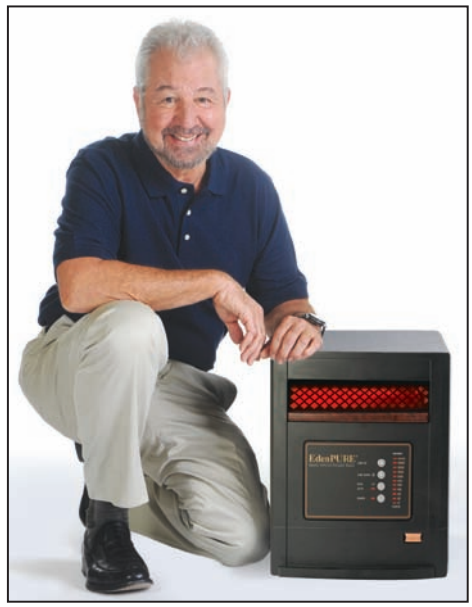
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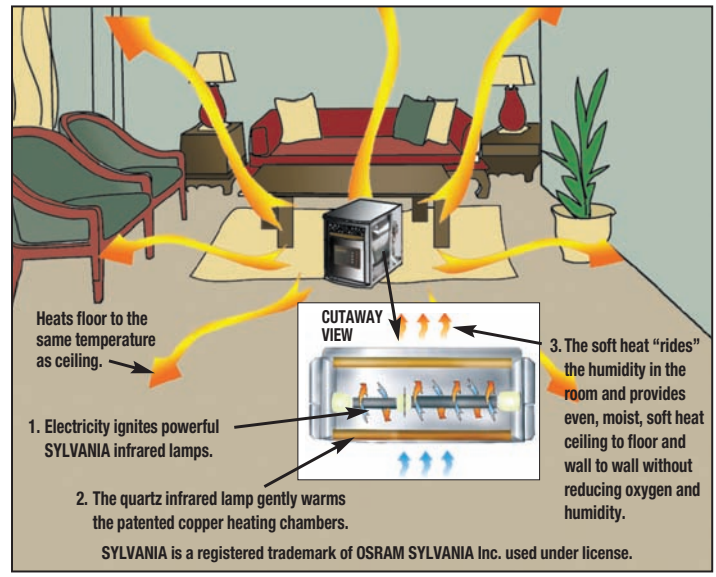
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lines provided by the New Jersey government, one is hardly surprised that officials have been going overboard with their efforts. All in all, schools' anti-bullying programs must satisfy an 18-page "compliance checklist" of "required components." The legislation requires a lengthy and ridiculous process following every alleged bullying incident.

Schools are required to adopt a definition of bullying at least as strict as the state's own:

> any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that is reasonably perceived as being motivated [by any real or perceived characteristic including race, disability, etc.] . . . that takes place [on or, when "appropriate," off school grounds], that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students and that:
>
> a. a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property;
>
> b. has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; or
>
> c. creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.

If an incident meets that definition, the official who learns of it has to inform the principal the same day and file a written report within two school days. Once a report has been filed, it goes to the "school safety team," a group chosen by the school district to review complaints and recommend disciplinary action. This team investigates the incident and releases a final report within ten days. The results are then reported to the superintendant, the board of education, and the parents of the children involved. The board makes the call as to the proper response, but its rulings can be appealed to the commissioner of education.

As the anecdotes recounted above show, in addition to being imprecise with their language, the law's drafters underestimated public-school administrators' love of bureaucracy—or at least their fear of the lawsuit that will ensue when a bullying incident that didn't receive a full investigation turns tragic. Supporters of the initiative aren't entirely wrong when they say that the administrators who are having the most trouble should head to the English department for lessons in reading comprehension. "We used terminology that says 'substantially disrupt or interfere'—that doesn't mean a child says your shirt's a bad color," says state senator Diane Allen, a Republican cosponsor of the law. "We're talking about the kind of bullying and harassment that disrupts the functioning of a school or creates a hostile environment."

Further, despite requiring school districts to take costly measures—from diverting precious teacher hours to the "school safety team" to training all personnel who interact with children, including bus drivers—the state government gave no extra funding. Allen points out that the required personnel can be drawn from current employees, and that while schools have to implement new programs, the materials for those programs are available for free online. "Some schools are trying to make this into something of great expense and great time spent, with more jobs and so on, but I think that if you decide to make it work and put children at the center, you can do it without great expense," she says. That may well be true—but given how cash-strapped all levels of government are, not to mention how much public-school teachers love any excuse to call for "more [union] jobs," it seems more than a little unfair for the state government to give additional tasks to school employees without funding to match.

The Garden State's experience is especially noteworthy because statewide anti-bullying efforts have swept the nation and are only becoming more forceful. While New Jersey's recent efforts are widely considered the strictest in the nation, all but three states have some kind of anti-bullying law, and one of the holdouts, Michigan, is considering one. California and Colorado enacted new legislation this year.

Unsurprisingly, the federal government increasingly sees a role for itself in standing up to bullies as well. As I write this, Obama-administration officials are meeting with concerned citizens at a bullying-prevention summit in Manhattan to discuss new statistics showing that Asian and Muslim students are disproportionately likely to be targets of bullying. Earlier this year, the president endorsed the idea of federal anti-bullying legislation; Sen. Al Franken (D., Minn.) has introduced a bill that would make this a reality and includes specific protections against bullying based on sexual orientation.

Which raises another issue: When a single policy governs all behavior at all public schools, it risks violating the free-speech rights of students and being struck down in court. In most schools, if one student calls another a "fag," the teacher will reprimand the bully and perhaps send him to the principal's office; but if a student expresses the view that homosexuality is wrong, the teacher might encourage a class discussion. When a single law governs both cases, its wording must help teachers make the same commonsense distinction—if it protects bullying, it has failed, and if it infringes free speech, it is unconstitutional. Michigan's bill has been held up thanks to a debate over a provision protecting alleged bullying that stems from "a sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction." Liberals' assertion that "religious tormentors" don't deserve an exception has some merit—but an explicit recognition of free speech is most definitely needed, considering the damage to free speech that "hate speech" laws, the adult version of anti-bullying laws, have done in Canada and Europe.

There is also the question of whether centralized state control, let alone federal involvement, is even needed in this area—yes, some schools do a poor job of policing bullying, but it might be better for parents to take their concerns directly to their school boards than for distant legislators to impose a policy on every district in the state. Allen says that schools ignored New Jersey's previous anti-bullying law, which gave schools guidelines but did not force any policies on them. But nonetheless, is that not a problem to be addressed, by parents and other local residents, in each school individually?

In New Jersey, there's plenty of blame to go around: At the very least, state lawmakers should have used clearer language and required a less elaborate investigation process, and school administrators should read the law much more narrowly. But for the rest of the country, the lessons are simple: Schools should make more of an effort to combat bullying, and higher-level governments should tread lightly when taking over duties that have traditionally been handled locally. **NR**



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Fast Track to Nowhere

China's experience with high-speed rail provides a cautionary tale

BY SAMUEL STALEY

President Obama may have telegraphed an important theme for next year's presidential election when he attempted to steamroll his new stimulus program through Congress by invoking the specter of falling behind China. "Building a world-class transportation system is part of what made us an economic superpower," he claimed. "And now we're going to sit back and watch China build newer airports and faster railroads?"

China's experience with public infrastructure does hold important lessons for the U.S. But they aren't necessarily the ones many Westerners, including the current U.S. president and his advisers, seem ready to embrace.

As high-speed-rail projects move forward in California, Pennsylvania, and Washington State, and regional high-speed-rail associations go ahead with plans in the Midwest, the Southwest, and the Atlantic Coast, it's probably a good time to revisit the rail debacle now unfolding in China.

We've already had one glaring warning sign that the Chinese experiment has a few flaws. A high-speed rail collision near the city of Wenzhou killed 40 people and injured more than 200 last July, exposing systemic and institutional failures to the world. The accident forced the Chinese to put high-speed-rail development on hold for reassessment, while authorities reduce speeds on existing tracks and reevaluate signaling technology.

These events portend that a similar future might await the U.S. if we rush to adopt the Chinese "model" for infrastructure development. The problems that China's high-speed-rail program encountered were not significantly different from those that faced large infrastructure programs rushed to completion in more mature economies.

The scale and rapidity with which China invested in its high-speed-rail network is breathtaking. Annual spending on high-speed-rail projects by China's ministry of railways tripled between 2007 and 2010 as the government rushed to build the world's most extensive network of high-speed trains. Borrowing by the railway ministry rose from 77.1 billion yuan to 1.7 trillion yuan to support this spending frenzy. High-speed track now makes up 8,358 kilometers of the nation's 91,000 kilometers of rail lines. Moreover, China still plans eventually to build another 17,000 kilometers, boosting high-speed rail's share to almost one-quarter of the nation's rail system.

Under any circumstances, keeping track of spending on this scale would be a challenge, and the rail ministry has been criticized within China for its impenetrable accounting practices and lack of transparency in contracts. Because adequate accounting procedures weren't in place, tracking revenues has been especially difficult, according to extensive investigative reporting by the Chinese business magazine *Caixin*. This is especially alarming given that the high-speed-train agency was supposed to run like a business (not unlike proposed projects in California and Texas). Unlike "social," or subsidized, investments, it was supposed to make decisions based on profit and loss. But now the Chinese system faces a real risk of default, as revenues fail to cover operating and debt-service costs.

What lessons should U.S. policymakers draw?

First, technology still can't overcome human foibles when schemes are rushed into implementation. While software failure was the proximate cause of the Wenzhou train disaster, the real problem was human error. Dispatchers had not been adequately trained to use the system, which had been hastily scaled up to higher speeds and greater complexity, so when a hardware malfunction created ever-spreading dangers, the dispatchers did not recognize the extent of the situation until it ended tragically. Complex, one-of-a-kind systems carry inherent risks in adapting, applying, and implementing new technologies. Cutting corners to achieve politically determined benchmarks increases these risks, with potentially catastrophic results.

Second, China's enthusiasm for high-speed rail outpaced the ability of its engineers to adapt technology safely and efficiently. In 2004 China, acting in partnership with foreign firms, began to modify standard technology to fit the particulars of its system. As problems became apparent (none seeming particularly significant at the time), the government imposed even more ambitious objectives on its engineers. Instead of 120-mph trains, the original specification, they were now expected to achieve speeds of 150 mph, then 180 mph. Technology never really caught up, a factor compounded by the uniqueness and vastness of the Chinese system. The Wenzhou accident was one particularly tragic result of forcing a system to change too much, and too fast.



The scene near Wenzhou, July 24, 2011

ALY SONG/RTR/NEWSCOM

Third, large-scale programs, particularly those serving national goals and aspirations, risk growing too quickly and requiring vast sums of money, resulting in a lack of accountability and transparency while breeding corruption. The Beijing–Shanghai high-speed-rail route alone nearly doubled in cost as expenses went from an estimated 12.3

Mr. Staley is associate director of the DeVoe L. Moore Center at Florida State University and a senior research fellow at the Reason Foundation, where he manages the China Mobility Project.



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billion yuan to over 21 billion yuan. Many Chinese officials, including the minister of railways and the chairman of a major logistics company, have been removed from their positions because of corruption that may have led to billions of dollars of waste. Obtaining lucrative construction contracts during the mid-2000s appeared to be more about having connections than about doing high-quality and cost-efficient work, and middlemen were handsomely rewarded for "mediating" services. And there is reason to think the American experience will be similar: Cost overruns and concerns about fraudulent forecasts and financial accounting are already plaguing high-speed-rail projects in the U.S. (particularly California).

Fourth, Chinese travelers, it turns out, aren't that different from Americans (or other Westerners), and when their incomes increase, they become less likely to ride trains.

In ongoing studies sponsored by the Reason Foundation that will be presented in Hong Kong this month and before the Transportation Research Board in January, researchers from the Highway College at Chang'an University are examining travel behavior among highway and train users. In earlier stages of development, Chinese travelers opted for buses, bicycles, and walking. But they increasingly prefer more flexible and adaptable travel modes, particularly the automobile. So high-speed train service is probably an upgrade for existing train riders, instead of a new alternative for travelers seeking faster ways to get from Point A to Point B. Indeed, even as China invests in its intercity rail program, it plans to add 45 civilian airports to the nation's air-travel network by 2015. This shows that China's transportation investment is aimed more at building the infrastructure for a wealthy economy than at trying to change travel behavior.

These lessons are important for infrastructure visionaries in the U.S., apart from the question of whether high-speed rail makes economic sense. After the Wenzhou accident, China is now stepping back and pausing, in an admirable effort to take stock of the implementation failures that have put the safety of its entire national high-speed-rail network in question. Let policymakers on this side of the Pacific take note. **NR**

Regulated Unto Death

How the EPA is killing America's energy industry

BY TRAVIS KAVULLA

Energy is a factor in everything we do, an input in everything made in the modern economy. When energy prices rise, so in tandem does the cost of virtually everything; and if energy prices rise only for America or a particular state, as is the case when cost is tied to a new environmental regulation rather than anything fundamental in an energy resource's supply, the difference between the cost of production in our nation or a state and the cost for an economic rival elsewhere grows.

So at a moment when national competitiveness, middle-class wages, and the U.S. economy in general are points of worry, the extravaganza of rules lately unleashed against electric utilities by the Environmental Protection Agency is profoundly inopportune. Among the regulations the EPA has decreed during the Obama administration, there are rules to address mercury, sulfur, and particulate emissions, the intake of water, and the disposal of coal ash, as well as vaguer matters such as "visibility." The rules overlap with one another and, with implementation dates clustered in the next few years, they will unleash a cascade effect leading to the decommissioning of many low-cost power plants, the spendy retrofitting of around a hundred more, and a crunch on utilities, which will struggle to get all of this done at roughly the same time with the little specialist labor that exists to do it.

The cost of complying with this panoply of rules is considerable. A paper by FBR Capital Markets predicts an all-in cost potentially exceeding $80 billion, most of it hitting the electric-utility industry. That number does not count the cost in stranded or impaired investments

Mr. Kavulla, a former associate editor of National Review, *is chairman of the Montana Public Service Commission, the state's utility-regulating body.*

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for plants that will be shut down before they have reached the end of their useful life—which in total are estimated to have around 45 gigawatts of generating capacity, enough to power between 20 and 30 million homes. When Montana-Dakota Utilities, which serves four states, released its biennial planning forecast this year, its business-as-usual case projected a plant-in-the-ground value of $3.723 billion, which will be recovered over time in electric rates. But add the retrofitting or plant replacements required by mercury and coal-ash rules, as well as a carbon tax, to the mix, and that value soars to $5.317 billion—over 40 percent more than the status quo, all of which will have to be recovered in rates.

Pres. Barack Obama in the past two months has been sending mixed signals about the EPA's rules bonanza. The administration suspended an EPA ozone rule, equivocated about the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, which affects 31 states and has led Texas regulators to forecast blackouts, and delayed the release of greenhouse-gas rules to next year. Yet there are plenty of varyingly ineffectual, grandiose, and economically damaging regulations President Obama could walk back were he serious about convincing America that his love affair with the regulatory state was all just a thoughtless swoon.

Were there an award for the regulation most laughably out of whack with the moment's national economic priorities, the winner would be the Regional Haze Rule, often called the Visibility Rule. Resurrected from rulemaking purgatory in 2009, after the financial crisis, it requires that visibility in "national airsheds" such as national parks, wildernesses, and certain Indian reservations be improved on bad days and not deteriorate on the days with the greatest visibility.

Why is there a visibility rule in the first place? As the EPA's website explains, the rule was necessary because "visual range has decreased from 140 miles to 35–90 miles" in the West, meaning that "many visitors aren't able to see the spectacular vistas they expect." This is pretty rich to those living in the West, whose "spectacular vistas" are more likely to be obstructed by wildfires of natural origin than by man's emissions. Does a norm that the EPA has proclaimed cease to be meaningful if Mother Nature routinely negates it?

The rule neatly demarcates what's important to the EPA, with "spectacular vistas" on one side and, on the other, the usual culprit: manufacturing and power plants, in this case those that emit particulate matter that blows willy-nilly into parklands. On balance, one would think—one would *hope*—this would be a clear victory for what is called in EPA parlance "the emitter." But don't hold your breath. Rather than treating matters like this as a balancing act of environment versus economy, the rote assertion of green-jobs ideology has become that the environment *is* the economy. That a generator or engine or boiler will always be to some degree at odds with nature seems a concept lost on this administration. The EPA is scheduled to take action this or next year to force recalcitrant states into compliance with the Visibility Rule.

An even more harmful rule that is ripe for revision and delay is the mercury regulation effected by the Utility Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT) standards. This, at least, is a rule intended to mitigate a real pollutant, and is in part being implemented by federal court order. But the Utility MACT is overzealous. Modern coal-burning technology produces a small amount of mercury. If you filled up the Astrodome with 30 billion ping-pong balls, representing the parts emitted when low-sulfur subbituminous coal is burned, and painted black those balls that represented mercury, then you would have only 27 black balls. Many states have already adopted stringent controls, so that, at Montana's large Colstrip facility, which hosts four power plants that supply the northwestern United States, you would have only three black ping-pong balls. Put in a more scientific way, the cleaner varieties of coal produce less than one pound of mercury for every trillion BTUs. At this rate of occurrence, it is difficult even to measure mercury emissions—let alone control them. Yet the EPA says it will finalize the rule by the middle of December.

The EPA is also steaming ahead with the Coal Combustion Residuals rule, another pillar of the agency's regulatory overkill. This rule has been written and awaiting the EPA go-ahead for a year. It threatens to treat the ash produced when coal is burned as a hazardous material that may be deposited only in certified hazmat landfills. Coal ash does not meet any existing EPA definition of a hazardous material, and hazmat landfills are in short supply (and in some coal-burning states, such as Montana, they are nonexistent). Coal plants produce a lot of ash—10 million tons of coal produce 1 million tons of ash when burned. If ash is to be treated as a hazardous waste on par with battery acid, there is simply no way coal plants, which still account for half of America's electrical generation, can remain online. The rule was issued this spring, but Obama, if he chose to, could save ratepayers billions by withholding final approval.

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The Visibility, the Utility MACT, the Coal Combustion Residuals, and other rules in the EPA's regulatory bouquet are ostensibly about public health, but their coalescence at this particular moment is enough to inspire justified suspicion that, really, they are a subterfuge to take coal-fired generators offline or, at least, make it much more expensive to use coal to produce electricity. Indeed, Steven Chu, before he became energy secretary, declared that "coal is my worst nightmare."

Greens have long been annoyed that coal and coal-fired electricity are so cheap, and that renewable forms of energy are so



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expensive. Renewables already are made artificially cheaper through mandates to buy green energy such as the Renewable Portfolio Standards, which 29 states have adopted, as well as direct subsidies such as the federal Production Tax Credit for Renewable Energy, which pays producers $22 per megawatt-hour of green energy (regardless of whether it is delivered at a peak-demand time on a hot summer afternoon, or in the dead of night).

Even with the mandates and subsidies, renewables in many places are not competitive. So has come a push to make conventional forms of generation more expensive. Greens have long argued that coal-generated electricity would not be cheap if only all of the negative externalities were reflected in the price the end-user pays for electricity or manufactured products. That's a difficult thing to bring about, of course, because when you push up prices of electricity, a particular energy-using process merely will migrate to locales where externalities are still external and energy is cheaper. These rules certainly will certainly abet that trend.

The fate of the rules is unclear. There is reason to believe some will be delayed, or never implemented, because of fierce political opposition in swing states such as Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania, home to large coal fleets. But more than being a sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of utilities with existing coal plants, the rules are an embodiment of regulatory uncertainty, rightly a watchword of our ailing economy. The mere threat of the rules has rendered nearly impossible the construction of new coal plants in the United States. Ironically, this keeps older and dirtier coal plants online and suspends many investments. Society is kept in limbo, courtesy of the EPA.

If the EPA is going to kill off the industry, then it ought to dispense with the tortuous waiting game and just get it over with. The status quo is the worst of both worlds. Industry is paralyzed and, meanwhile, plans for what to do with the clean, low-sulfur coal deposits of the Powder River Basin, America's most promising coal play, now revolve around exports to China, a nation every bit as determined as our EPA is ambivalent. In effect, the EPA is not lessening pollution in the world; it is merely exporting it, and our economy along with it. **NR**

Three Winners

The Nobel peace committee divides its 2011 prize wisely

BY JAY NORDLINGER

The Oslo Freedom Forum is an annual human-rights conference, held in the Norwegian capital. There are always brave and admirable people among the speakers. One such at the conference last May was Leymah Gbowee of Liberia. And she was surely the most colorful: colorful in her dress and colorful in her presentation. She joked about her pleasantly plump figure. And she had a serious message to impart: "The road to freedom is long. The cost of freedom is high. The fight for freedom is not for the fainthearted or the pessimistic."

On October 7 came big news out of Oslo: The Norwegian Nobel Committee announced that Gbowee would receive the 2011 peace prize. She would receive it along with two other women: another Liberian, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who is in fact president of the country; and a Yemeni, Tawakkul Karman. The women, said the committee, were winning the prize "for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work." The ceremony will take place on December 10, as it does every year: On that day in 1896, the man who willed the prizes, Alfred Nobel, passed away.

In that will, he says that a "person" shall win one of his prizes, not "persons." But the statutes of the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm say that up to three people may share a prize. Only once prior to this year was the peace prize divided between three people. (The Nobel prizes are now 110 years old.) That was in 1994, when Yasser Arafat won along with two Israeli statesmen: the prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and the foreign minister, Shimon Peres. The Norwegian Nobel Committee was honoring them for a process begun in, and named for, the committee's own city, Oslo. Never mind that Arafat and his PLO would quickly shoot this process to hell.

More than a few say, "When they gave the Nobel peace prize to Arafat, that's when I gave up on the prize." But one might remember that the two Israeli statesmen were happy, or at least willing, to appear with Arafat in Oslo. And one of them, Peres, went out of his way to say, in his Nobel lecture, that Arafat's share in the prize was "fitting."

Until this year, twelve women had won the peace prize. The first was Baroness Bertha von Suttner in 1905. She was a veteran peace campaigner, a novelist, and a friend of the testator. Other women to win include Jane Addams (1931) and Mother Teresa (1979). In one fell swoop, the committee boosted the total of women to 15. In its announcement, the committee said, "We cannot achieve democracy and lasting peace in the world unless women obtain the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society."

Leymah Gbowee and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf have done their best in Liberia—a country whose recent history is not for the squeamish. On the night of April 12, 1980, Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe entered the bedroom of Pres. William R. Tolbert with 17 other soldiers, and bayoneted the man to death. Doe met his own end on the night of Sept. 9, 1990. The president, as he had become, was tortured to death by Prince Johnson and his crew. Johnson drank Budweiser as the crew cut off both of Doe's ears, forcing the president to eat one.

The two civil wars were no nicer. The first lasted from 1989 to 1996, and the second from 1999 to 2003. These wars were so savage, so depraved, so annihilative, they defy human description. They featured child soldiers, who were drugged up; the hacking of limbs; and rape after rape after rape. Any female from childhood to old age who escaped rape was lucky. There was a total breakdown of civilization and moral order.

Gbowee, who was 17 when the wars started and 31 when they ended, decided to do something about it. Fed up, desperate, and fearless, she organized other women in a peace movement: a "mass-action campaign," as they called it. In every way they knew, they pressured the

Mr. Nordlinger is an NR *senior editor. He has a book coming out from Encounter in March:* Peace, They Say: A History of the Nobel Peace Prize, the Most Famous and Controversial Prize in the World.

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combatants to stop fighting. They wreaked "peaceful feminine havoc" on them, to quote Gbowee. The women's story is told in a 2008 documentary, *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*.

In 2005, Johnson Sirleaf was elected president: becoming the first democratically elected female head of state in all of Africa. Gbowee called this "the icing on the cake"—the icing on the cake of the peace movement and the wars' end. America's first lady and secretary of state, Laura Bush and Condoleezza Rice, attended the inauguration. George W. Bush gave Johnson Sirleaf the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2007.

Born in 1938, she was the daughter of a pioneering politician in Liberia. In her years as president, she has restored a semblance of civilization to the country, although Liberia's problems are still horrendous. Rape is still a constant. And corruption in government is terrific, clean as Johnson Sirleaf may be personally. Two years ago, I talked to a Liberian official. I asked him whether foreign aid was, on balance, helpful or harmful. He said, "Do you know the difference between AID [as in the U.S. Agency for International Development] and AIDS?" I said no. He said, "The letter S."

Johnson Sirleaf pledged to serve only one term but, in the manner of politicians everywhere, changed her mind: She was reelected last month, shortly after her Nobel prize was announced. Her campaign slogan was, "Monkey still working, let baboon wait small." What it meant was, "The president needs more time to accomplish her mission; the opposition can just cool it for a while." Running for reelection in 1864, Abraham Lincoln had a similar slogan: "Don't change horses in midstream."

About the Yemeni laureate, the Nobel committee said, "In the most trying circumstances, both before and during the 'Arab spring,' Tawakkul Karman has played a leading part in the struggle for women's rights and for democracy and peace in Yemen." Karman, age 32, happens to be the youngest-ever winner of the Nobel peace prize. At one time, Martin Luther King was the youngest winner: He was 35 in 1964. Karman cites him as her number-one model.

Like Johnson Sirleaf, she is the daughter of a prominent politician. It stands to reason that women who rise in Third World countries (as we used to call them) should be the daughters of leading political men. They have familiarity with politics, and they have self-confidence. One thinks of Indira Gandhi in India. If she had sprung from a farmer's family, would anyone have heard of her? Instead, she was the only child of a founder of the modern state. Essentially the same can be said of Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma—who won the Nobel peace prize for 1991.



Leymah Gbowee, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Tawakkul Karman

Karman has been agitating for freedom and democracy in Yemen since at least 2005. In that year, she started a group called Women Journalists Without Chains. Last January, inspired by the uprising in Tunisia, she led a similar uprising in her own country. The government detained her for a day and a half. The dictator warned her brother that, if she kept it up, she would be killed. She kept it up, and has survived. On the day the Nobel prize was announced, she said, "This is a victory for Arabs around the world. And it will end the dictatorship of Ali Abdullah Saleh."

After 33 years—more than Karman is old—Saleh has promised to leave power at the end of this month. Is the Nobel peace prize responsible? Surely not, but neither could it have hurt. Sometimes the prize makes a difference, sometimes it doesn't. Lech Walesa told me that his Solidarity movement in Poland could never have succeeded without the prize. On the other hand, the prize to Aung San Suu Kyi didn't make a dent in Burma.

How have you been feeling about the Nobel peace prize lately? Personally, I find that I can't quite write it off. I feel the same about the literature prize. For ten straight years, they'll give it to a far-Left hack. (I exaggerate just a little.) Then they'll give it to Bellow, or Naipaul, or Solzhenitsyn—or Vargas Llosa, who won last year. In the space of seven years, 2002 to 2009, the peace committee gave the prize to three American Democrats: Jimmy Carter, Al Gore, and Barack Obama. I think all three prizes are dubious. Besides, Bill Clinton must be miffed, being the only top Democrat uncrowned (so far).

But the 2010 prize was a bold stroke, going to a Chinese prisoner of conscience, Liu Xiaobo. For over 60 years, China's democrats had been waiting for a Nobel, and they finally got one. Cuba's democrats are still waiting—and will probably wait forever. Be that as it may, the Norwegian Nobel Committee did very well in 2010, and they did well again this year.

About the three laureates to be crowned, or bemedaled, on December 10, you can raise a number of questions. For example, President Johnson Sirleaf has made many compromises, as she has tried to keep her tribalistic and explosive country together. Last month, she was campaigning with Prince Johnson, once just another torturing warlord, now a senator. Gbowee points out that, in Liberia, every villain is a hero in some community. As for Tawakkul Karman, she belongs to an Islamist party—and yet she is a liberal, certainly in the Arab context. She maintains that "things like extremism and terrorism, which have grown under dictatorship, will fade away in a free Yemen."

Almost never are Nobel peace laureates saints (an exception being Mother Teresa). They are human beings, working in messy human situations. Each of the 2011 laureates has stuck her neck out. Each has risked a great deal for the betterment of her country and her fellow man. Furthermore, we in the West should remember that, while female empowerment is old hat here, it is new hat, or no hat at all, in many of the world's places. So, for the 2011 Nobel peace prize, hats off. **NR**

GBOWEE: BROWN/AFP/GETTY JOHNSON SIRLEAF: SANOGO/AFP/GETTY KARMAN: PANORAMIC/ZUMA



Repo Men

Beware Wall Street efforts to reoccupy the Republican party

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

If you're making money on the Wall Street scale—which is nothing like your boring, middle-management in the Fortune 500, Hamptons-and-Mercedes, barely–a–1 percenter type money—then you can buy basically anything. When real-estate investor Robert Rosania put part of his storied champagne collection up for sale in 2008, the auction was predicted to fetch $5 million—couch-cushion change to Rosania, who had not yet reached his 40th birthday, making him a good deal younger than many of the vintages in his cellar. (Known in the wine world as Big Boy, he brandishes a special saber designed for decapitating head-clutchingly expensive bottles of champagne. Bespoke vintage-champagne cutlery: *That's* how you know you're rich.) Not far from Zuccotti Park, where Occupy Wall Street was fragrantly encamped, I noticed a young man wandering into a store to buy a pack of cigarettes on a bright Saturday morning, wearing blue jeans, a T-shirt, and a $237,000 Vacheron-Constantin watch. In a world of $600,000 cars (consult your local Maybach dealer) and $4,300-a-night whores (consult Eliot Spitzer), it's no big deal to buy a president, which is precisely what Wall Street did in 2008 when, led by investment giant Goldman Sachs, it closed the deal on Barack Obama.

For a few measly millions, Wall Street not only bought itself a president, but got the start-up firm of B. H. Obama & Co. LLC to throw a cabinet into the deal, too—on remarkably generous terms. President Obama, for a guy prone to delivering prim and smug little homilies denouncing *greed, greed, greed*—the only of the seven deadly sins that truly offends Democrats (though Mrs. Obama has done some desultory work on gluttony)—is strangely comfortable among the Gordon Gekkos of this world. Shall we have a partial roll call? Beat the drum slowly and call out the names: With unemployment still topping 9 percent, the catastatic world economy teetering on the brink of another, even larger financial catastrophe, and trillion-dollar U.S. deficits as far as the green-shaded eye can see, let's hear it for Obama's first National Economic Council director, Lawrence Summers (of hedge-fund giant D. E. Shaw and venture-capital firm Andreessen Horowitz), who has had some nice paydays courtesy of Lehman Bros., JPMorgan Chase, and Citigroup. Let's hear it for Citigroup's Michael Froman, deputy assistant to the president and deputy national-security adviser for international economic affairs, for Hartford Financial's Neal Wolin, deputy Treasury secretary, for JPMorgan's William Daley, Obama's chief of staff, and for his predecessor, Rahm Emanuel of Wasserstein Perella. Let's hear it for Fannie Mae's Tom Donilon, national-security adviser. (No, seriously: One of the luminous interstellar geniuses who brought Fannie Mae to its current aphotic state of affairs, upside down to the tune of trillions of dollars, is running *national security*, and the former director of the White House Military Office, Louis Caldera, was on the board of IndyMac when it finally went toes up—sleep tight, America!) And, lest we forget, let's have three big, sloppy cheers for economic-transition team leaders Robert Rubin (Goldman Sachs, Citigroup) and folksy tax enthusiast/ghoulish billionaire vulture Warren Buffett.

That's a pretty fantastic lineup, from Wall Street's point of view, but the real bonus turned out to be Treasury secretary Tim Geithner, who came up through the ranks as part of the bipartisan Robert Rubin–Hank Paulson–Citigroup–Goldman Sachs cabal. Geithner, a government-and-academe man from way back, never really worked on Wall Street, though he once was offered a gig as CEO of Citigroup, which apparently thought he did an outstanding job as chairman of the New York Fed, where one of his main tasks was regulating Citigroup—until it collapsed into the yawning suckhole of its own cavernous ineptitude, at which point Geithner's main job became shoveling tens of billions of federal dollars into Citigroup,

ROMAN GENN

in an ingeniously structured investment that allowed the government to buy a 27 percent share in the bank, for which it paid *more than the entire market value of the bank*. If you can't figure out why you'd pay 100-plus percent of a bank's value for 27 percent of it, then you just don't understand high finance or high politics.

But high finance is not the only corporate mystery to be unraveled here: President Obama's repetitious denunciations of Big Oil have not stopped his man David Axelrod's firm from setting up Astroturf campaigns on behalf of Exelon subsidiary ComEd, or stopped the president from appointing GE chief executive/tax-minimization engineer/offshoring guru/bailout baby Jeff Immelt to his risible White House jobs commission, or choosing former Kraft and Duke Energy board member Mary Schapiro to run the SEC.

When President Obama opined during his 2011 State of the Union speech that a corporate tax-rate cut might be just the thing for America after a year of record corporate profits, his left-wing base was shocked and dismayed. Heck, some conservatives were caught offguard, too. Perhaps they hadn't noticed who was running the Obama administration: In large part, the same guys who plan to be running the next Republican administration.

Barack Obama (Nasdaq: BHO) has been a pretty good buy for Goldman Sachs et al. Sure, the Frank-Dodd financial-reform bill is going to be a sharp pain in Wall Street's pinstriped posterior, and it's going to cost some moneymen some money, but not enough that anybody's going to be out a champagne saber. Mostly, Big Business has got just what it wanted from the Big Government guys in the Obama administration: Frank-Dodd did not do much of anything to lift the cloud of opacity over the world of structured finance, which is what the investment bankers feared most. President Obama has made some noises about ending the carried-interest treatment that allows the fine fellows who run private-equity funds to pay 15 percent in taxes on their gazillion-dollar take-homes instead of 35 percent, but the private-equity guys know that isn't going to happen, mostly because they've heard this story before, from Senator Schumer, and they recognize it for what it is: an inelegant appeal for campaign donations. Beyond Wall Street proper, your Fortune 500 types are looking at the many-splendored tax credits and subsidies and grants and stimulus dollars lavished upon firms such as the now-defunct Solyndra and the really-should-have-been-defunct General Electric and wondering: How do I get me some of that?

What's worse is that much of official Washington is looking at Wall Street and asking the same question. The answer: *Easy*. If Wall Street has done pretty well by investing in Washington, the more despair-inducingly germane fact is that Washington has done pretty well by investing in Wall Street. A catalogue of recent congressional insider-trading, self-dealing, IPO shenanigans, and inexplicably good investment luck would fill an entire volume, and in fact it has: The book has the Tea Party–bait title *Throw Them All Out: How Politicians and Their Friends Get Rich Off Insider Stock Tips, Land Deals, and Cronyism That Would Send the Rest of Us to Prison*, by Peter Schweizer of the Hoover Institution. That's a lot of title for a fairly slim book (176 pages of reportage, plus end notes), but, despite its relatively slender dimensions, it cost me an entire night's sleep: I spent half the night reading it in a single sitting and the other half having nightmares about it. It's the most offensive and disturbing thing I've read since sampling the oeuvre of the Marquis de Sade as an undergraduate.

Some of the highlights: Nancy Pelosi and her husband were parties to a dozen or so IPOs, many of which were effectively off limits to all but the biggest institutional investors and their favored clients. One of those was a 2008 investment of between $1 million and $5 million in Visa, an opportunity the average investor could not have bought, begged, or borrowed his way into—one that made the Pelosis a 50 percent profit in two days. Visa, of course, had business before Speaker Pelosi, who was helping to shape credit-card-reform legislation at the time. Visa got what it wanted. The Pelosis have also made some very fortunate investments in gas and energy firms that have benefited from Representative Pelosi's legislative actions.

The Pelosis made a million bucks off a single deal involving OnDisplay, the IPO of which was underwritten by investment banker William Hambrecht, a major Pelosi campaign contributor. Writes Schweizer: "The same Bill Hambrecht went before the House Finance Committee, chaired by Barney Frank, a Pelosi ally, to push for a change in the registration process for stock IPOs, an exemption called Regulation A. Under current law, a company that plans an IPO of less than $5 million in stock gets an exemption from detailed reporting. Hambrecht wanted the exemption raised to $30 million, which would greatly benefit his business, making IPOs easier, quicker, and far less expensive. As the hearings began, Congressman Frank said, 'I should note also that it was Speaker Pelosi who first called this to our attention earlier in the year. It is something that the speaker has taken a great interest in.'"

Besting Nancy Pelosi, Rep. Gary Ackerman (D., N.Y.) got in on the *pre*-IPO action, without putting up so much as one rapidly depreciating U.S. dollar of his own assets, when a political supporter—who just happened to be the biggest shareholder of the firm in question—lent him $14,000 to buy shares in the private company, which he then sold for more than a hundred grand after the firm went public. There wasn't so much as a written loan agreement.

On and on and on it goes: Sen. John Kerry invested aggressively in health-care companies while shaping health-care legislation. Rep. Spencer Bachus (R. Ala.) was a remarkably apt options trader during the days when he had a front-row seat to Congress's deliberations on the unfolding financial crisis. The Obama administration poured billions of dollars into solar companies, of which the failed Solyndra is the most infamous. But a lot of that money went to other firms, including First Solar, which is owned by billionaire Obama supporter Ted Turner and by Goldman Sachs. Goldman Sachs is omnipresent. And during the financial crisis, a big piece of Goldman Sachs was bought by Warren Buffett, who stacked up a lot of cash when the government poured money into that struggling investment bank with the support of Barack Obama. When the federal government bought into Goldman Sachs, it negotiated for itself a 5 percent dividend. Warren Buffett got 10 percent—on top of the benefit of having Washington inundate his investment with great rippling streams of taxpayers' money. Republicans are no saints, either, but Democrats were running the congressional show during such crucial episodes as the implementation of the bailouts and the health-care debate—which were big investment opportunities for political insiders with access to market-moving information. Congress has effectively exempted itself from insider-trading rules, not that the SEC would have the guts to go after a Senator Schumer or a Speaker Pelosi for these exploits. And that—not campaign contributions, not lobbying—is the really stinky petri dish of festering corruption at the nexus of Washington and Wall Street. You want a case for limited govern-

ment? That's it. And Wall Street is on the wrong side of the argument, which is one reason free-market conservatives should not romanticize the lords of finance.

Say this for them, though: Gordon Gekko at least was an honest social Darwinist. He made a lot of money and declared that "greed is good." Michelle Obama (2007 household income: $4,238,165) made a whole lot of money and then lectured a bunch of blue-collar women in Zanesville, Ohio (median household income: $28,854) that they had a moral obligation to forgo high-paying jobs in "corporate America" (which, notice, is not exactly HQ'd in Zanesville, Ohio, poverty rate: 26.3 percent) in order to "work for the community." Like Gordon Gekko, she's a carnivorous competitor at the top of the socioeconomic food chain, but she's telling us to eat our veggies, like good little herbivores.

Wall Street can do math, and the math looks like this: Wall Street + Washington = Wild Profitability. Free enterprise? Entrepreneurship? Starting a business making and selling stuff behind some grimy little storefront? You'd have to be a fool. Better to invest in political favors. As Schweizer points out, until fairly recently the Blackstone Group, the world's largest private-equity manager, had spent only about $250,000 a year on lobbying, which to me sounds like one part-time K-Streeter and a lot of lunches. After a friendly encounter with Senator Schumer, the firm saw the scales fall from its eyes and began to spend millions of dollars a year on lobbying—and hired Senator Schumer's former staff counsel, along with dozens of other Democratic staffers, to do its lobbying. (Senate Republicans will get their chance, don't you worry, as soon as they're back in the majority.) You'd think that the Blackstone Group, along with the rest of Wall Street, would be happy with its investment. But the pinstripes gang is suffering from a collective case of buyers' remorse: Sure, the insurance guys got the keys handed to them with Obamacare, and the structured-finance guys still are sitting securely behind their fortifications of impenetrable complexity and staggering leverage, and the investment banks got to underwrite a lot of "Build America Bonds" and nonsensical stimulus financing. But they want more—that is their nature. And they're sizing up a cozy little investment in Mitt Romney, a fact that should give Republicans pause.

Blackstone's boss, Stephen Schwarzman, will hold a fundraiser for Romney at his Park Avenue apartment in December, and he's encouraging his fellow pirate captains to climb aboard the USS *Willard*. Romney is himself a Wall Street guy, hailing from a firm with the cartoonishly villainous name of Bain (say it out loud) Capital. Bain, charmingly, is not really backing its founding partner or his party, its donors thus far preferring to channel most of their political contributions to President Obama. But Bain, currently the No. 2 political donor bloc among moneymen, is a tiny minority among the major financial-sector political players in that it is currently leaning Democrat. The top dog—Goldman Sachs, as though you needed to be told—is backing Republicans by a wide margin at the moment. So is practically every other major Wall Street player: Donors associated with Bank of America, Paulson & Co., the American Bankers Association, New York Life, the National Association of Realtors, JPMorgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, Credit Suisse, UBS—all are going Republican. At this point in the cycle, only Citigroup's donors have joined Bain in staying Democratic—and, really, how could you blame them, given the sweet deal that Tim Geithner laid in their lap? Romney's ten biggest donor blocs include Goldman Sachs (his biggest—No. 1, as always), Credit Suisse, Morgan Stanley, Barclays, Bank of America, and JPMorgan Chase. Bain's thrown a little goodwill money his way, too.

So, what does Wall Street want?

Here's what Wall Street doesn't want: It doesn't want to hear from Sarah Palin or Michele Bachmann or even Newt Gingrich, or suffer any sort of tea-party populism. It wants you rubes to shut up about Jesus and please pay your mortgages. It doesn't want to hear from such traditional Republican constituencies as Christian conservatives, moral traditionalists, pro-lifers, or friends of the Second Amendment. It doesn't even want to hear much from the Chamber of Commerce crowd, because those guys are used-car dealers and grocery stores and for the most part strictly from hick, so far as Wall Street is concerned. Wall Street wants an administration and a Congress—and a country—that believes what is good for Wall Street is good for America, whether that is true or isn't. Wall Street doesn't want free markets—it wants friends, favors, and fealty.

Also, the princes of finance don't want to be hearing the name "Jon Corzine," king of the Wall Street Democrats, former senator from and governor of New Jersey, legendary former CEO of Goldman Sachs, echoing throughout the corridors of power too much in the near future. The too-big-to-fail banks want Corzine crucified, but they want him crucified quietly, because they are looking to wring a little cash and preferential treatment out of his richly deserved crucifixion. And that may be the real reason the Wall Street gang is giving Republicans a second look.

Take a little trip down Bad Memory Lane back to 2008 and the ignominious death of Lehman Bros. A particular Lehman maneuver, infamous in the financial world as "Repo 105," is worth taking a look at. (Warning: Very light and totally digestible financial gobbledygook ahead.) "Repo" is short for "repurchase agreement." A repurchase agreement is something that is used when a big institution that has a lot of assets, like an investment bank, needs some cash, as all such big institutions do from time to time, to run its daily operations while waiting for various deals to mature and unwind. Investment banks don't usually sit on a lot of cash, because cash just sits there. A repo works like this: I give you a whole bunch of securities and you give me a whole bunch of cash, on the condition that I agree to buy back those securities from you in the near future, along with a fee. You get a little profit and I get the liquid cash I need and, if I'm a gold-plated Wall Street name, like Lehman Bros. once was, you probably don't worry all that much about the securities I'm giving you to hold, since you expect me to be able to repay that short-term loan. If the Mister Magoos at Standard & Poor's or Moody's say it's Triple-A, that's good enough for you. Unless the day comes when you actually have to sell them because I can't pay you back.

Repos are a really good and totally legitimate tool for raising short-term cash. But Lehman noticed something interesting about the way repos are regulated: If the ratio of the value of the securities lent out to the cash received is anywhere between 98 cents and 102 cents on the dollar, then it goes on the books as a *loan*. But if the ratio is, say, 105 cents on the dollar, then the deal is booked as a *sale*—even though the lender is getting his money back and the borrower is getting his securities back. If the deal is booked as a sale, then you can, if you can find a willing counterparty, get a

whole bunch of bad assets off your books and a whole bunch of cash onto them, which makes your firm look like it's in a lot better shape than it is—bonus time! That is true even though there is a repurchase agreement in place, meaning that the deal is going to get reversed and unwound at some point.

You'd think that after the Lehman debacle, all that would have changed. In fact, you'd think that would be practically *the first thing to be changed*—not credit-card swipe fees or executive-compensation rules or any of the rest of it. But it wasn't. Corzine's firm, MF Global, used something called "repo to maturity"—basically Repo 105 with a facelift—to accomplish the same goal: making the books look better by hiding bad assets, in this case a bunch of losing investments in European government bonds. The bigger problem is that while MF Global was both acting as a broker for its customers and making its own bets, it failed to keep the customers' money segregated from its own, which is why some $600 million in customers' money went missing. Now there's a whole bunch of people wanting to get paid back and not enough money for everybody to get made whole, and the big Wall Street banks want to make sure that they're first in line, with the government rewriting the rules of bankruptcy to put them ahead of the local-yokel customers out in the sticks. If you don't think that the government can just arbitrarily rewrite the bankruptcy rules to suit its political preferences, revisit the General Motors bailout, when it did just that, shortchanging bondholders in favor of the union goons who act as Democratic footsoldiers and dues-collectors.

"At the risk of oversimplifying it," one Wall Street insider explains, "imagine a bank went bankrupt. Then the regulators came in and cracked open all the customers' safe-deposit boxes, even though they knew for certain that none of the contents belonged to the bank. Then they tossed those assets into the pile for the creditors to pick through and told the box holders to get in line as well. That's what folks are saying is happening here. And in a situation like that, who wants a safe-deposit box?"

So there you have it: hedge-fund titans, i-bankers, congressional nabobs, committee chairmen, senators, swindlers, run-of-the-mill politicos, and a few outright thieves (these categories are not necessarily exclusive) all feeding at the same trough, and most of them betting that Mitt Romney won't do anything more to stop it than Barack Obama did. If anything, the fact that Romney is having the least luck with the firm that knows him best speaks better of him than does the enthusiasm he apparently inspires in Goldman Sachs et al.

Either way, the last thing Wall Street wants is for the Corzine scandal to launch a new round of frenzied outrage out there on the fruited plains where dwell people who don't know an IPO from a CDS, and who might suspect that something here is not entirely on the up-and-up. They're hoping that conservatives can be buffaloed with a bit of cheap free-market rhetoric into not noticing that something is excruciatingly amiss here. They are the repo men, headpiece filled with subprime-mortgage derivatives, and they are looking to repossess the Republican party they abandoned in 2008 (see "Losing Gordon Gekko," National Review, March 9, 2009). Free-market, limited-government conservatives should be none too eager to welcome them back, nor should we let our natural sympathy with the profit motive blind us to the fact that a great many of them do not belong in the conservative movement, and that more than a few of them belong in prison. **NR**

Romney's THE ONE

Why the former Massachusetts governor deserves the GOP nomination

BY RAMESH PONNURU

Even though nobody has yet cast a vote in the primaries, Republicans are increasingly resigned to Gov. Mitt Romney's winning the party's presidential nomination. Every week he gets a few more endorsements from Republican officeholders. He has never had a commanding lead in the polls, but one by one the other candidates who have occupied the top tier with him—first Rep. Michele Bachmann, then Gov. Rick Perry, then Herman Cain—have fallen back out of it. The current surge for Newt Gingrich looks like one last fling before Republicans settle down with Romney.

Republicans should not be gloomy about this prospect. Romney isn't merely the candidate who is likely to win the Republican primaries. He's the candidate who should win them. That's why he's likely to win.

We all know the knocks on Romney. His health-care plan in Massachusetts was Obamacare in one state. He's a flip-flopper. Inauthentic. His conservative detractors say he's the establishment/moderate candidate—or worse. (Actual Thanksgiving conversation in the Ponnuru home: Conservative brother-in-law: "So, which of these characters are you supporting?" Me: "I think Romney's the best of the bunch." Him: "I didn't know you were a Democrat.")

It's true that Romney took a sharp right turn when he moved from state to national politics. But it's also true that in 2008 he was the candidate behind whom Rush Limbaugh and Mark Levin, among other conservative notables, said that the conservative movement should rally in order to stop John McCain from getting the nomination. He has not moved left since that time. His positions on policy questions are almost all the same as they were then. On a few issues he has moved right: He now favors a market-oriented reform to Medicare, for example.

If Romney was to McCain's right then, he is still. He's to George W. Bush's right, too. Bush never came out for the Medicare reform Romney has endorsed. Bush never said that *Roe v. Wade* should be overturned, either. Romney has. Romney's long list of policy advisers includes people who are, within their fields, roughly in sync with the politics of the Bush administration or to its right; almost nobody is significantly to its left.

If Mitt Romney becomes president, he will almost certainly be dealing with John Boehner as speaker of the House and Mitch McConnell as Senate majority leader. While they, too, have their conservative detractors, they are the most conservative congressional leaders Republicans have had in modern times, and they will exert a rightward influence on the Romney administration. If they send him legislation to repeal Obamacare, cut taxes, or reform entitlements, he will sign it where Obama would veto it.

If at some other point in his presidency a liberal-run Congress sends him tax increases, he will veto them where Obama would sign. Compared with President Obama, a President Romney would do more to protect the defense budget.

A President Romney's judicial nominees would be superior to President Obama's simply because he would not be trying to stack the bench with liberal activists. But they are likely to far exceed that low bar. Each Republican president since the Nixon-Ford era has nominated a higher percentage of conservatives as justices to the Supreme Court than his predecessor. That's mostly a testament to the growth and development of the conservative legal network. Romney is likely to look for nominees whom conservative lawyers like—Robert Bork is a top adviser—who are professionally accomplished, and who cannot be portrayed as extreme. If Republicans hold the Senate they will almost certainly be confirmed. If they do not, they will probably be confirmed.

Romney's regulatory agencies will be relatively restrained. His appointees to the National Labor Relations Board will not punish Boeing for locating a plant in a right-to-work state. He will act, within the limits of his legal authority, to keep the Environmental Protection Agency from imposing expensive restrictions on carbon emissions. He will reinstate conscience protections for pro-life health-care workers.

It's true that almost any Republican president, not just Romney, would do these things. But that's the point. The Republican party now features a remarkable degree of programmatic consensus. The entire field wants to cut corporate tax rates, convert Medicaid into block grants, and (the asterisk candidacy of Gary Johnson aside) protect unborn human life. Even Jon Huntsman, the candidate positioned farthest left in the field, favors these policies. None of them enjoyed such uniform support in previous primaries, and some of them had none.

When the candidates differ, it is typically on issues that are unlikely to matter during the next presidency. Representative Bachmann may, unlike some of the others, wish to abolish the EPA, but no conceivable Congress within the next eight years will grant her wish.

The narrowness of the candidates' differences on pertinent issues militates in favor of picking the one who can best implement the sensible agenda they largely share. It also reduces conservatives' need to worry about candidates' sincerity. If President Romney were to do an about-face on carbon caps, the right to life, or taxes, he would be going to war with the vast majority of his party. The fact that conservatives do not regard him as the leader of their movement tightens this constraint on him. A Republican president with more capital among conservatives would be able to deplete it.

Romney's public positions and his political interests both suggest he would govern as a conservative, albeit a cautious one. Many conservatives want more than that from a president, more than executive experience and public agreement with them on the issues. They want a president who shares their convictions and instincts, who will actively seek occasions to advance their views, and who will take political risks for them. They are right to want these things, for the most part, and there is no guarantee Romney will deliver them.

On the other hand, there is also something to be said for calculation in a politician. Successful political leaders need to have a realistic sense of what public opinion, and the political system, will bear, a sense cultivated by the habit of calculation. And there is a limit to how much political risk conservatives should want a president allied to them to take. Most of the time conservative activists should be trying to reduce the risks of advancing conservative initiatives rather than to goad elected officials to political recklessness. Conservatives should, that is, point the way for ambitious politicians to advance good ideas that can command the support of a national center-right majority.

Governor Romney's political career may not reflect the ideal balance between conviction and calculation. But a presidential primary offers a choice among imperfect alternatives, not embodied ideals. Weighed against the available alternatives, Romney comes out ahead—way ahead—because he is the only one of the primary candidates with a good shot at achieving a prerequisite for advancing a conservative agenda as president: namely, actually becoming president.

Huntsman is highly unlikely to win the nomination because Republican voters divine in him a disdain for them, and return it. The others, even if they got the nomination, would be almost-certain losers in a general election. They are either too out of sync with the electorate, too personally erratic, or both.

Representative Bachmann says that President Obama is certain to lose reelection, so Republicans should feel free to nominate the candidate of their dreams, without regard to electability. The president certainly looks beatable. But writing him off is unwise. His approval numbers are weak but not disastrous, the Republican party remains unpopular, incumbency almost always carries advantages, and the composition of the electorate is likely to be much more Democratic than it was in 2010. If the bottom drops out of the economy, perhaps as a result of Europe's disorders, then maybe even Gingrich or Perry could win the race. But the stakes are too high for that kind of gamble.

Even if one of them did win the White House, what we have seen of their campaigns suggests that his presidency would be a bumpy ride. In Perry's case, the problem would be an apparent unfamiliarity with national issues that looks good only in comparison with Herman Cain's proud ignorance. Gingrich, meanwhile, is a constant reminder that political leaders can have too much, as well as too little, imagination. His recent proposals on immigration are classic Gingrich: innovative-sounding, accompanied by high-tech gadgetry, and wholly absurd. Local community boards will decide which illegal immigrants to expel! We will be "humane," while denying temporary workers the vote and stripping their children of citizenship!

The last time Gingrich held office, he reached a depth of unpopularity that suggested that the public did not merely disagree with his policies but disliked him as a person. Memories have faded, and his current fans say he is a changed man. But he still has the rhetorical style—by turns incendiary, grandiose, and abrasive—that turned off middle-of-the-road Americans then. (November 16: "Because I am much like Reagan and Margaret Thatcher . . .") And he does not seem to have learned that aspiring presidents should weigh their words carefully. Recall the events that led to his campaign's meltdown this summer, in which he first praised Paul Ryan's plan for entitlements, then condemned it as "right-wing social engineering," and finally apologized to Ryan for the comment.

There is another issue with Gingrich, the broaching of which risks cruelty but cannot be avoided in the cold analysis Repub-

licans have to perform. We don't know whether Gingrich's marital history will weigh heavily on voters, but we know it won't help. The contrast to President Obama's family will tell against him. Gingrich's election would represent several firsts. He would be the first president with multiple ex-wives, and the first president with any ex-wives who speak negatively about him on the record. He would bring with him the first first lady who could be labeled a "home wrecker." President Obama would not have to say a word about any of this for the press to make it an issue.

Governor Romney has his weaknesses as a candidate, too. In the past only high-income voters have demonstrated a natural affinity for him. His flip-flops are well documented. He won't be able to take full advantage of the unpopularity of Obamacare. A significant number of voters will hold his Mormonism against him, although Republican voters in recent surveys seem likely to look past this misgiving in the interest of retiring Obama and most Democrats who oppose Mormon candidates won't be available to any Republican nominee. But he is also reasonable, articulate—phenomenally articulate, by the standards of recent Republican presidential candidates—and reassuring. Democrats will try to make him into a scary figure, but they will have less to work with than if Republicans nominated Bachmann, Cain, Gingrich, Perry, or Rick Santorum. He has improved as a campaigner, and now usually projects an air of command that eluded him in the last presidential race.

To Romney's conservative critics, this assessment is all wrong. Romney cannot win in November 2012, they say, because conservative voters will lack the motivation to cast ballots for someone so uninspiring and moderate. Thomas Sowell and George Will are among the conservative heavyweights who have made this case recently, with Sowell noting pointedly that the conservative Reagan won two presidential elections where moderates such as Bob Dole and John McCain have lost them.

Yet George W. Bush won two elections, albeit close ones, with positions to Romney's left and rhetoric that attempted to distance him from the bulk of conservatives. (He was the compassionate one, you may recall.) The truth is that Republicans have never lost a presidential election because an otherwise viable nominee could not get conservatives to vote. The exit polls from the 2008 election show that the race was lost in the center of the electorate. If Romney is anywhere near Obama in the polls in October 2012, conservative voters will show up to help him. To win, though, he will also need some votes from people who voted for Obama in 2008—and he has a much better chance of getting them than his rivals do.

So far the Republican primaries have been a testament to the common sense of the party rank-and-file. As candidates and near-candidates have enjoyed their bursts of publicity, Republican voters have greeted them one by one with an open mind and high hopes, only to reject them as their flaws became apparent. Sarah Palin, Donald Trump, Bachmann, Perry, and Cain have all gone through this process. In reacting this way, Republican voters have disproven the caricatures that liberals and too many conservatives have indulged: that they care only about attitude and volume, not knowledge or judgment.

The right thing for Republican voters to do now is to make Romney undergo the rigors of a competitive primary and then grant him the nomination. My bet is that's exactly what they're going to do. **NR**

Buckeye for Promotion

A 34-year-old GOP star eyes an Ohio Senate seat

BY JOHN J. MILLER

When Josh Mandel showed up at a College Republican phone bank in Independence, Ohio, he looked like he could sit down behind a fold-up table and join about a dozen students who had been making calls all afternoon. Yet the purpose of his visit on November 6 wasn't to enter their ranks. Instead, he meant to rally these GOP troops two days before a statewide election. So he stood before them, ramrod straight, and gave a short speech on why hard work pays off in politics. As Mandel finished, Gary Joseph Wilson, a law student at Case Western, raised his hand. "How old are you?" he asked. Mandel turned the question around: "How old do you think I am?" Wilson thought about it for a second. "Twenty-four?" he guessed.

Wilson was wrong by a decade. Mandel is 34—and as state treasurer, he is one of Ohio's senior Republican officeholders. He just doesn't look it. About an hour earlier, as he canvassed a neighborhood in the Cleveland suburb of Rocky River, he introduced himself to Crista Moeller as she watched kids run around her backyard. "Do you get carded all the time?" she asked, with a smile. Mandel, experienced at this kind of banter, gave one of his stock replies: "By the time I'm 35, I hope to be shaving."

He also hopes to be a U.S. senator. Mandel is running against first-term Democrat Sherrod Brown in what promises to be one of the most watched Senate races of 2012—a contest that may determine which party controls the chamber. Democrats currently hold a 53–47 advantage, but they must defend more than twice as many seats as Republicans at a time when voters probably will be in the mood to pink-slip a few incumbents. The GOP expects to win in North Dakota, where a Democrat is retiring, and to make strong bids in Florida, Nebraska, and Virginia. But Republicans also will have to play defense in Massachusetts, where Scott Brown is up for reelection. Ohio voters have determined the fates of presidents—they made the difference for George W. Bush in 2004—and their verdict on Mandel vs. Sherrod Brown in 2012 could prove decisive in the Senate.

When Mandel talks about why he's running, he speaks of his campaign as an obligation: "I've never been one to say no to answering the call, whether it was to serve my community as a city councilman, serve my state as a legislator, or serve my country as a Marine." He's going to find himself using this line a lot. Despite his boyish appearance, Mandel has engaged in the manliest of activities: military service. He enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve right out of college. Then came two tours in Iraq, first along the border with Syria in 2004 and three years later as a part of the surge.

Along the way, he went to law school, served as a city councilman in Lyndhurst, and won election to the state legislature. Yet the Marine experience left the deepest impression. Stateside, he performed funeral duty, meeting caskets as they came off planes and

standing guard at wakes. The most memorable part of the job, he says, was notifying the next of kin: Mandel drove the colonel who performed the grim task. "It makes your stomach ache, having to go to a home in a town like Painesville and watch parents open the front door and learn that their son has been killed by a roadside bomb," he says. "It taught me that because we're Americans, we can debate and disagree and have opinions without getting shot, hung, or stoned to death—all because young men have paid the ultimate sacrifice to preserve these freedoms."

Last year, following his election as Ohio's treasurer, he was planning to serve a full four-year term. By the start of 2011, however, conservatives were scrambling for a challenger to take on Brown. Their top choice, Rep. Jim Jordan, had bowed out, citing family concerns. So Mandel began to think it over. In April, he started raising money.

His decision bore all the marks of a young man in a hurry, but Ohio conservatives seem satisfied with the choice. "As soon as I knew Josh was in, I was for him," says Jordan. "He has the energy and the intensity it takes to win." In 2010, Mandel impressed Republican leaders with his fundraising prowess: For the treasurer's race, he raked in more than $4 million, almost three times as much as his Democratic opponent, who was the incumbent. "I've never seen anyone work so hard at it," says an Ohio Republican. "He's so persistent."

Last spring, after Mandel had committed to the Senate race, an adviser to Jim DeMint, the Republican senator from South Carolina, called Mandel and proposed a meeting. Mandel's response stunned him: "Josh was like, 'I'll be there tomorrow.'" And he was, after driving through the night with an aide. They arrived in Washington at dawn and checked in at a hotel so they could shower. A few hours later, Mandel was meeting with DeMint. "When I looked at his résumé—the Marines, city council, and so on—I thought an older guy would walk through the door," says DeMint. "It didn't take me long to decide we need Josh in the Senate. We need his youth and we need his willingness to fight against the culture of spending." DeMint's Senate Conservatives Fund, a political-action committee that helped several conservative insurgents to victory in 2010, made Mandel one of its first endorsements for the 2012 election cycle. The Club for Growth also has gotten behind Mandel.

For Mandel, the hard work began years earlier, at Ohio State, where he was twice elected president of the undergraduate student government—a feat so unusual that it made the front page of the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*'s metro section in 1999: "OSU Student President Wins Election for Rare 2nd Term," said the headline. His campaigns were unorthodox. Mandel rented a King Kong balloon, stuck a banner with his name on it, and inflated the beast to its 30-foot height on the Oval, which is OSU's central gathering area. His most creative tactic involved a student cafeteria. "There were these ethnic buffets in the dorms and right before the election they were planning to have Chinese day," says Mandel. "So we offered to supply the fortune cookies." When students cracked them open and received their fortunes, they read a traditional saying on one side and "Vote Mandel" on the other. His proudest accomplishment at OSU, says Mandel, was getting the school to invite J. C. Watts, the former Republican congressman from Oklahoma, as its commencement speaker in 2000—an event that Mandel missed because he had shipped off to Marine boot camp at Parris Island.



JAY LAPRETE/AP

Josh Mandel

The *Plain Dealer* story that touted Mandel was prescient in identifying a future leader, but its first sentence was laughably mistaken: "Josh Mandel may act like a politician and sound like a politician, but he does not want to become one." By 2003, as a third-year law student at Case Western, Mandel was running for an at-large seat on the city council of Lyndhurst, a Cleveland suburb. "I knocked on every door and told voters that I wanted to roll back their property taxes," he says. Mandel won the election and persuaded the council to pass the cuts. "The other members didn't want to do it," he says. "But at the meeting, hundreds of people turned out. Normally, we got about eight."

In 2006, a Democratic-leaning seat in the state legislature opened up. "I was told I couldn't win," says Mandel, noting that a chunk of the district overlapped with the one represented in Congress by left-wing Democrat Dennis Kucinich. Mandel became a candidate anyway, relying once more on his old-fashioned approach: "I started knocking on doors in February, in the snow and with my nose running." By Election Day, he had rapped on 19,679 doors and had worn out three pairs of shoes—and again he won, even though plenty of other Republicans fell in a rotten year for the GOP. Today, Mandel carries around the third pair of shoes—Aldo brand, faded brown leather, holes in their black soles—and uses them as a prop during his stump speeches.

Mandel served two terms in Columbus, calling for expansion of school choice, elimination of the death tax, and drilling for oil and gas on state lands. These proposals went nowhere, due to the opposition of Democratic governor Ted Strickland. Following the elections of 2010, in which John Kasich beat Strickland and Republicans gained full control of the state legislature, each one has made advances. "Sometimes you're in power and sometimes you're not," says Mandel. "It's important to fight on critical issues even when you know you won't win right away because it makes success possible later on."

Mandel's next big success was his election last year as state treasurer. He collected over 2 million votes—more than any other statewide office seeker, with the exception of Rob Portman, a Republican who won an open Senate seat. Mandel hasn't had much time to develop a record in this post, though his office has maintained Ohio's credit ratings, published the salaries of all state

employees, and cut its own operating costs. He likes to talk about how he canceled plant-watering contracts, saving taxpayers $2,000.

Although Mandel has never lost a political race, he will discover that the 59-year-old Brown presents a tough challenge. Brown won election to the Senate in 2006, forcing out Republican moderate Mike DeWine. It was his third statewide victory, following a pair of wins in the 1980s, when he was Ohio's secretary of state. (He ran for a third term in 1990 and lost.) From 1993 until he became a senator, Brown served in Congress, representing the Cleveland area. Earlier this year, *National Journal* rated Brown as one of ten "most liberal" senators. He voted for Obamacare, but not before expressing disappointment that it didn't go far enough. He also supported stimulus spending and the Environmental Protection Agency's bid to regulate greenhouse gases. "Brown is seasoned and he works really hard," says Greg Lashutka, a former Republican mayor of Columbus and a Mandel supporter. "This will be a close race."

With so much possibly on the line in Ohio, both for the state and for the nation, resources will pour in as groups try to boost turnout and sway independent voters. As an aggressive protectionist—he's the author of a book called *Myths of Free Trade*—Brown is a favorite of Big Labor. Mandel will try to paint his rival as an out-of-touch career politician who was first elected to public office before Mandel was born, but Brown almost certainly will counter by portraying Mandel as too young, inexperienced, and radical.

Up to now, Mandel has proceeded with caution. He has his favorite targets: He wants to repeal Obamacare, cancel the Dodd-Frank financial regulations, and put a leash on the EPA. Yet he won't say how he would have voted on a Brown-sponsored bill to punish China for currency manipulation, even though the Senate approved it in October. Nor will he talk much about entitlements, except to offer that he was against the debt-ceiling increase and favors a balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution. About the budget proposals of Republican congressman Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, he's equally vague: "I like parts of the Ryan plan but disagree with parts as well." Mandel promises to put forth specifics next year. He also refuses to criticize Obama for a hasty withdrawal from Iraq. "It's about time to wind things down over there," he says.

On November 8, Ohio voters sent mixed signals about their possible intentions for 2012. Sixty-one percent rejected Issue 2, a ballot initiative pushed by Governor Kasich that would have limited the collective-bargaining rights of state workers. Yet two-thirds also voted for Issue 3, which seeks to exempt Ohio residents from federal health-care mandates—which may not in fact achieve anything, but nevertheless sends a strong political signal.

The Sunday before the voters went to the polls, when Mandel visited the College Republican call center in Independence, he spoke to volunteers who were focused on passing Issue 3. Two weeks later, he ruminated on their success: "This is the untold story of the 2011 election in Ohio," he said. "Republicans voted overwhelmingly against the government takeover of health care. So did thousands of independents, Democrats, and union members."

For his own race, Mandel will need to stitch together a similar coalition—and persuade a narrow majority of the Buckeye State to vote for a Brownout. **NR**

IRANIAN END GAME

The U.S. must settle for nothing less than checkmate

BY MICHAEL RUBIN

For almost a third of a century, the Islamic Republic of Iran has confounded American presidents. It has taken hostages, conducted terrorism, undermined the Middle East peace process, and worked unrelentingly to become a nuclear power and develop missiles with global reach. Tehran might frustrate American officials, but its tactics and its efforts to bolster its strategic position are both predictable and reflective of Iran's sense of its history and culture, as well as the late Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary ideology and his profound disdain for the United States.

Every president since Jimmy Carter, with the exception of Bill Clinton, has faced Iranian hostage-taking, either in Iran or in Lebanon. Even the reformists with whom Clinton and President Obama have sought to engage unapologetically endorse this practice. Mohammad Khatami, best known for his rhetorical calls for a dialogue of civilizations, penned an article in the hard-line daily *Kayhan* praising the embassy hostage-takers. Upon becoming president, he appointed their spokeswoman, Masoumeh Ebtekar, to be his vice president.

During President Obama's term, Iran has seized and released Roxana Saberi, a former Miss North Dakota working as a freelance reporter, and three naïve American hikers as well. Retired FBI agent Robert Levinson, who disappeared in Iran almost five years ago, is alive; he remains America's longest-kept hostage.

Every president since Jimmy Carter has also faced a terrorist challenge from Iran. Long before a Drug Enforcement Administration informant blew the whistle this year on an Iranian plot to kill the Saudi ambassador in Washington, D.C., the Iranian embassy hired the radical black nationalist Dawud Salahuddin, an American convert to Islam, to kill a Shah-era diplomat in Bethesda, Md. When President Reagan ordered peacekeepers into Lebanon, Tehran responded by ordering an attack on their barracks, killing 241. In 1996 Iranian-trained Saudi terrorists detonated a truck bomb at the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, killing 19 U.S. airmen billeted there. And while critics say George W. Bush exaggerated the Iraq–al-Qaeda link, the *9/11 Commission Report* details considerable Iranian assistance to the militant Sunni group beginning in 1991. In the decade since 9/11, Iran's Quds Force has been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Neither the Islamic Republic's behavior nor its defiance should surprise. While Obama hopes that the Islamic Republic will unclench its fist, Iranian behavior simply reflects the worldview underpinning the regime. The Islamic Republic cannot reform and become a responsible member of the international community,

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because the ideology that defines its revolution places it in perpetual opposition to Western notions of liberal democracy.

The Islamic Revolution is inseparable from Ayatollah Khomeini. Its roots lay in his radical reinterpretation of Islamic jurisprudence. While traditional Shiites dismissed clerical rule as a usurpation of the messiah's role, Khomeini had, since 1970, argued that an ayatollah could act as the deputy on earth of the Mahdi—Shiism's messianic figure.

Many American diplomats welcomed Khomeini's Feb. 1, 1979, return to Iran. As national-security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski explained in his memoirs, "The lower echelons at State, notably the head of the Iran Desk . . . were motivated by doctrinal dislike of the Shah and simply wanted him out of power." Journalists took Khomeini at his word when he assured them that he had no interest in personal power.

When a referendum two months later overwhelmingly confirmed the Iranian people's desire for an Islamic republic, Khomeini declared it to be "the first day of God's government." He defined the new system to be radical in every way: "It should transform our education and judicial systems, as well as all the ministries and government offices that are now run on Western lines or in slavish imitation of Western models."

Iranian rejection of the West was not Khomeini's creation. In 1962, Iranian writer Jalal Al-e Ahmad condemned the Iranian association of the West with modernity as "Westoxification," a sickness. Khomeini's xenophobia therefore appealed not only to a religious constituency, but also more broadly to Iranian intellectuals.

Today's most prominent Iranian dissidents reflect this paranoia. Such dissidents as Akbar Ganji, upon whom the Cato Institute last year bestowed its Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty, may condemn the Islamic Revolution's excesses, for example, but they reserve their true vitriol for the United States, which they view at best through the writings of Noam Chomsky, and at worst through the same conspiratorial lens as Pres. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The Iranian regime cheered when, in 2006 and 2007, Ganji thumbed his nose at White House invitations and American efforts to help Iranian civil society.

Ahmadinejad, for his part, reflects the thinking of the Revolutionary Guards when he repackages the Westoxification obsession into dire warnings about a "Cultural NATO." The deep-rooted belief that Western culture reflects a deliberate military strategy targeting Muslim youth may sound bizarre, but it has theological consequences. Within the Sunni world, it was this same notion that Palestinian theologian Abdullah Azzam, mentor to Osama bin Laden, embraced. Scholars may assure us that jihad is defensive in nature, but Azzam preached to bin Laden that the Islamic world had suffered a preemptive attack. Bin Laden, therefore, saw 9/11 as an outgrowth of legitimate, defensive jihad.

Unlike such revolutionaries as Gamal Abdel Nasser, however, Khomeini would not allow Iran to be a Cold War battlefield. "We are at war with international Communism no less than we are struggling against the global plunderers of the West, headed by America, Zionism, and Israel," Khomeini explained. "Neither East nor West—Islamic republic!" became Iran's defining slogan.

NEVER did Khomeini envision a revolution contained within Iran's borders. Addressing pilgrims in Qom just 40 days before the seizure of the American embassy, he thundered, "Dear sisters and brothers, in whatever country you may live, defend your Islamic and national honor! Defend fearlessly and unhesitatingly the peoples and countries of Islam against their enemies—America, international Zionism, and all the superpowers of East and West." Shortly after, Khomeini inaugurated a constitution that required Iran to support and protect "the just struggles of the oppressed and deprived in every corner of the globe." Indeed, the constitution cites the Koranic call to "prepare against them whatever force you are able to muster, and horses ready for battle, striking fear into God's enemy and your enemy, and others beyond them unknown to you but known to God."

In effect, Iranian leaders interpret the call to export revolution as an endorsement of violence. When, in 2008, Khatami suggested that Khomeini had sought only to transform Iran into a soft-power Mecca, and that Iran should therefore refrain from the more violent aspects of revolutionary export, 77 members of parliament demanded that the intelligence ministry prosecute him. Ayatollah Mahmoud Heshemi Shahroudi, the head of Iran's judiciary and a close associate of the current supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, quashed any further debate when, against the backdrop of the controversy, he emphasized that the export of Iran's revolution was a military strategy, telling the Revolutionary Guards, "You are the hope of Islamic national and Islamic liberation movements."

To understand the Islamic Republic's mentality, it is important to understand Iran's sense of its place in the world. Iranians have internalized the notion that, as their kings once declared, they are the pivot of the universe. In a region replete with 20th-century nation-states that rose from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, the Great Game, or European colonial endeavors, Iran has a near-continuous history going back millennia. Perhaps only China can compare with Iran in its self-perception as the inheritor of a great empire. Yet the 19th century did not treat it kindly, and today Iran is only half the size it was at its 17th-century apex.

While perhaps only a quarter of Iranians still believe in the clerical system that Khomeini inaugurated, most are fiercely nationalistic. Iranians look at their lost territory as a "near abroad," in much the same way Russian nationalists see Ukraine, Georgia, and perhaps even Poland. Iran's clerical leaders often try to rally Iranians around the flag by playing to their nationalist heartstrings.

Hence the Iranian leadership encourages outrage at what it interprets as Western attacks on Iran's legacy. Tehran scuttled the George W. Bush administration's efforts to establish a "red phone" hotline in the Persian Gulf, for example, after the State Department referred to the Persian Gulf as simply "the Gulf." And whenever public discontent grows inside Iran, Iranian leaders embrace expansionist rhetoric. On July 9, 2007, for example, Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor of a hard-line daily widely seen as the voice of the supreme leader, raised regional anxiety when he penned an editorial suggesting that the island nation of Bahrain—home to America's Fifth Fleet—should return to Iranian control after almost five centuries of separation. Two decades after Arab leaders unwisely ignored Saddam Hussein's description of Kuwait as Iraq's 19th province, none are willing to shrug off Iran's description of an independent Arab state as merely a renegade province.

The Iranian leadership interprets Iran's conflict with the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan through the lens of religious warfare as well as a perverse Persian-nationalist Monroe Doctrine. Hence the Tabnak News Agency, most closely affiliated with "pragmatist" former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, accuses the United States of seeking to transform Afghanistan into a "new Andalusia," a reference to the expulsion of Muslims

from Spain, by "converting the Afghans to Christianity . . . and corrupting the Afghans morally."

While both Bill Clinton and Barack Obama extended olive branches to entice Iran to the table, the Iranian regime filters all American actions through Tehran's deep-rooted sense that it is locked in a proxy war with the United States. Hence, when Clinton's secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, apologized for the CIA-sponsored coup in 1953 against Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, the Iranian regime responded by demanding that the United States pay reparations. The irony here, of course, is that the clerics opposed the left-leaning premier as much as the Eisenhower administration did. More recently, when Obama lifted Bush-era preconditions on direct dialogue, Khamenei responded by imposing conditions of his own, first and foremost the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Middle East.

It was in the context of proxy war that Khamenei, upon hearing that American forces would withdraw from Iraq, declared, "Today America has been defeated in Afghanistan and Iraq, and it has no choice but to leave these two countries." Two weeks later, on November 16, Mohammad Reza Naqdi, the commander of the paramilitary Basij, elaborated. "The result of the heavy casualties and disgrace the United States experienced in Iraq led to the emergence of a pro–Islamic Republic government," he explained, adding that American forces would face the same fate in Afghanistan. "I say with certainty that the United States is so weakened that if we attack them today, they not only will lack the ability to counter us, but they will also beg Iran for negotiations," he concluded.

Iran's current overconfidence is reflected in other ways. No longer do its leaders describe the state merely as a regional power; rather, against the backdrop of their growing presence in Latin America and the dispatch of ships to the Horn of Africa and the Mediterranean, they call Iran a "pan-regional power." The Iranian leadership believes that the nation is on the threshold of an Iranian century.

While Iran embraces a uniquely Persian worldview, it also masterfully games Western diplomatic culture and the American desire to strike deals. Shortly before he was taken hostage in Iran, Bruce Laingen, the American chargé d'affaires in Tehran, outlined the Persian approach to negotiations. "Perhaps the single dominant aspect of the Persian psyche is an overriding egoism. . . . The practical effect of it is an almost total Persian preoccupation with self and leaves little room for understanding points of view other than one's own." In practice, this meant that "one should never assume that his side of the issue will be recognized, let alone that it will be conceded to have merits." Indeed, never have Iranian authorities recognized the legitimacy of any American or European negotiating position. While American diplomats may seek concession for concession, Iranian authorities interpret concessions as an admission that Washington's previous position was illegitimate, and simply readjust the baseline from which to talk.

Hence, when Obama waived, as a precondition for talks, the demand that Iran cease uranium enrichment, Iranian authorities interpreted the move as an acknowledgement that all previous U.N. Security Council resolutions condemning Iran's enrichment were unjust.

Because Iranian authorities deny any legitimacy to Western concerns, they see no reason to negotiate sincerely. Even Iran's reformists brag about how they dupe Western diplomats. On June 14, 2008, for example, during a debate with an Ahmadinejad aide, Khatami's former spokesman Abdollah Ramezanzadeh criticized Iranian hard-liners for their defiant rhetoric. The content was not the problem, but rather the result. The purpose of dialogue, he argued, was not compromise, but avoiding sanctions. "We had an overt policy, which was one of negotiation and confidence-building, and a covert policy, which was continuation of the [nuclear] activities," he said.

On Oct. 24, 2011, Hassan Rowhani, Khatami's nuclear negotiator, bragged to Iran's largest reformist daily about how he used diplomacy with the West to run down the clock to Iranian nuclear capability. "When I was entrusted with this portfolio, we had no production in Isfahan," he explained. But by the time negotiations broke off, Iran had completed not only its uranium-enrichment facility, but also a heavy-water plant in Arak that can produce plutonium. Rowhani bluntly bragged that Tehran offered talks to European leaders as a way of delaying U.N. sanctions. "The Islamic Republic acted very wisely in my view and did not allow the United States to succeed," he explained. "It managed to oppose the United States and did not allow the nuclear case to be submitted to the Security Council" immediately, he said, adding, "This was my objective."

Iranians famously quip that they play chess while the Americans play checkers. As the Islamic Republic expands its influence and nears nuclear capability, it certainly appears that they seek to checkmate America.

It is possible to turn the tables on Tehran, however. The Iranian leadership has twice before staked out ideological positions that it later abandoned, vowing during the initial hostage crisis that it would not compromise on myriad anti-U.S. demands, and swearing during the Iran–Iraq War that the Iranian military would not stop fighting until it ended Saddam's rule. In both cases, Khomeini suddenly reversed course. In 1981, after more than a year of fruitless diplomacy, he agreed to release the American hostages. The reason was not any new diplomatic initiative, but rather the outbreak of war with Iraq: As the late national-security expert Peter Rodman pointed out soon after the hostages' release, the cost of Iran's isolation had become too great to bear. Likewise, it was economic pain that forced Khomeini to accept a ceasefire with Iraq in 1988, with Iran's war aims unfulfilled. Declaring his decision as if he were drinking a chalice of poison, he agreed to a ceasefire. The cost of pursuing his revolutionary agenda had simply become too great to bear.

If the next administration aims to make Tehran reconsider its pursuit of nuclear weapons, it must raise the cost of Iran's nuclear program beyond the breaking point. Instead of ratcheting up sanctions bit by bit—an approach that plays to Iran's strategy of running down the clock—Western authorities should impose massive and crippling sanctions upon every aspect of the Iranian state. These should include actions against all Iranian banking and rial transactions; oil exports and gasoline imports; aviation; and weapons and technology sales. At the same time, the White House should increase rather than decrease America's military presence in the Persian Gulf.

Only when the Islamic Republic truly links the decisions it makes to the pain it feels can the White House dictate the formula for Tehran to earn the easing or lifting of sanctions. Washington should simultaneously prepare for all military scenarios and encourage regime change. Unless Khamenei is forced to drink from the same chalice that neutered Khomeini, the Islamic Republic will triumph. Compromise is not possible—only checkmate. **NR**

Athwart

BY JAMES LILEKS

Comply and Fall

The National Review cruise was great, except for the part when the ship got lost. We left Fort Lauderdale, sailed into the yawning maw of the North Atlantic, and couldn't find our bearings. Terrifying at first, but then we learned why: Someone left an electronic device in the "on" position, and it completely scrambled all the navigation equipment. It's not rare—last month the *Allure of the Seas*, the world's largest and most technologically sophisticated cruise ship, set sail for the Bahamas but went halfway up the Mississippi River because someone forgot to turn off a Kindle. Rumor says the captain found the offender and beat the e-reader into pieces with a sextant. So tired of this happening.

Well, no. I made that up. But it makes you wonder why you have to turn off everything when an airplane takes off. No pilot ever says, "Man, the stick was just buckin' up and down as we tried to climb, thanks to some dang fool who didn't turn off his pacemaker." So what's the rationale?



Safety! If something happens during take-off, they want your total attention. The sudden banging sounds, the shuddering of the fuselage as if it were a snake attempting to shed its skin, the screams, the acrid smoke, the oxygen mask in front of your face—if you're listening to Haydn on the way up, you might miss these subtle cues. If you're reading a Kindle, you might be so engrossed in the story you ignore your seatmate's punches as he attempts to clamber over your lap. *But what if I'm reading the in-flight magazine?* you say. *What's the difference?* The in-flight magazine is designed so you'll constantly turn the page looking for something more interesting than "six don't-miss burger joints in Spokane" and won't be too distracted in the event of a water landing. This is a safety feature.

It's easier to ban everything, and we comply because we don't want our picture in the paper next to a story headlined "Man Removed from Airplane over Refusal to Stop Playing Angry Birds." So we shut everything off, feign sleep, contemplate mortality, consider how the miracle of flight is now commonplace, then flip open our devices the moment it's "safe." *O glowing rectangle, how I have missed you.* All is forgiven and forgotten.

It's a feature of modern life: compliance with the Author - ities because there's no point to objecting. It's annoying enough when you're led by the wise, but when you're led by a pack of jackanapeses and dunderheads, well, to quote Plato, hoo boy.

Which brings us to the bureaucrats of Europe. This time it's the matter of the improperly advertised water. From the bulging file of "Only in Europe! (Until It Happens Next Year in San Francisco)" comes this story: EUcrats have chided a bottled-water company for making a health claim unsupported by science. Makes you taller? Smarter? Even more egalitarian? No, the company made a claim of jaw-dropping audacity: The water was useful in preventing dehydration.

There was some technical explanation about absorption rates and cellular integrity, but no one cares about the rationale, because it's ridiculous. Find any marathon, stand at the finish line, and offer the runners a choice between a) water, and b) a glass of sand. Wager on which one they'll take. You could say, "Sure, they'll take the water, because they've been conditioned by a lifetime of ads from Big H_2O," but most people would take water because they're—what's the word?—*thirsty*. For *water*. The EUcrats' next step will probably be a stern demand to reedit all those French Foreign Legion movies, so the drama no longer hinges on the last precious drops in a canteen as they stagger across the trackless desert. While you're at it, edit out the cigarettes, so everyone appears to be putting their fingers to their lips, thoughtfully.

It's the crisis of Western Civ in a snapshot: On one hand, a populace so affluent they buy fancy tricked-up water, as if they were Third Worlders whose municipal water supply was a chunky broth of gut-gripping microbes; on the other hand, an overeducated, overpaid, nomenklatura remora hanging on the body of energetic capitalism, spending *three years* to study whether water has hydrating properties— and then handing down diktats to private enterprise to force them to change their ads.

Expand the example a thousandfold, and you have the entire European experience with regulation on the molecular level. Everyone understands that the government doesn't approve of the wording of a bottled-water advertisement. No one cares. Authority without authority; acquiescence without respect: That's where the Western world is today. When times are good, who cares—but after a while people note that the teeming armies of Brussels busybodies are obsessing over these wee teeny issues while flaming roof timbers of the post-war economic system crash down on the marble floor. Europe is burning, and they're regulating water. They exist in a fantasy world that's 99.999 percent perfect; some fine-tuning is needed here and there, and then things will be so *magnifique* they can take a year off before they tackle the last issue vexing Europe: the typeface for the regulations governing the state subsidies for conversion of empty churches into mosques. Some say Helvetica, some say Times New Roman. One meeting about that issue almost came to blows.

America isn't there yet, but we're close. If the West doesn't get a sudden infusion of leadership, brash claims by water bottlers will be the least of our concerns. As the flight attendants might put it: Put away your toys. We have begun our descent. **NR**

Mr. Lileks blogs at www.lileks.com.



The Long View

BY ROB LONG

Bethesda Mental Health Clinic

Behavioral Modification Unit
Doctor's Notes
Patient: N. Gingrich
Insurance Number: Blue Cross/College Health A7YXX
Group: 107

Nov. 11, 2011

Patient arrives on time—this is starting to be a habit with him. When questioned, he insists that he has made such progress on his egocentric issues—grandiosity, messianic complex, automatic talking, Baron Munchausen—that he has come to realize that showing up late so consistently was an ego-driven power choice. Doctor compliments Patient on his insight. Patient requests more Ziprasidone. He feels that he's on the brink of making "a big move" into the top tier of the Republican primary candidates, but when he says this, he smiles sheepishly. This suggests great progress on the part of Patient. For the first time in over a decade of treatment, he shows signs of self-awareness. Will consider upping the Ziprasidone and perhaps supplementing with another antipsychotic without weight-gain side effects.

Nov. 18, 2011

Patient again arrives on time. Is ebullient and upbeat. Accompanying him is his wife, Callista, which is of course a violation of the therapeutic frame. When Doctor mentions this break from convention, Patient and wife both insist that "as a team" they need to be in total sync with Patient's treatment. Both seem to feel that great progress has been made. Patient is able to speak extemporaneously for less than eleven minutes, and has modeled normal human behavior so effectively that he is now within a few percentage points of the current Republican frontrunner. They credit Doctor, which is gratifying, though Doctor is aware that this could also be flattery strategically delivered in order to obtain a more powerful prescription for Ziprasidone or even Quetiapine. Patient has negotiated serious social challenges with great skill and grace. Doctor has observed his behavior in many debate settings, and can report that he is currently displaying immense and impressive self-control for a person suffering his level of mental illness. Answering questions, acknowledging the physical presence of others, making wry and self-aware comments, all suggest that the current dosage is correct.

On the other hand, Patient is displaying hostility toward all members of the press corps, which suggests chemical imbalance in the behavior-modulating functions. Patient is fixated on the false solution of increasing the anti-psychotic medications and does not respond well to Doctor's suggestion that the meds will be more effective with increased exercise, meditation, and light therapy.

Patient then launches into what promises to be a long disquisition on alternative medicines, dinosaurs, and Alvin Toffler's Third Wave principles, but catches himself in the middle of saying the word "Pachycephalosaurus" and smiles slightly.

Patient still has a long way to go.

Nov. 25, 2011

Patient arrives on time, in semi-euphoric state. Reports to Doctor that he has "transformed" himself from an also-ran in the campaign for the Republican presidential nomination. Patient then laughs loudly. "Get me," he says, "using the word 'transformed'!"

Patient is pleasant and relaxed. He exhibits great cheerfulness and regulated, socialized ego-strength. When Doctor speaks, Patient is clearly listening, and even makes responses that are based on and build upon what Doctor has just said, reflecting a true "conversational exchange," which Patient has been unable to do for the past decade.

Recent polls have Patient showing great strength as a candidate. When Doctor asks about increased anxiety levels, or episodes of reversion to past delusional, psychotic behavior, Patient smiles, laughs loudly, and proclaims that he has found a "technological solution."

Patient rolls up his sleeve and displays on his bare forearm a coil of copper wire attached to a small transmitting device. He then reveals a tiny microphone placed beneath his shirt.

"Watch this," he says. And he then proceeds to tell Doctor about the "historical destiny of a transformational figure called Newt Gingrich," but before he finishes the sentence, the coils spark, and a powerful electric shock surges through his body.

Doctor is dumbfounded. This is the root of Patient's recent progress? Simple aversion therapy?

Patient nods happily. Patient's wife, Callista, enters carrying a large laptop computer with a transmitting device attached to it. Patient tells Doctor that the laptop is programmed to recognize any "weird" behavior or "off-putting" language from Patient, and will automatically trigger a shock response.

"Got me through the debates. Got me to right behind Mitt."

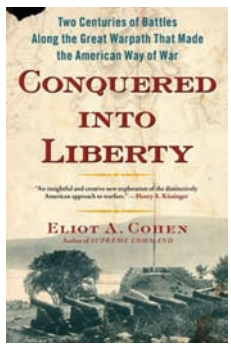
Doctor is forced to admit that he's impressed.

"I developed the algorithm myself," Patient says. "I am actually a self-taught genius in the areas of—"

And the coils spark again. The faint scent of burned flesh hangs in the air. Patient smiles happily.

School for Fighting

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON



Conquered into Liberty: Two Centuries of Battles along the Great Warpath that Made the American Way of War, by Eliot A. Cohen (Free Press, 432 pp., $30)

WHAT does the "Western Way of War"—or its subset the "American Way of War"—mean? Most have inferred from the phrase a dynamic military tradition of some 2,500 years that dates back to the dawn of the Greek city-state. Despite frequent detours and occasional dead-ends over the centuries, it bestowed on Europeans—including Alexander the Great, the Successors, Roman legions, Hernán Cortés, and the 19th-century British imperialists—innate advantages over their non-Western enemies.

On any given day, a greater commitment to decisive battle, discipline (as defined by drill and solidarity of rank), superior technology (made possible through devotion to the rational tradition), plentiful supply (which is a dividend of free markets), the more frequent civic audit of consensual government, and emphasis on freedom and individualism might, on the battlefield, trump even enemy advantages in manpower, logistics, location, and generalship.

Mr. Hanson is a military historian and senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, and the author of the just-released The End of Sparta.

Americans were late inheritors of that hallowed tradition. In their two centuries of warring, American youth have shown a special knack for mobility, speed, and reliance on equipment—usually attributed both to the uniquely vast spaces of the American continent and to the citizenry's broad familiarity and comfort with industrial machines and, later, rails and cars. It was far easier for George S. Patton to race across France in the summer of 1944 in easily serviced and plentiful Sherman tanks and GM trucks because tens of thousands of hot rodders in his army had been tinkering with souped-up cars since their early teens. All that, at least, is the conventional picture of the genesis of the American way of war.

Cohen does not necessarily disagree. But he adds that there is more to the American military heritage than the U.S.'s conventional war-fighting and its European antecedents. We should expand the concept of "American" to include pre-revolutionary times, and so include nearly 200 years of frontier fighting, when the sustainability of an English-speaking New England was not guaranteed. In a careful examination of 18th-century warfare along the northeastern seaboard—in the rugged 200-mile corridor of mountains, forests, and lakes from Albany to Montreal dubbed the "Great Warpath"—Cohen sees two less-appreciated sources for the way Americans currently fight. First was the birth of a unique strain of raiding, ambushing, subversion, living off the land, ad hoc alliance-building with indigenous peoples, long-range reconnaissance, and patrolling behind enemy lines.

Second, writes Cohen, was the very fact that these non-traditional tactics were rooted in the distinctiveness of colonial society. They were not strictly mandated from on high by officers steeped in formal military science. Instead, most of the novel ways of defeating savage enemies arose from the ground up—among observant Vermont militiamen, New York tradesmen, New England farmers turned fighters, and local-community defense forces. These all formed the "middle" stratum of the military, which not only was in the best position to adapt to new challenges, but was also able to persuade both subordinates and superiors to follow its new military paradigm. In short, it soon became very American to draw new tactics up on the fly to fit an ever-changing war—and not to worry much about who had figured out what worked best.

Cohen believes that this legacy endures, with the result that, today, the U.S. military still puts great reliance on the folk wisdom accrued on the battlefield by its captains, majors, and colonels, especially in non-conventional theaters, where Special Forces and other light, but highly trained, contingents fight wars of insurgency not conducive to the use of traditional American artillery, armor, and infantry assets. He also argues that Americans did not inherit sacrosanct borders, but learned to protect themselves from all sorts of northern invaders, at first French and Indian, later Canadian and British. Our determination not to have others at any cost cross into our land is thus another artifact of mostly forgotten preemptive northeastern skirmishing.

Cohen provides an evolutionary narrative of the Great Warpath that, over two centuries, saw fighting become more vicious, lethal, and frequent. Britain may have landed more settlers in northeastern North America, but, during the later 17th century, the French absorbed Indian tactics and strategy better than the British did, and were more successful in enlisting indigenous tribes to keep English-speakers confined to the south and east. The resulting strife was horrific and best typified by Louis de Buade de Frontenac's vicious Indian and French raiders, who swarmed the area around Schenectady killing and burning out English-speaking settlements.

Yet only a half century later, during the equally savage French and Indian War, the British and their American allies had become masters of irregular *Last of the Mohicans* frontier warfare, and they gradually pushed the French and their dwindling Indian partners ever farther northward. And while British firepower and supply finally overwhelmed the French, the Crown's forces increasingly relied on a group led by Robert Rogers

known as "rangers" (the forebears of our modern Army Rangers), and on other colonial regiments that had learned from the French and Indians how skilled skirmishers could stymie conventional columns.

By the time of the Revolutionary War, Ethan Allen, Richard Montgomery, Philip Schuyler, and Benedict Arnold had incorporated 150 years of colonial-frontier experience, and they quickly sought to win a war of subversion against their former British leaders. Cohen has an original revisionist portrait of a pre-traitorous Benedict Arnold, whose inspired leadership and often unconventional generalship proved as vital to the Americans as he was unappreciated by them. While the Revolutionary War was not won by skirmishing along the Great Warpath, American irregulars kept thousands of British tied down and ensured that New England would not be severed from the other colonies, given its vulnerable proximity to the British stronghold in Canada. And during the War of 1812, imaginative American freelancing officers once more fought the British with an intensity sometimes absent to the south; this not only resulted in the safety of New England, but almost led to the annexation of parts of Canada. Throughout the later 19th century, during periodic flare-ups with England, there was never much chance of British-inspired invasions of the northeastern American border, given the deterrence long established through centuries of savage non-conventional fighting.

Sometimes, in the final paragraphs of his chapters, Cohen makes wide leaps in comparing the Great Warpath to modern American military dynamism. These assertions are often too cursory and thus beg for more evidence of unambiguous continuity. How does one, after all, calibrate colonial skirmishing—in which relatively few fought and were killed—alongside the role of the Western heritage, the Industrial Revolution, the Civil War, and two World Wars in examining America's military origins? But his larger point, that America had developed a tradition of irregular fighting, is surely convincing. Many of us have not fully appreciated the legacy of fighting Indians, Canadians, French, and British amid the woods of New England. Too frequently we forget that 1600 to 1776 was as long a period as was that between the Declaration of Independence and the Korean War.

Cohen has given an accessible but detailed narrative of a strangely forgotten chapter in American military history. But his chief purpose is didactic, as he warns how uninformed most criticism of the American way of war can become. We are accused of having become, all of a sudden, paranoid, juvenile, and excessively bellicose in responding to attacks on our homeland, and of lashing out like "cowboys and Indians." Cohen agrees that our way of war is connected to Indian-fighting, but notes that this is not a deviant behavior on our part: It is an act of adherence to our military roots that gives us advantages sometimes not found in the conventional Western military tradition.

In short, Americans have always liked Rangers, and liked even more winning through unconventional means. Surging into Anbar Province required not only classical mastery of firepower, logistics, communications, and discipline, but also street smarts about outfoxing terrorists at close quarters and in shifting alliance with local militias—all best done ad hoc by American captains, majors, and colonels. Colonels, not generals, laid the groundwork for success in Iraq in 2007, when the top brass theretofore had not, and that is likewise typically American.

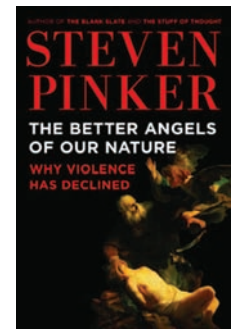
That Cohen, in the course of a traditional history of early colonial warfare, has advanced a new thesis about how our 18th-century forebears taught later Americans how to fight fire with fire is all the more to his credit. Or, as he puts it: "The American way of war remains a hybrid of European modes and something far more improvisational, far less rule-bound. When Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in 2011, they took part in a tradition of 'cross-border operations' stretching back centuries." **NR**



"Okay—who leaked?"

Be Nice!

JOHN DERBYSHIRE



The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined, by Steven Pinker (Viking, 832 pp., $40)

In this, his most ambitious book to date, Steven Pinker describes, and attempts to explain, a curious historical phenomenon: the decline in all kinds of violence among human beings, from pre-civilized times to the present.

The first thing one wants to ask is: Has there actually been such a decline? Given the tremendous wars and political massacres of the 20th century, can it really be the case that man is less of a wolf to man in our own times than in Charlemagne's, or Agamemnon's?

Beginning with homicide, Pinker takes a broad statistical view, with humanity at large as the divisor in his calculations. What, he asks, were a person's chances of dying at the hands of another person, rather than from natural causes, in any given era, over any given broad geographical area? This approach, though it would offer little comfort to survivors of Verdun or Auschwitz, is the only way to take the measure of homicidal violence in the generality.

The first thing it shows is a huge drop in one's probability of being killed by someone else as humanity passed from pre-state—that is, hunter-gatherer or early agricultural—societies to those organized in cities and nations. Archeological sites and studies of surviving hunter-gatherer peoples tell the tale. In a pre-state tribe, your chance of a violent death averaged 15 percent. By contrast, even in pre-Columbian Mexico, a rather crude state structure, your chance was a mere 5 percent. Some similar figure applied to the first Eurasian civilizations.

What Thomas Hobbes called Levia-

than—organized state power—was therefore the first agent to damp down the violent-death rate, even as it allowed great increases in population. If you go from the early civilizations to recent centuries, the numbers drop further. Even under modernity at its worst, in the 17th century and the first half of the 20th, the overall rate of death during Europe's wars was no more than 2 or 3 percent. Homicide rates in the largest American cities today match those in the *least* violent pre-state societies.

It was civil-homicide rates that first caught Pinker's attention. The seed that grew into this book, he tells us, was a graph produced by political scientist Ted Robert Gurr in 1981. Gurr had combed English records going back to the early 13th century in order to plot the change in homicide rates over time. The results were striking. By the 20th century, homicide in England had fallen by 95 percent from the earlier figure. Similar data sets have since been compiled for other European countries. They show the same decline, from high double digits per 100,000 people per year around A.D. 1300 to low single digits today. (The averages for pre-state societies are in high-ish *triple* digits.) Following the pioneering German political scientist Norbert Elias (1897–1990), Pinker claims this decline as part of the "Civilizing Process" that came with the consolidation of modern states—Leviathan 2.0, as it were—and the spread of literacy and "gentle commerce."

Overlaid on the later stages of the Civilizing Process was, Pinker tells us, a "Humanitarian Revolution" in which cruelty, slavery, and the more horrid kinds of judicial punishment came to be seen as unacceptable. He tracks this Humanitarian Revolution back to the abolition of human sacrifice in Eurasia during the last centuries B.C., but argues that it got truly airborne only in the 17th-century Age of Reason and the following Enlightenment. "By 1776 the American revolutionaries had defined 'despotism' down to the level of taxing tea and quartering soldiers."

An acceleration principle then kicked in, with downward steps in interstate violence during the "long peace" (since 1945) and the "new peace" (from 1989). Civil violence declined in parallel during these same periods, in a multitude of phenomena from capital punishment to spanking, from racial persecution to boxing. I was amused to learn that early episodes of *Sesame Street* are now deemed unsuitable for children, as they show such dangerous activities as the riding of tricycles without helmets.

Pinker, whose statistical sense is very keen, points out that some of these movements have long since passed the point of diminishing returns. When a child is hit by a moving automobile nowadays, the driver is usually a parent chauffeuring her own kids to school for fear they might be kidnapped.

After seven chapters of working over history and prehistory, Pinker offers two on the science of human nature. Here he is on his home ground and writes most fluently and knowledgeably. Psychology, neuroscience, and genetics have added tremendously to our understanding of ourselves this past 50 years. As robot space probes have transformed the planets from fuzzy blobs to landscapes with oceans and volcanoes, researchers in the human sciences have made comparable advances in our knowledge of thought, behavior, and personality.

Among the best known of these researchers was Stanley Milgram, who showed 40 years ago that in obedience to an authority figure, there was almost no limit to the pain his research subjects would inflict on fellow participants shrieking in (bogus) agony. Milgram's experiments have since been repeated hundreds of times with dozens of variations, always revealing human nature as containing more darkness than we would have cared to know. More capacity for justifying and moralizing away our misdeeds, too: One of the recurrent themes in the modern science of human nature is that our brains are tireless spin doctors.

Drawing on the latest research in brain functions, Pinker works up a typology of our inclination to violence. That inclination has, he says, five distinct origins: cold predation ("the shortest path to something you want"), dominance within groups, revenge, sadism, and ideology. These are the inner demons of our nature, and discussion of them forms the first of the two human-science chapters. In the second he examines the other side, those "better angels" of his book's title: self-control, empathy, reason, respect.

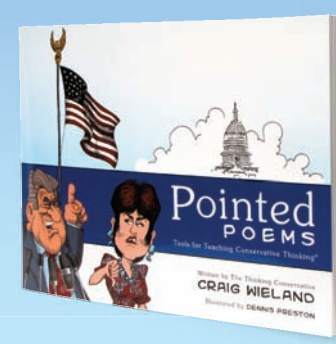
It is necessary to his thesis to show that the better angels have been gaining ground over the inner demons across the centuries. Why this should be so is beyond the present scope of scientific inquiry, so Pinker puts the relevant speculations into a separate, concluding chapter.

The Better Angels of Our Nature is a rich and argumentative book containing a wealth of empirical analysis seasoned with Pinker's usual complement of anecdotes, wit, and felicitous turns of phrase. (I had never before heard the term "percussive maintenance"—the most abrupt way of dealing with a malfunctioning electronic device.) It seemed to me, though, that Pinker is, in this book, noticeably less successful than formerly in keeping his own

Homicide rates in the largest American cities today match those in the *least* violent pre-state societies.

Every conservative in America should own this book.
Tommy Thompson

Economics in a way that anybody can understand it.
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biases under control, and less skillful at negotiating his way through the minefield of political correctness.

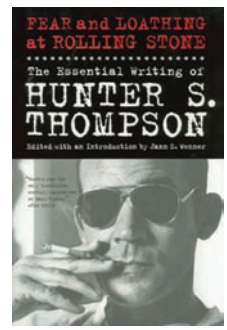
His prejudice against nationalism, for example, leads him into a logical lapse. Of Woodrow Wilson's doctrine of national self-determination, Pinker notes that "one of [its] dangers is that there is really no such thing as a 'nation' in the sense of an ethnocultural group that coincides with a patch of real estate." That would be news to, for instance, the Japanese or the Hungarians. Then, 20 pages later, we read that "some of Europe's peaceful borders demarcate countries that were conveniently homogenized by the massive ethnic cleansing of World War II." That echoes Jerry Z. Muller's 2008 essay "Us and Them: The Enduring Power of Ethnic Nationalism," in which Muller argues that a peaceful system of neighboring nations is usually the result of violent ethnic separation. Muller does not appear in Pinker's list of references.

Probably it is Pinker's distaste for religion that will most vex NATIONAL REVIEW readers. On Europeans' valuing human life more highly after the Wars of Religion: "Part of this newfound appreciation . . . was an intellectual and moral change: a shift from valuing *souls* to valuing *lives*. The doctrine of the sacredness of the soul . . . is highly malignant." There are of course forceful arguments on the other side. Indeed, later in the book Pinker backs off somewhat from that stern Hitchensism to allow, in the tradition of earlier Whiggish historians, that "in zones of anarchy, religious institutions have sometimes served as a civilizing force." (Macaulay did this much better: "A society sunk in ignorance, and ruled by mere physical force, has great reason to rejoice when a class, of which the influence is intellectual and moral, rises to ascendancy.")

These are, however, editorial asides in a densely argued work of empirical inquiry. Pinker has things to say, backed by sound numerical evidence, that should be of interest to any educated person. The facts and numbers are skillfully woven into a story that belongs ultimately to the mystery genre. In Pinker's closing words: "What do we make of the impression that human history contains an arrow? Where is this arrow, we are entitled to wonder, and who posted it?" As with all the best mystery narratives, we are left pondering at last, each of us according to his own inclination and understanding. **NR**

The Gonzo Files

KYLE SMITH



Fear and Loathing at Rolling Stone*: The Essential Writing of Hunter S. Thompson,* edited by Jann S. Wenner (Simon & Schuster, 592 pp., $32.50)

A FEW months after Richard Nixon was reelected in 1972, Hunter S. Thompson sat in a bar with Paul Scanlon, his editor at *Rolling Stone*. "Hunter looked like hell and was clearly not in great spirits," Scanlon writes in the introduction to this lively new anthology. Scanlon gently wondered aloud whether it might be wise for Thompson to cut back a bit on his heroic consumption of drugs and booze. The writer's reply, Scanlon says, was this: "He gave me a look; nothing nasty, just *a look*. He extracted a tab of Mr. Natural blotter acid from [his] pocket, stared me in the eye, and swallowed it. I got the message."

Thompson was 35, and about to publish the last of his three great books. After Nixon's resignation the following year, Thompson would deliver only five more first-rate magazine articles (in the view of Scanlon, whose grading is generous) before he rejoined his body with his talent by shooting himself in 2005. If he had been buried under a tombstone (instead of having his ashes fired out of a cannon in the presence of celebrities), it might have been inscribed with these words, which he wrote in a 1978 profile of Muhammad Ali that was mostly about Thompson's practical jokes and misadventures: "Some people write their novels and others roll high enough to live them, and some fools try to do both."

Mr. Smith is a film critic for the New York Post.

The new volume, which contains some of the crazed, misshapen glories of imagination that turned into the ecstatically weird, rampantly funny books *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*, is in part a chronicle of exhaustion—of the writer, of the reader. Read at a single go—in a rush, as it were—the tics and tricks become loudly repetitive. For the most part, Thompson wasn't a Path-Breaking Journalist or a New Journalist or a Gonzo Journalist, because he wasn't a journalist. Journalists talk to people and write down what they say. Journalists add to the global stock of knowledge. Pursuant to these aims, journalists very often leave the hotel. Thompson provides a running transcript of an ongoing conversation with himself.

The lengthy Ali piece, written just after the Champ's embarrassing defeat by the little-heralded Leon Spinks, relates almost nothing of what its highly charismatic and unusually quotable subject said until the end (and even then, sticks to routine sports-page chatter about Ali's weight and conditioning). Thompson was on chummy terms with George McGovern, had (or claimed to have had) a long one-on-one with Nixon about football, and spoke to then–presidential candidate Jimmy Carter for some six hours—yet shares little of what these figures said. (Thompson said he lost the tapes of his Carter interviews.) Thompson was ungenerous with the spotlight.

Thompson went to Vietnam and was stationed in Saigon when the North Vietnamese overran the city. He wrote nothing except (to borrow Thompson's idiom) a couple of thousand words of rancid gibberish about the feeling inside his hotel. Sent to Zaire in 1974 to report on the Ali–Foreman fight, he delivered only silence. He whiffed on the invasion of Grenada, too. Included amusingly in this volume are letters to and from *Rolling Stone* founder Jann Wenner, who, in an excited March 1973 missive, suggests half a dozen story assignments, from the L.A. mayoral race to professional wrestling. At the bottom of the page arrives the punchline: "*Editor's note: None of these assignments came to fruition.*"

Nor was Thompson a pundit or social critic; he made no attempt to persuade and very little to weigh or analyze. "Contributing some of the clearest, most bracing and fearless analysis of the possibilities and failures of American democracy in the past

century" (in the words of the *Chicago Tribune* about him) is exactly what he did not do, and we can all be grateful that Thompson wasn't Ralph Nader. What conservative would want to read *that*?

Thompson's fans include Pat Buchanan (who, in a Thompson piece on the fall of Nixon, has a few beers with Thompson and tells him *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail* was "one of the funniest things I've ever read"), Tom Wolfe (who called Thompson "the great comic writer of the 20th century"), and P. J. O'Rourke (who said he thought Wolfe "could've made a better case, at least in bits and pieces, that Hunter was the best *writer* of the late 20th century").

If Thompson was ideologically of the McGovernite Left, he was temperamentally pure Rooster Cogburn (hence, perhaps, his John Wayne–ish pseudonym of Raoul Duke). Clean-shaven in tennis shoes and Hawaiian shirts and mirrored aviators, his diminishing hair closely cropped, he looked like an off-duty cop who got lost on his way to the lido deck. He was a Second Amendment freak who fantasized about being a sheriff (as he wrote in his hilarious piece about running for chief lawman of Aspen in 1970), served in the military (the Air Force—as a sportswriter), and adored football. Thompson was a wandering master of alcohol, tobacco, and firearms—the regulatory holy trinity. The same man who called Nixon "a Cheapjack Punk and a Lust-Maddened Werewolf, whose very existence was (and remains) a bad cancer on the American political tradition," could also note, of Generation Woodstock—his readers!—that "nobody guessed, back then, that the experiment might churn up this kind of hangover: a whole subculture of frightened illiterates with no faith in anything." Of a McGovern campaign movie that he called "a flat-out masterpiece," in which "the characters and the dialogue made Turgenev seem like a punk," he nevertheless concluded, "Wonderful. No doubt about it. My only objection is that I disagree with almost everything he said."

It's a commonplace that Thompson was a kind of rock star, but what kind? We must get the subgenus right. Thompson didn't wreathe himself in hippie idealism like Crosby, Stills, and Nash, didn't float away on artful clouds of angst like Lou Reed or George Harrison. He was a Dada heavy-metalist, a screaming showman who thundered absurdly for the hell of it. Before Ozzy Osbourne snacked on bats, Hunter S. Thompson, during his drug orgy on the road to Las Vegas, conjured forth storms of them. Both men styled themselves "Doctor." (Osbourne's latest book: *Trust Me, I'm Dr. Ozzy*.) Each served as engineer and sole passenger on his own custom-designed crazy train. Their intent was not to instruct for our education, but to self-destruct for our amusement.

We read Thompson because his work was itself a drug, a merry intoxicant: HST. His typewriter howled and he set the night on fire. For those readers who are (unlike his editor Scanlon in that bar in 1973) unable at a glance to identify a specific street brand of LSD, his prose enables a safe, hangover-free visit to a place of deep and jangled weirdness. Here's my favorite paragraph in the book, from a rare moment of post-Nixon-administration clarity when Thompson was covering the hilariously sordid divorce trial of newspaper heir Pete Pulitzer and his wife, Roxanne, in 1983 Palm Beach:

> The servant problem is the Achilles' heel of the rich. The only solution is robots, but we are still a generation or so away from that, and in the meantime it is just about impossible to hire a maid who is smart enough to make a bed but too dumb to wonder why it is full of naked people every morning. The gardener will not be comfortable with the sight of rope ladders hanging from the master-bedroom windows when he mows the lawn every morning, and any chauffeur with the brains to work a stick shift on a Rolls will also understand what's happening when you wake him up at midnight and send him across the bridge to a goat farm in Loxahatchee for a pair of mature billys and a pound of animal stimulant.

Thompson is best discovered at about age 17, when the reader begins to notice he (it is almost always a he) has grown up in more comfort than 95 percent of the human race will ever know, and is looking for someone to blame for this. Thompson is the Virgil who guides the passage from splendid childish isolation to activist engagement—and then back out again, into the clean sunshine of pure mockery. Approvingly quoting Mencken—another conservative—he wrote, "The only way a reporter should look at a politician is *down*." His absurdism was as much a rebuke to Very Serious Journalism as it was to pols or police.

Rarely did Thompson stoop to dispensing wisdom, but when he did so, he could make a success of it. Anyone who has ever spent much time covering big-time political campaigns will understand why Thompson felt the need to veer madly away from the speeches and "on background" gossip, free as a bat. "A sense of humor is not considered mandatory for those who want to get heavy into presidential politics," he wrote in July 1972. "Junkies don't laugh much; their gig is too serious." **NR**

If Thompson was ideologically of the McGovernite Left, he was temperamentally pure Rooster Cogburn.

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Ivy League Love

RANDY BOYAGODA



The Marriage Plot, by Jeffrey Eugenides (Farrar, Straus, 416 pp., $28)

Boy meets girl. Boy likes girl. Girl likes boy, maybe. Girl meets new boy. Girl really likes that boy, she thinks. Now what? By its very structure and elements, the love triangle promises tension, longing, secrecy, betrayal, hopefulness, and reversal: It's no great surprise, then, that it's long been a conventional premise for storytelling. What might be surprising, however, is novelist Jeffrey Eugenides's decision to use a love triangle as one of the two primary premises for his latest novel, *The Marriage Plot*; the other premise, which is obviously related and still more conventional, is evident in the book's title. The source of surprise is the radical departure that this novel ostensibly represents from its predecessors, *The Virgin Suicides* and *Middlesex*. The first, a critical darling that was made into a precious Sofia Coppola film, could be described, in bare terms, as follows: Girl has to grow up. Girl gives up instead and kills herself. Repeat, for all of her sisters. Eugenides's second novel, a Pulitzer Prize–winner that has sold 3 million copies, could likewise be described in simple terms: Girl meets self. Self is also boy. Boy-girl lives out in-between life.

With a pair of earlier novels, in other words, that respectively dealt with a devoutly Catholic family of youthful, unmarried sisters successively killing themselves according to a set of mysterious reasons, and a sweet, smart, transgendered Greek-immigrant kid's life in suburban Michigan following his eccentric family's coming-to-America saga, Eugenides both exposed and fulfilled an upscale reading public's voracious appetite for literary fiction that's motivated by progressive-minded sentiments and traffics in themes and issues that are easy-to-swallow-as-difficult.

His new novel, by comparison, is ostensibly difficult-to-swallow because, by its linked premises—a love triangle that's constantly threatening and promising to break into a marriage pairing—it seems too easy, and even passé. In fact, Eugenides signals his awareness of this likely reaction early on, through the complaints of a cranky old literature professor about the late-Western literary indifference to a core feature of human experience and of the Western tradition:

> In the days when success in life had depended on marriage, and marriage had depended on money, novelists had had a subject to write about. The great epics sang of war, the novel of marriage. Sexual equality, good for women, had been bad for the novel. And divorce had undone it completely. . . . As far as [the cranky old professor] was concerned, marriage didn't mean much anymore, and neither did the novel. Where could you find the marriage plot nowadays? You couldn't. You had to read historical fiction. You had to read non-Western novels involving traditional societies. Afghani novels, Indian novels. You had to go, literally, back in time.

We'll assume this East Coast academic has somehow never read John Updike and let his complaint stand, because it so obviously serves as the author's apologia for what he's trying to do with this novel, including, incidentally, going back in time to find a historical moment and setting apparently more amenable to a traditional, marriage-plotted story than is America, circa 2011. Revealingly, as we'll see, he chooses Brown University, and the local and international circuits frequented by Ivy League graduates in the early 1980s.

We enter this world through the story of an intelligent and beautiful young woman named Madeleine, who's uncertain about what to do with her life following graduation. She must decide between two suitors she's been involved with at Brown, Mitchell and Leonard, who are both very intelligent but temperamental opposites. At the same time, she has to figure out how to transform her successful undergraduate career as a dutiful student and incorrigible lover of 19th-century English novels into a viable professional life. (Spoiler alert: Deciding between competing offers from Columbia and Yale for graduate school proves easier and more enjoyable for Madeleine than deciding between Mitchell and Leonard.)

Books such as this one are usually marketed as "tender coming-of-age" stories (as far as the contemporary publishing industry is concerned, no one comes of age except tenderly). But more impressively, at least initially, Eugenides

Mr. Boyagoda, a novelist and critic, is a professor of American studies at Ryerson University in Toronto. He is writing a biography of Richard John Neuhaus, and his second novel, Beggar's Feast, *was recently published in Canada.*

FOYER

What are the houses of the old?
Last vestibules we enter,
Small vastnesses. They smell of mold,
Of camphor, and of must,
And of necessity, their center
Cannot hold.
Moth-eaten are their rooms
Where merely breathing dooms
Us to incorporating dust,
And to the anterooms that take us in.
Penultimately cold,
We wait there to begin.

—LEN KRISAK

has attempted a novel of vocation, or what he insightfully describes at one point as a young person's desire and struggle to realize a "cohesive self." The novel's main characters—Madeleine, Mitchell, and Leonard—spend the entirety of the novel in search of just such cohesion, discerning, individually and with and through and sometimes against each other, the relationships and professions to which they are called by their talents and time and place in the world, while simultaneously confronting problems of religious faith, crippling psychological disorder, and crippling parental expectations.

To reveal his characters' vocations to themselves and to us out of such a complex of concerns, Eugenides makes smart use of chance encounters, misunderstood intentions, unread letters, breathless departures and arrivals, timely coincidences, and other such stock features of 19th-century fiction. These moves—which take form, for instance, as a sudden marriage proposal late in the novel, and then an unexpected reunion later still—are enjoyable, indeed exciting to come across regardless of their obvious artifice, but they are unfortunately submerged in a book that's far too much taken with its apparent charms. *The Marriage Plot* features many play-by-play passages about sex, whether with oneself or with someone else, that made me long for the taste and decorum of a damp Harlequin novel. ("Leonard's girth filled Madeleine up in a way that felt not only satisfying, but breathtaking. Every millimeter of movement, in or out, was perceptible along her inner sheath.")

The book also wears its learning far too proudly, whether the subject is 19th-century fiction, postmodern literary theory, microbiology, Christian theology, manic depression, European casinos, Manhattan real estate, or India. To be sure, the range of material that Eugenides draws on is impressive, but the consistent effect is curiously flat: Whether the subject is the reproductive behavior of yeast cells or the theological implications of caring for the lame and sick or the m.o. for getting an apartment with good light and close proximity to Central Park, it all feels the same. These are matters of interchangeable significance; they serve less as an array of discrete, packed realities for the playing out of intensely lived lives than as occasions for author and character alike to demonstrate the admirable virtues and the admirable vices of the late-American meritocracy.

Mitchell's tired of traveling through Europe with his increasingly gay friend, but should he go on to India and volunteer with Mother Teresa on his own? Leonard is fighting with his Boston doctor over the dosage of his antidepressants while falling behind on his Cape Cod research-fellowship gig, so why doesn't he just administer an experimental clinical trial to himself? Madeleine is upset and confused about the nature of her commitment to Leonard, but why can't the waiters in her Paris hotel leave her to sip wine in peace while she thinks things through? Finally, most ridiculously, at long last Mitchell momentarily gets his girl, but he's confused: "Was this really Madeleine's breast he was taking into his mouth, or was it something he had dreamed, or was he dreaming now?" This might be the least manly line in all of American literature.

Close to novel's end, Eugenides has a character describe Madeleine as a "lonely misfortunate, and inward as a governess." The obvious invocation of a canonical marriage-plot novel, *Jane Eyre*, inadvertently exposes the fundamental problem with *The Marriage Plot*: By her station, her origins, and her prospects, Jane really is a misfortunate for the entirety of Brontë's novel, until, wondrously, she's not; whereas Madeleine, by her station, her origins, and her prospects, is remarkably fortunate except for those moments she's not, and while these are moments that cause immediate and extensive emotional turmoil and threaten to misdirect her trajectory permanently, they never really do.

At base, it seems, Eugenides likes his characters a little too much. In this way, he's on the far side of a novelist like Jonathan Franzen, who at times doesn't seem to like his characters enough. Unfortunately, as a result of their author's overweening affection for them, the characters in *The Marriage Plot* suffer through difficulties that feel, from start to finish, remarkably cosseted. To be sure, the highly privileged have souls too. It's just hard to be ultimately moved by the experiences of people whose life-crises tend to be, in the end, the rough equivalent of learning that the J. Crew catalogue is out of the hairshirt they've ordered. **NR**

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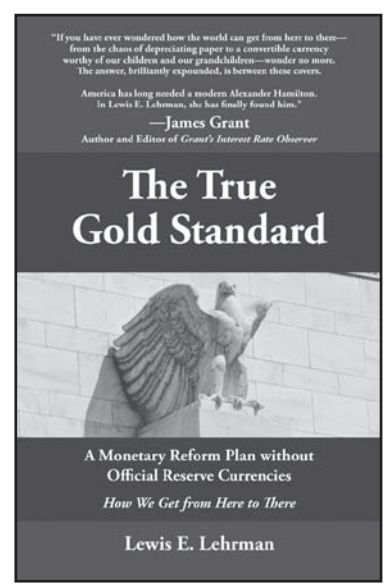
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Film

Miscasting Pearls

ROSS DOUTHAT

'You'll believe a man can fly!" ran the ad campaign for the original Christopher Reeve *Superman*. How quaint that sounds today, when movies try to make us believe in far wilder things: in planet-killing asteroids, in automobiles that transform into giant robots, in a hundred kinds of superheroes—and now, with Alexander Payne's *The Descendants*, in the idea that a woman would cheat on George Clooney with Matthew Lillard.

If the latter name doesn't ring a bell, then you probably weren't a teenager in the late 1990s, when Lillard—long of body and rubbery of face, like a faintly demonic Gumby—played supporting roles in the *Scream* franchise and various Freddie Prinze Jr. vehicles. But one detail should tell you everything you need to know about his sex appeal (or rather, lack thereof): His career peaked when he played Shaggy in 2002's live-action *Scooby-Doo*.



FOX SEARCHLIGHT

Shailene Woodley and George Clooney in The Descendants

Payne, the man who gave us the peerless *Election*, has made a habit of repurposing underappreciated actors and casting against type. In *About Schmidt*, he turned Jack Nicholson into a Midwestern sad sack. In *Sideways*, he made an unlikely leading man out of Paul Giamatti, let the B-movie queen Virginia Madsen finally prove that she could act, and mined comedy and pathos from the sitcom star Thomas Haden Church.

The Lillard-Clooney combination, though, is a bridge too far. Or rather, casting Clooney as a hapless cuckold is a bridge too far. *The Descendants* asks him to play Matt King, the well-meaning but weak scion of an old Hawaii clan, who's modestly successful as a lawyer but ineffectual as a husband and a father. While he manages the disposition of the 25,000 unspoiled acres of Hawaiian coast that he co-owns with his cousins (all of whom trace their ancestry, and their wealth, back to a Victorian-era marriage between a native princess and an Anglo-Saxon arriviste), his daughters, 10 and 17, are growing up bratty and dysfunctional, and his vivacious wife is planning to leave him for Lillard's grinning real-estate agent.

This is the sort of role that a more rumpled, lived-in thespian—think Philip Seymour Hoffman, as an example—could inhabit in his sleep. Clooney is a game actor and a good one, and he does his best to bury his charisma for the part, clattering around in boat shoes and a bad haircut, letting his kids walk all over him, and doing his best impersonation of a well-off beta male. But he's still *George Clooney*, with the chin and the smile and the movie-star sheen, and no matter how hard he works, it feels like we're watching Cary Grant in a part meant for Jack Lemmon.

It's too bad, because the story in which he finds himself (taken from a novel by Kaui Hart Hemmings) is a perfect showcase for Payne's distinctive tragicomic style. Payne is both a satirist and a humanist: In his movies, film critic David Edelstein has noted, "mockery and empathy seesaw, the balance precarious," and we can find ourselves laughing at a character one moment and crying for him the next.

The source of the tears in *The Descendants* is the jet-skiing accident that throws King's wife into a coma, forcing Clooney's character to take real responsibility for his children, face the possibility that he's about to become a widower, and—after his older daughter (Shailene Woodley, beautiful and brilliant in the part) blurts out the *real* reason she was fighting so much with her mother—realize that he's been betrayed by a woman who's now at death's door. The source of the laughter is the element of farce in King's subsequent attempt to reclaim his manhood, which requires him to contend with his wife's bullying dad (Robert Forster), his older daughter's insufferable stoner boyfriend (Nick Krause), his various grasping cousins (including Beau Bridges as a long-haired tropical sleaze), and finally his wife's lover, who of course turns out to have a wife (Judy Greer, rescued from a lifetime of romantic-comedy supporting roles) and children of his own.

As funny as they are, these misadventures are a bit rambling and a bit predictable, and there were times when I thought that Payne needed a little more acid and a little less generosity. "Paradise can go [bleep] itself," Clooney's character says of Hawaii at the beginning of the movie, but in the end a sunnier and more uplifting spirit wins out over the hints of spiritual torpor and tropical decay.

Still, uplift has its uses, and *The Descendants* takes its tragedies seriously enough that the concluding harmonies feel earned rather than forced. This is not Payne's best film: I'd rank it slightly below *Sideways* and well below *Election*. But there's a lot of talent at work here, and the finished product is very much worth seeing. You'll just need to suspend your disbelief, or else close your eyes from time to time and imagine that Matt King isn't being embodied by George Clooney. **NR**

City Desk

Buyer's Remorse



RICHARD BROOKHISER

A FRIEND from out of town complained about shopping in the city: Wasn't it all chain stores now? Although I snorted, I felt secretly ashamed, for I had seen neighborhood after neighborhood go from emptiness to luxuriance to blandness. I looked for refutation. Three times a week I walk 600 yards to my gym, down a street between the sleekness of midtown and the funkiness of downtown. It is the artery of average; when God gives us this day our daily, this is the way it comes. What could I acquire there if I paid attention?

I could begin by acquiring money. The first building on the first corner was a bank, with its girdle of ATMs foremost. Next was something that would appear again and again, a shoe store, this one devoted to running shoes. Why so many running shoes? Because they are not just for running, but also for youth fashion display. An African working a sidewalk table advertised $3 sweaters, then, dropping his price immediately, sweaters for $1.50. A computer-game store was the first to make a dramatic pitch for attention. I have never played a computer game, but I have respected them ever since I read that games make as much money annually as Hollywood. What the gamesters of America are getting, if these display windows were any indication, is apocalyptic violence. ASSASSINS CREED REVELATIONS said one poster, over a hooded figure; CALL OF DUTY answered its mate, featuring a futuristic grunt. A cellphone store greeted the Incarnation with a window filled with red and green balloons. More shoes—boots this time. Duane Reade—they are everywhere! Chain drugstores are the new 5-and-10s, heavy on snack food and cosmetics. A dry cleaner, run by Orientals (the old-fashioned moniker matches the old-fashioned venue). China bids to overtake us as a superpower, but its children still come here and become dry cleaners; their children go to Yale. A threading salon will fix your eyebrows, and wax your skin. Where? Let Leporello sing the catalogue: Half face, full face, full arms, under arms, half legs, full legs, bikini line, deep bikini, Brazilian. A man imagines the geography, even as he flinches from the pain; women know allure involves suffering. Two fast-food places follow, one promising to be HOT 'N JUICY, just the thing after your deep bikini. More shoes. Then a store of jeans. There is actually a chain, I learn, called OMG. "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain." That seems pretty plain, even without the repetition, but what does the LORD know about jeans, He doesn't even have legs. More shoes, a second bank, and a vast hole, awaiting a new building, round out that block.

Next block is longer. It begins with a store selling eyeglasses, and—sign of the times—a sign advertising the insurance it takes: a blizzard of names, from big companies (Oxford, Aetna) to labor unions (Local 1199, UFT). Last month, the pita store next door was decorated with turkeys. Eat at the melting pot. A rarity, a bookstore, owed its existence to specialization: wisdom of the East, including astrology readings, "Vedic and Western" (can you comparison-shop destiny?). A nails spa offered attention to the feet, with a chart of reflective zones, explained however in Chinese, so not aimed at my demographic. A hair salon, more shoes, a model-management company. Another cellphone store (for that call from your agent). An electronics store had set out a display, oddly, of luggage; above the roller bags, TVs played a movie of some helicopter chase scene. Then a long and forbidding storefront: NYC Human Resources Administration. It was built like a bunker, and seemed as cheery as Hitler's. Next to it, the first of several, a vacancy: FOR RENT. 2 Dollar Jewelry is still holding on. A second eyeglasses store also advertised dental groups, laser aesthetics, and chiropractors. Read their fine print. A clearance sale (EVERYTHING $10 OR LESS), a mattress store, more luggage, a serious if homely effort at holiday cheer: artificial Christmas trees, toys in boxes, dolls. The gym was not yet mine. A vast party store, with literal thought balloons: Get Well, Congratulations, Happy Birthday, Thank You. Two running mannequins wear more running shoes. A cute poster blonde shills outerwear. Then the economic gradient drops: WE BUY GOLD & DIAMONDS, and offer NOSE & EAR PIERCING. Between two empty stores, "Get your holiday fashion—Naughty or Nice" (you know which one she'll choose). Between two shoe stores stood the lone building of distinction: symbolic ladies, scrolls, curves, cornices. No sign what it was built for and no occupants now. Starbucks, Urban Outfitters, and a quilted-aluminum breakfast cart end this block.

Half a block to go. Pizza slices, then a gold & diamonds store that frankly says, WE PAWN. The window is filled with crosses. Candy, cigar, soda, tobacco all fill one awning and one store: Where is Mayor Bloomberg? RENT. The promise of FASHION is slightly undercut by NURSES UNIFORMS REGULAR & PLUS. More cellphones, another spa, more gold, this time particularized: wedding bands, engagement rings, name rings, charms: all the broken hopes. DVDs, more shoes, more luggage. Back and foot rub incongruously share space with an International Christian Fellowship. More DVDs: Conan, samurai, porn. Office supplies and UPS. Almost the last, the biggest space on the block, the Salvation Army. General Booth makes his pledge: "While women weep as they do now, I'll fight. While little children go hungry, as they do now, I'll fight. While men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight. While there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight. I'll fight to the very end!"

Then I come to my gym. **NR**

Happy Warrior

BY MARK STEYN

Headlines

A HEADLINE from the *Daily Telegraph* of London: "IMF Drawing Up £500bn Package to Save Italy, Spain and the Euro." Insofar as most of us give any thought to the International Monetary Fund, we vaguely assume it's there to help developing nations. But it's now bailing out First World advanced economies. Indeed, Italy is a member of the G7, which is supposed to be the super elite of the developed world. But it's angling for a 600 billion–euro rescue package.

So it's a good thing we've got this IMF thingy to hand when we need someone flush enough to prop up soi-disant European economic powerhouses. But where exactly does the IMF get *its* money from? Ah, well. America provides 17.7 percent of the IMF's funding, which is more than the next three biggest contributors (Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom) combined. So, in a 600 billion–euro bailout for Italy, 106.2 billion euros—or about $143 billion—will come from the United States. Which is to say, you.

But don't panic. You're pretty much tapped out. The United States recently bust through the $15 trillion debt ceiling to set a new all-time world record as the Brokest Nation in History. So another $142 billion barely rates a line item.

Oh, by the way, the IMF itself has spent most of the last few years operating with a $400 million budget deficit. So a broke G7 economy is being bailed out by a broke transnational organization funded by a broke hyperpower. That seems likely to work.

The jig is pretty much up for the post–World War II global order. It's becoming increasingly hard to avoid the thought that, when it comes to the Western world, there's no there there. There may be a there out there somewhere else, but chances are you're paying for that, too. The put-upon taxpayer of an industrial nation accepts that the bulk of his contribution to the "international aid" budget is entirely wasted: The traditional quip, made by many people, from the great Peter Bauer to Ron Paul more recently, is that it's poor people in rich countries funding rich people in poor countries. But that bon mot doesn't seem quite to cover the revelation that the U.S. Agency for International Development gives foreign aid to China.

That's to say, we borrow money from China to give to China. Oh, don't worry. It's only a few million, and most of it goes to "promote clean energy." It sounds so reasonable when you put it like that. Who among us hasn't borrowed money from his loan shark in order to buy his loan shark a hybrid?

The IMF, meanwhile, predicts that China will become the planet's leading economy by 2016. In other words, the guy elected next November will be the last president of the United States to preside over the world's dominant economy, and he'll end his term back where Grover Cleveland was: a global runner-up. My colleague Jonah Goldberg thinks all this talk of Beijing's economic might is nutso: He points out that China has 40 million people who live in caves, etc. That's all true. Back in the heyday of Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan and Oriental stereotyping, Erle Stanley Gardner wrote en passant in the course of a non–Perry Mason yarn: "The Chinese of wealth always builds his house with a cunning simulation of external poverty. In the Orient one may look in vain for mansions, unless one has the entrée to private homes. The street entrances always give the impression of congestion and poverty, and the lines of architecture are carefully carried out so that no glimpse of the mansion itself is visible over the forbidding false front of what appears to be a squalid hovel." In a sense, the Communists have simply inverted the "false front": Behind the glittering skylines of the coastal megalopolises lies a vast peasant hinterland in which not even the non–cave dwellers are in danger of being mistaken for a consumer society.

Who among us hasn't borrowed money from his loan shark in order to buy his loan shark a hybrid?

But that's the point: China's newfound status is unsettling because it's so weird. In the late 19th century, Britain may not have liked the rise of Germany and the United States, but it could look at its economic rivals and see newer, nimbler versions of itself. By contrast, China is on course to become the world's leading economy without ever having been a developed economy. The fact that it's full of cave dwellers and has no genuine market shouldn't be cause for scoffing, but for a bit of quiet introspection on the crazy world we've ushered in. From Reuters: "China Blasts U.S. for Ignoring 'Ticking Debt Bomb.'"

Consider how utterly incomprehensible that headline would seem to an American from a mere 30 years ago. Back then, the smart guys assured us that economic liberalization would force political liberalization upon China. Instead, we helped them come up with the only economically viable form of Communism. So economically viable, indeed, that Agence France-Presse reports that the People's Republic has agreed to "purchase infrastructure assets from debt-plagued nations" in the European Union. *Pace* the CFR, not only is China still Communist, but Europe would rather mortgage itself to the Politburo than attempt to wean itself off its unsustainable welfare regimes.

But hey, relax. According to the *Washington Post*, "Black Friday and Other Holiday Weekend Shoppers Set Spending Record." Hard to know what's sadder: debt-laden "consumers" snapping up the latest trinkets from China, or expert "analysts" interpreting their stampede as a portent of recovery. NR

Mr. Steyn blogs at SteynOnline (www.steynonline.com).

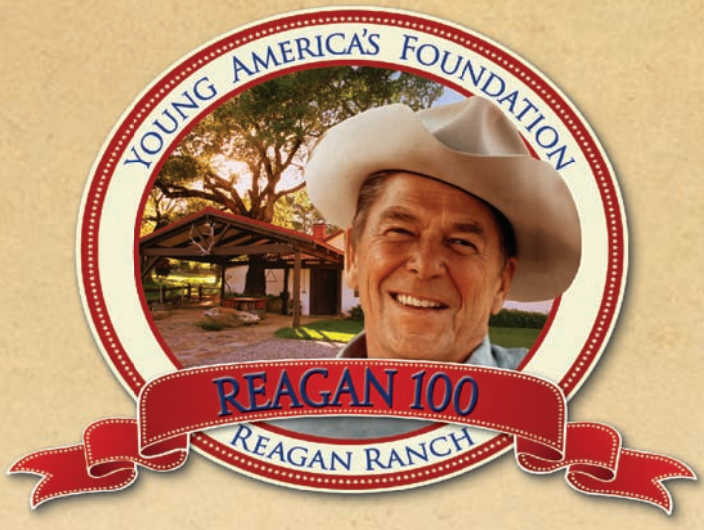
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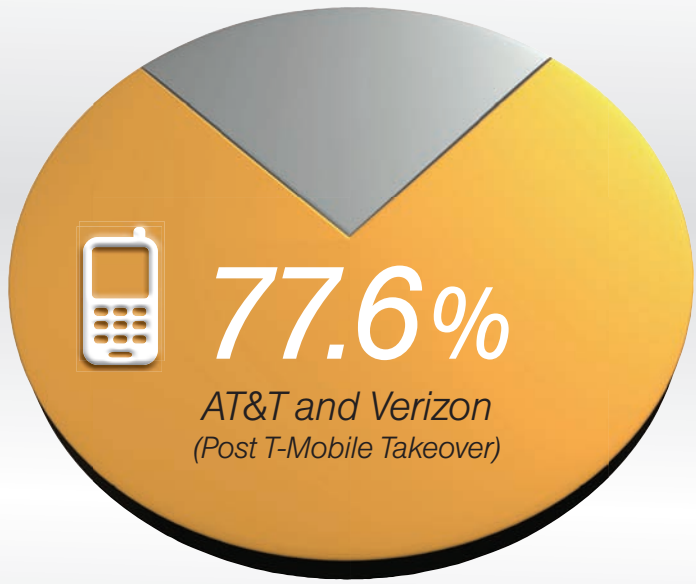
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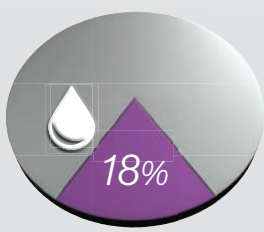
Governor Sarah Palin with students at a Reagan 100 event at the Reagan Ranch Center in Santa Barbara, California



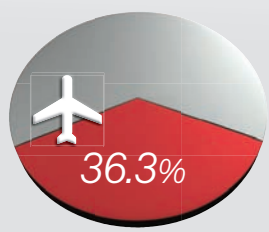
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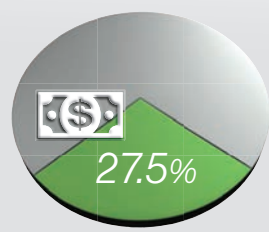
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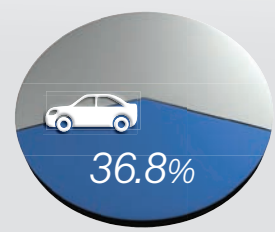
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Wireless industry source: Individual company annual financial reports for 2010.
Oil source: www.alacra.com/acm/2042_sample.pdf, page 22. Note: data includes oil refining and gas.
Airline source: DOT, form 41, Schedule P-1.2.
Banking source: DATAMONITOR'S "Banks in the United States" and www2.fdic.gov/sdi/main.asp.
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