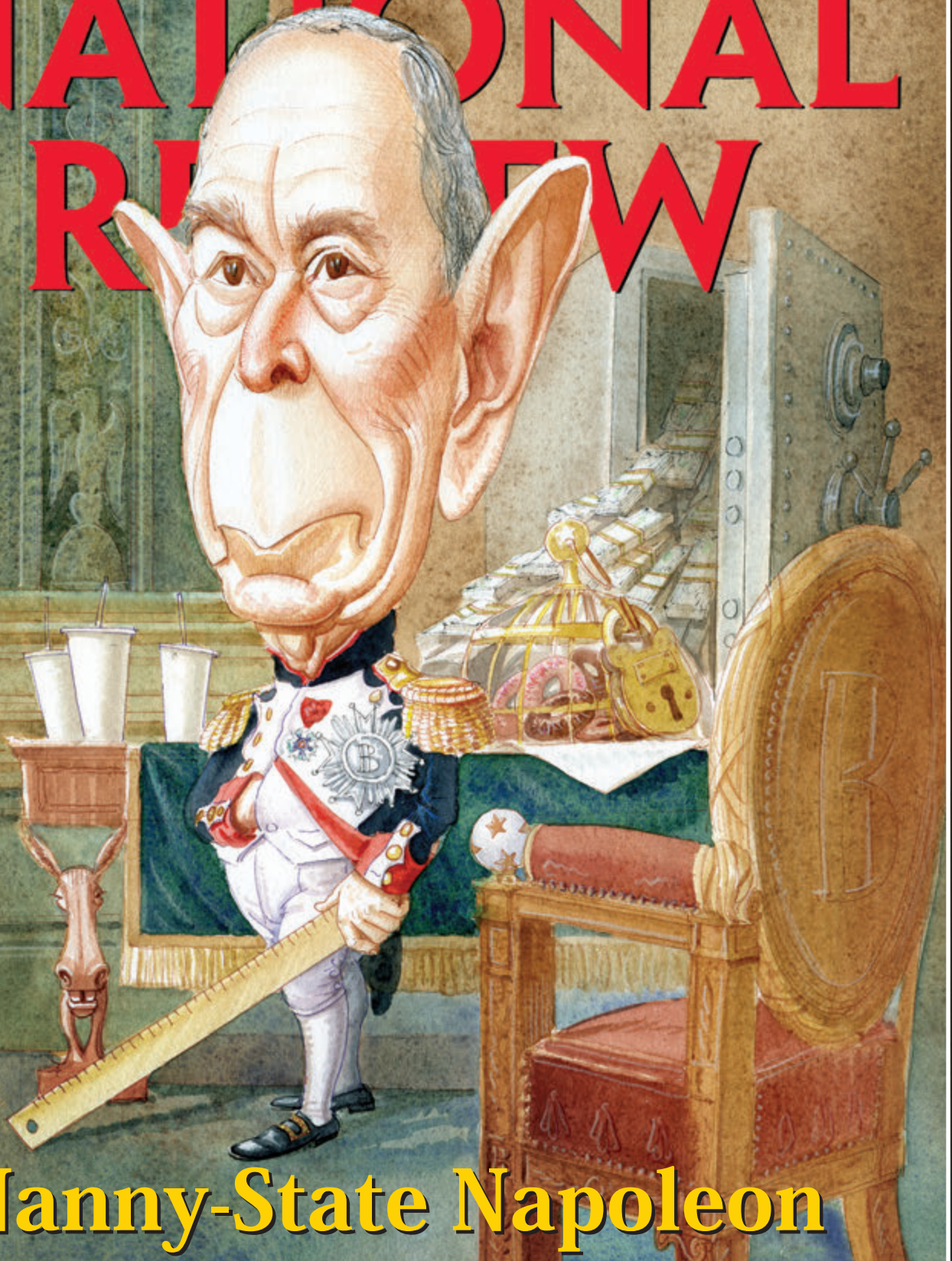


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Problems in the Papacy?

In “The Wayward Shepherd” (February 24), Professor Mahoney longs for a pope to “uphold authentic continuity in the Church” and to refrain from “change for change’s sake.” Surely, the pope who in 2019 compared obtaining an abortion to contracting a hitman; the pope who in 2019 also said he would rather die than end priestly celibacy; the pope who in 2019 publicly celebrated Mass in the United Arab Emirates; the pope who in 2018 paved the way for 1.4 billion Chinese to gain access to the sacraments would be such a pope. Had Pope Francis called for “a more internationally coordinated approach to the management of earth’s goods” (as Saint John Paul II did in 1990), he would still be such a pope.

Professor Mahoney’s criticism fails to point to a substantive change to Church doctrine, and hardly quotes the Holy Father at all. Fellow critics’ observations are more common, as are the sins—real or perceived—of other prominent clerics. It’s right to lament the persecution of Christians around the globe. It’s reasonable to wonder about the near-term political impact of the pope’s diplomacy. In the meantime, Catholics of all stripes should take comfort in the words of the professor’s protagonist, Cardinal Sarah, when he observed that “every pope is right for his time.” Our victory is not political.

Kevin McCarthy
Via email

DANIEL MAHONEY RESPONDS: I’m afraid the letter writer’s account of Pope Francis’s fundamental convictions and actions is very partial, indeed. And the radical separation of theology and politics (which at its highest aims at a common good worthy of free and responsible human beings made in the image and likeness of God) is untenable. As I have argued elsewhere, the pope’s ecological convictions lean toward pantheism, and his emphasis on the Church’s role in the world risks making the Church a secular nongovernmental organization. There is also a persistent confusion of the biblical “signs of the times” with a progressivist understanding of the zeitgeist, or what I called in my article “the authority of the present moment.” The pope’s forgetting of the unique evil that is totalitarianism is rooted in both theological and political misjudgments, as is a strange deference to movements, regimes, and religions that persecute Christians and human freedom. I give plenty of examples in my article. Cardinal Zen has spoken forthrightly about the abandonment of China’s underground Church and the appeasement of an “official” church in China dominated by collaborators and secret-police agents. On the theological front, this pope has sullied the nonnegotiable Catholic understanding of the indissolubility of marriage and has increasingly severed mercy from its crucial link to repentance. That risks giving aid and comfort to what his predecessor so memorably called “the dictatorship of relativism.”

From time to time, Pope Francis speaks unequivocally in the voice of Catholic orthodoxy. That is most welcome. But he also has more regularly downplayed the grave evil of abortion by preferring not to speak of it even as he freely denounces capital punishment. He also rehabilitated Cardinal McCarrick and gave him a leading role in recommending new bishops and cardinals in the United States. That is lamentable by any standard. But mainly this pontificate has failed to stand up to the forces of moral nihilism with vigor and conviction. I wish the moments and statements highlighted in the letter above were less rare and more typical of this pontificate as a whole. I do indeed hope and pray that the Holy Roman Pontiff rejects fashionable “change for change’s sake,” for the good of both the Church and the world. And I do so as a faithful Catholic mindful of the continuity of truth.

Letters may be submitted by email to letters@nationalreview.com.



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The Week

■ Coronavirus, the Sanders campaign—these epidemics are never as bad as they seem.

■ While the coronavirus was spreading from Wuhan, China, through East Asia to the Middle East and Western Europe, World Health Organization officials lauded the Chinese government's "extraordinary" efforts to contain the epidemic. Now it's approaching pandemic level. American officials got off to an inauspicious start in addressing the crisis, with testing inexplicably limited for weeks until the FDA took emergency measures. Meanwhile, the White House tried too hard to talk up Wall Street by emphasizing our "airtight" defense against the virus. Investors sent the market plunging anyway. The sell-off receded slightly after the Federal Reserve announced interest-rate cuts—a welcome move—yet uncertainty persists as the number of cases in the U.S. grows. Besides the early testing stumble, the administration has undertaken the correct measures to contain the virus. To hear the Democrats tell it, though, Trump has already created a humanitarian debacle. They've hit him for alleged cuts to the Centers for Disease Control, but Congress has in fact increased funding to the agency during the Trump years, and *New York Times* columnists have absurdly dubbed the disease "the Trump virus." We suspect the coronavirus outbreak here won't prove as bad as alarmists fear, but our political culture is every bit as juvenile and unserious as it seems.

■ We signed a deeply flawed deal with the Taliban. The agreement commits us to eliminating our military presence in Afghanistan. First, the U.S. will reduce its troops by 5,000 over the next several months, and then it will remove the remaining 8,600 next year. In exchange, the Taliban will supposedly not allow al-Qaeda or any other groups to use Afghan soil to threaten the United States, and will enter into cease-fire negotiations with the Afghan government. It's hard to take the Taliban's commitment on al-Qaeda seriously. It already denies that it collaborates with terror groups, including al-Qaeda, even though this is blatantly false. It's not encouraging that the Taliban wasn't willing to negotiate with the Afghan government before getting the U.S. commitment to a withdrawal, or to implement a cease-fire during the talks. The Afghan government has balked at a lopsided prisoner swap in the deal, which commits to releasing up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners at the outset of the intra-Afghan negotiations. Already the deal has shown signs of breaking down. If that's going to happen, it's better that we know it before we've increased the Taliban's leverage with troop withdrawals.

■ Joe Biden had to retract a story he has repeatedly told about being arrested in South Africa in the 1970s while trying to see Nelson Mandela. Now he says he was momentarily "detained" at the airport for refusing to go through a whites-only door. Biden has been on notice about this kind of tall tale for a very long time: Stealing words, and biographical details, from a



See page 12.



British Labour leader sank his 1988 presidential bid. Fabulism is an ingrained habit for him, as is an indulgent eye-roll about it for the press.

■ "When Fidel Castro came to office, you know what he did?" said Bernie Sanders. "He had a massive literacy program. Is that a bad thing?" First, you have to love the phrase "came to office"—as though Castro had won an election. Second, Sanders is perpetuating a myth about Cuban Communism and the improvement of the people. When Castro "took office," Cuba was one of the most advanced nations in Latin America, including one of the most literate. The literacy rate was close to 80 percent. But such facts aside, we repeat what Armando Valladares, the great dissident and onetime political prisoner (22 years), says. In paraphrase, he says, "Suppose that all the propaganda about Castro's Cuba were true. Must there be a one-party dictatorship for a people to have literacy, health care, and the rest? Aren't these things present in free countries? Don't they exist without gulags and dungeons?" They do indeed. And Bernie Sanders is a com-symp—a literal com-symp, or sympathizer with Communism—who is a disgrace to the free country he was damn lucky to have been born in.

■ Sanders announced he would not attend the annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Sanders, who says he wants to be the first Jewish president (and who has never attended the AIPAC conference), said the group provides a platform "for leaders who express bigotry and oppose basic Palestinian rights." If only the Israeli regime were as gentle and enlightened as the Castros' Cuba.



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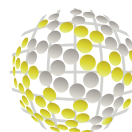
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■ We already knew that Democrats want to raise taxes on your income. Now, Sanders wants to raise taxes on Americans' *imaginary* income, too. A bill from Senator Sanders, co-sponsored by Chris Van Hollen (D., Md.), would levy taxes on stock options when they are vested rather than when the options are exercised. They will be taxed, that is, when the recipient could make some money from those stock options rather than when he does. This is bad policy, and constitutionally dubious at that. The thing about options is, they're optional: Recipients have a choice about when to exercise them, and share prices rather famously go both upward and downward. Senator Sanders's scheme would tax workers not only on income they have not received but on income they may never actually receive. (People do lose money on stock options; perhaps Senator Sanders, a lifelong dependent, is unaware of this.) Sanders's bill would complicate life for start-ups, which often attract talent in the early stages through offering a share of ownership in the company rather than higher cash wages. (You might think that a socialist such as Senator Sanders would welcome a business practice that gives workers a larger share of corporate ownership, but he does not.) This is more foolish class-warfare stuff from Senator Sanders, a proposal that puts his ignorance on particularly sharp display.

■ At the most recent Democratic debate, Elizabeth Warren recited one of her many oppression origin stories, this one about "pregnancy discrimination" she purports to have faced as a public-school teacher. Warren used the tale of woe to land a hit on Michael Bloomberg over comments the billionaire allegedly made years ago to a female subordinate. "At least I didn't have a boss who said to me, 'Kill it,' the way that Mayor Bloomberg is alleged to have said to one of his pregnant employees," Warren said. Presuming he said it—a reasonable assumption, knowing Mike Bloomberg—a question for the pro-abortion senator: What, specifically, was the problem with Bloomberg's remarks?

■ Warren has long been a critic of "money in politics." So it was with some surprise that we learned the senator, trying to revive a failing campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, announced that she would accept money from super PACs after all, despite their unholy status in campaign-finance-reform demonology. True to form, she chalked it up to sexism, bemoaning that she and Minnesota senator Amy Klobuchar alone committed to rejecting super PAC money, while "all of the men who were still in this race and on the debate stage all had either super PACs or they were multibillionaires and could just rummage around their sock drawers and find enough money to be able to fund a campaign." The motive for her change of heart is dubious, but we welcome it nonetheless. Perhaps circumstances will also inspire her to come around on the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* ruling.

■ The brouhaha over Roger Stone's sentencing ended with a whimper. Judge Amy Berman Jackson imposed 40 months' imprisonment, precisely in the range that Attorney General Bill Barr had controversially proposed. His suggestion, countermanding the four trial prosecutors (including some former Mueller-probe staffers), who had asked for nine years, prompted gnashing of teeth from the organized bar, including a petition signed by some 2,000 former Justice Department officials (many

with long histories of donations to Democrats) and the diva-like resignation of the trial prosecutors. While the prosecutors' proposal was a literally sound construction of draconian sentencing guidelines, it ignored federal law's imperative that the punishment fit the crime: here, Stone's hapless obstruction. The Barr controversy concerned a non-binding recommendation; everyone knew the sentencing was wholly up to the judge. As for the claim he was doing the president's bidding, Barr favored keeping Stone's convictions in place and a sentence of more than three years, in a case Trump would have favored dismissing. In this case, Barr seems to have found the golden mean between Trump and his critics.

■ Grants of clemency to a president's allies and friends are not unprecedented, but this president has engaged in them to an unusual degree. A recent spate of them benefited the "junk bond" king Michael Milken and former Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich. Milken's pardon was justified: It has always seemed to us, and to other observers, that his real crime was not the technicality he went down for but making it easier to depose sleepy corporate managers. Blagojevich is a harder case: The sentence may have been too harsh, but he has never expressed any contrition for trying to sell a Senate appointment. Mercy has to be balanced against other goods, and our political class is not so full of rectitude that we should show more tolerance for corruption.

■ A few days before launching his lawsuit against what he called "this filthy organization," the climate scientist Michael Mann wrote that there "is a possibility that I can ruin National Review." Nearly a decade later, we are still fighting his attempt to do precisely that. Now, after our myriad attempts to get the meritless case dismissed have failed, we are back in the trial court, with expensive and time-consuming discovery underway. Mann's plan to "ruin" us, as he put it in an email produced under discovery, is plainly to get to a trial with a politically sympathetic D.C. jury and hope that the finer points of the law and the First Amendment are lost. (Short of that, he is surely happy for the case to drag out further, draining us of energy and resources.) But it's clear that the case should never get to that point—hence our latest motion. Under the First Amendment, Mann has to prove that we published the Corner post in question with "actual malice." That would require him to show that NR actually believed that the post was "false" (or likely false) at the time of publication. That is absurd for a number of reasons, including that—given the nature of The Corner—we didn't even know about the post until *after* it was published. The case against NATIONAL REVIEW is thus nonsensical at its core. It is also barred by a federal statute, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which protects online publishers for hosting content posted by outside contributors. Mann's stated intention is to bring us "down for good." Needless to say, this is not how a country with a First Amendment or a culture of free speech is supposed to work. It's past time that this suit is dismissed as incompatible with both, and a failure on the facts and the law.

■ President Trump has nominated Representative John Ratcliffe (R., Texas) to become director of national intelligence. The job, held by former senator Dan Coats from 2017 to 2019, is now filled on an acting basis by Richard Grenell, who is also our

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Senate Republicans questioned his credentials; before his brief time in Congress he was a lawyer and a small-town Texas mayor. The most important credential of both Grenell and Ratcliffe is their loyalty to Trump. Fine. But why can't the president find someone for an important slot who is loyal, experienced, and unencumbered by other duties?

■ The goat of this year's CPAC, the annual D.C.-area conservative bash, was Mitt Romney. When President Trump addressed the gathering, he twice called Romney a "low-life." Turning Point USA founder Charlie Kirk encouraged the crowd to boo Romney ("Every time his name is mentioned, you should respond that way"). But American Conservative Union chairman Matt Schlapp took the prize when he told Greta Van Susteren that if Romney were to show up—Schlapp having previously announced that he would not be welcome—"I would actually be afraid for his physical safety, people are so mad at him." Did Schlapp mean to say that CPAC attendees are uncontrollable louts? Or did he mean that they are mad at Romney, but he couldn't think of any non-loutish way to say so?

■ President Trump's 2020 campaign sued the *New York Times* for libel. The suit targets a March 2019 op-ed by former *Times* executive editor Max Frankel, explicitly written as an opinion piece, placed in the opinion pages. Legally, opinion is not libel. Political opinion enjoys robust First Amendment protection. Frankel based a "collusion" argument on the June 2016 Trump Tower meeting. Because the Mueller probe absolved him of criminal conspiracy with Russia, Trump suggests that any claim of collusion is defamatory. But mere collusion is not conspiracy, which is why there has been so much loose talk about the former. Frankel did not claim the latter. Trump does not need a lawsuit to argue that the mainstream media are in the tank for Democrats. Will the president ever learn that not every pointless fight is worth fighting?

■ The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals briefly halted Trump's "Remain in Mexico" policy, under which Central American migrants seeking asylum must wait their turn in Mexico—and then promptly stayed its own order, allowing the policy to continue for the time being as court challenges proceed. The policy, the result of a deal with Mexico, has been key to mitigating the crisis at the border by discouraging those who seek to abuse the asylum process: Migrants are no longer released into the country while they await their hearings, and thus they no longer have an easy opportunity to disappear

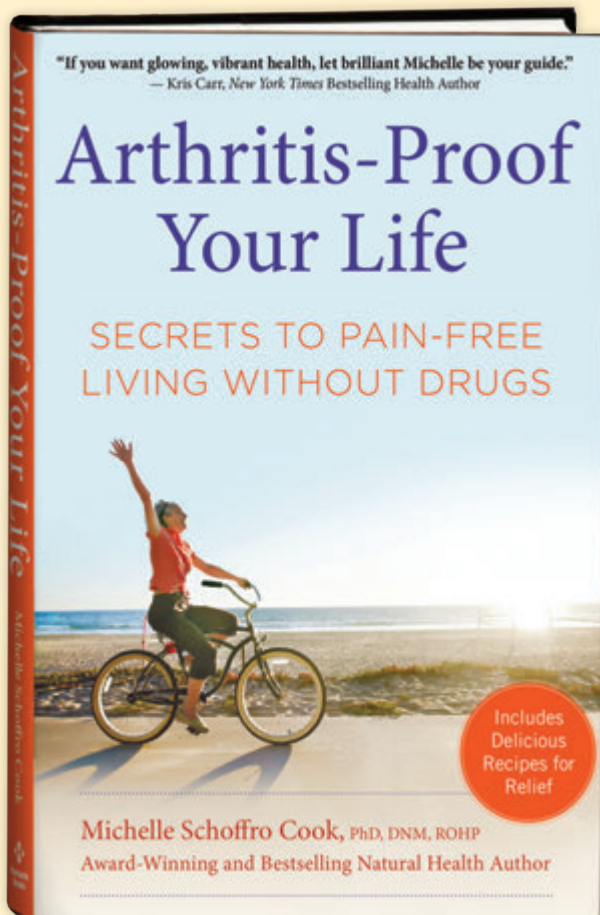
into the interior. The rule also appears to be legal, as the executive branch has the authority to return certain migrants to territories bordering the U.S., though that question involves parsing several convoluted passages of U.S. immigration law. The Supreme Court should settle this matter as soon as possible; or better yet, Congress should immediately clarify the statutes to allow this crucial policy to continue.

■ Democrats in the Senate have successfully filibustered two pro-life bills, the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act and the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act. The first bill would have required doctors to provide medical care to newborn infants who survive attempted abortions and the second would have prohibited abortion after 20 weeks' gestation. The votes could expose the extremism of dozens of Democrats (both bills have majority support among Americans, according to recent polls), but only if Republicans publicize them. We know prominent media outlets won't.

■ The Democrat-led House has passed a bill that would ban flavored tobacco and non-tobacco nicotine-vaping products, including menthol cigarettes. This comes on top of new rules that prohibit many (but not all) flavorings in the nicotine cartridges used in the popular Juul and other similar vaping devices. Those rules were imposed by the Trump administration, which nonetheless opposes the House bill, as do some members of the Congressional Black Caucus, who protest that the ban on menthol cigarettes places a disproportionate burden on black smokers, who choose menthol more frequently than do other smokers. The Trump administration and the Congressional Black Caucus, together at last. The CBC does have a point: African Americans would be disproportionately inconvenienced by the ban on menthol cigarettes. But to the broader point: Why should any adult be restricted when it comes to choosing, not whether to smoke or to vape, but which products to choose? The Trump administration's rules and the Democratic bill both are offered as responses to the popularity of vaping among underage users, but selling these products to minors already is illegal—as, indeed, is selling these products to some adults: President Trump already has signed into law a measure prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to people under 21. That's Washington thinking: If one regulation doesn't work, pile on some obliquely related ones.

■ Critics of school vouchers often say that public schools are hurt when students leave for private schools. Supporters of vouchers say the opposite: When public schools face competition, they're forced to get their act together. A carefully designed study, recently released through the National Bureau of Economic Research, supports the latter view. As Florida's private-school scholarship program has expanded over the past two decades, the study finds, outcomes for public-school students have improved—with the gains concentrated at the schools most subject to private competition, and among lower-income kids. Competition works: Who knew?

■ While digging through Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's personal Facebook feed, a reporter at the *New York Post* unearthed a 2017 video of the socialist upstart celebrating her goddaughter's placement in a New York charter school. "My



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goddaughter,” Ocasio-Cortez exulted while walking through the Bronx—“I got her into a charter school like maybe a block or two down.” The Squad leader’s goddaughter was lucky to get into the school when she did. Her godmother is stumping for Bernie Sanders, who promises to freeze federal funding for charter schools and ban all for-profit charters.

■ There were moments during the trial of Harvey Weinstein when it was almost possible to feel sorry for him: a man ruled by sexual compulsions that he could not gratify in normal ways. Such moments vanished as soon as they appeared, because the ways in which he gratified himself depended on coercion and intimidation, wielding the power of his position over young actresses. A jury convicted Weinstein of first-degree sexual assault and third-degree rape. He will appeal, but must also stand trial in Los Angeles for different charges of sexual assault and rape. Hollywood cannot be tried legally for its complicity in these crimes, but surely a moral reckoning must take place.

■ Cenk Uygur, a sometime politician and founder of the Young Turks, a left-wing media outfit, has been trying to dissuade his workers from unionizing, because, he says, these efforts would be unhelpful to the firm. Imagine that! The *Huffington Post* describes Uygur in a fit of pique “chastising” employees who had proposed organizing a union. “A unionized workforce would bring new legal and bureaucratic costs that TYT can’t sustain,” the *Huffington Post* wrote. Indeed. (Uygur’s employees “spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation,” reports the publication. Some progressive boss!) This sort of thing is everywhere to be seen: The University of California at Santa Cruz just fired dozens of unionized teaching assistants who put together a wildcat strike for higher pay. Everybody is Eugene Debs when it comes to other people’s businesses—when it’s their business, progressives are Ronald Reagan vs. the air-traffic controllers. Lori G. Kletzer, the university’s “interim campus provost and executive vice chancellor” (such a lot of titles!) said that the university just couldn’t justify keeping on nonperforming staff. Yes, and there’s good reason it is easier to make automobiles in Tennessee than in Detroit. Perhaps our progressive friends will be able to deduce a more general principle from their experience.

■ Dancing Nazis? Hasidic insects? A concentration-camp float? These were featured items in carnival parades this year in Campo de Criptana, Spain, and Aalst, Belgium. Carnival is saturnalia, an upside-down world of revelry and mockery. It is hard to judge performance art, which is what costumed parades are, from online clips (what might we make of a highlight reel from *The Producers*?). But the presence of such displays on a continent that harbored actual Nazis who treated Jews of all stripes like insects, only 80 years ago, is not cause for revelry. Next year go to New Orleans instead.

■ A February 3 column in the *Wall Street Journal* by Walter Russell Mead carried a clever headline: “China Is the Real Sick Man of Asia.” Mead’s point, true enough, was that “the coronavirus epidemic is unlikely to be the last” catastrophe there, as dictatorial repression tends to yield instability. The “sick man” metaphor, apt enough, refers to a once-great power

in decline, variants having been used to describe the Ottoman Empire in the mid 19th century, Britain after the Suez crisis, and stagnating Japan in the 1990s. A common phrase, an uncommon reaction: Chinese authorities denounced the headline, demanded that the newspaper retract the column and apologize, and expelled from the country three of the newspaper’s reporters. (In response the Trump administration curtailed the number of Chinese state-media employees welcome in the U.S.) This attempt to whip up a struggle session was likely a ploy to distract from public scrutiny, so good for the *Journal* for refusing to kneel.

■ “Earlier today, we arrested three local men, aged 63 to 72, for suspected participation in a non-approved gathering.” That bland-sounding statement, uttered by a police official, fell on Hong Kong like a bomb. The arrestees were “three local men,” yes, but not just any three. They were three of the most illustrious democracy advocates in the city: Lee Cheuk-yan, of the Labour Party; Yeung Sum, of the Democratic Party; and Jimmy Lai, the entrepreneur and businessman. Lai is possibly the most famous person in all of Hong Kong. He publishes a newspaper, *Apple Daily*. Some 7,000 people have been arrested since the recent democracy protests began in earnest. The arrest of Lai, Lee, and Yeung puts the crackdown at a whole new level. In front of a police station, Lee vowed, “The charges will not hinder our fight for democracy, freedom, and our human right to continue to gather, march, and protest.” If Hong Kong people are to maintain their democratic freedoms, they will need all of that spirit they can get.

■ Some are calling it the worst moment in the nine years of Syria’s war: a big claim, given the mass killings and other horrors that have gone on. But the latest is exceptionally hard to hear about. Approximately 1 million Syrians have fled to the last rebel-held territory, Idlib Province, which is in the northwest of the country. The winter has been extremely hard. People are living in tents or out in the open. They are doing anything they can to keep warm, and that includes burning clothes and shoes—anything to live through the night, if only to die the next day. An unknown number of babies and small children have frozen to death. The World Health Organization reported 29 in late January. Even those Americans who oppose intervention in Syria have to wonder, “Should the United States do more, if only in the provision of blankets, heaters, and other items that go under the name ‘humanitarian aid’?”

■ Northeastern neighborhoods of Delhi descended into mayhem for three days and nights last month as police watched. For weeks, Muslim Indians had been holding public protests against the new Citizenship Amendment Act, which provides a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants who have fled religious persecution in neighboring countries. The CAA excludes Muslims. It was enacted not long after the government’s revocation, last year, of autonomy for India’s only Muslim-majority state. In Delhi, Hindu mobs began to descend on the protesters. Confrontations led to violence; 46 were killed, most of them Muslims. Rioters set fire to homes, businesses, and four mosques. The Shiv Vihar neighborhood was hit especially hard. When authorities finally bestirred themselves to investigate,

they targeted Muslims. In promoting their Hindu-nationalist vision for India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party have exacerbated longstanding tensions between Hindus and Muslims and emboldened those who would resort to violence to impose Hindu supremacy. In the face of deep sectarian conflict, pluralist liberal democracy in India has always been fragile. It's too soon to call it finally broken, but not to note that Modi appears resolved to break it.

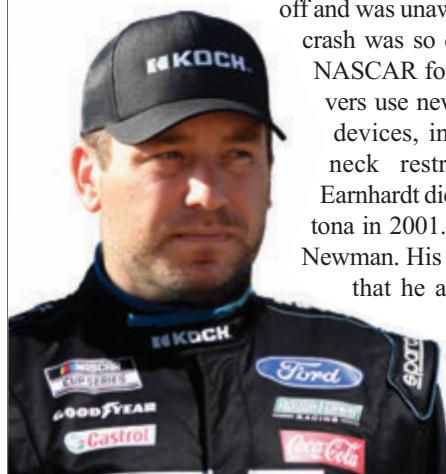
■ The British House of Lords held a debate on whether public toilets ought to be gender-neutral. Lord Lucas argued that “wok-ness” has resulted in an abandonment of common sense on the matter. “Some institutions have converted their ladies’ and gents’ communal toilet facilities to gender-neutral. Others have converted changing rooms similarly,” he said. “Is this desirable or justified? What research as to people’s needs is it based on? Has anyone—and women in particular—been consulted?” He further added that women have the most to lose in these situations and that it is quite understandable that they should not want to “find themselves in an enclosed, unobserved space with men.” These are good questions to raise and points to make, even if it is a pity they have to be.

■ “Predators harmed innocent children,” Jim Turley, chairman of the Boy Scouts of America, writes in an open letter to men who as members of the organization were abused by volunteers and employees. “And for this I am deeply sorry. The BSA cannot undo what happened to you.” He goes on to explain that the organization is filing for “a voluntary financial restructuring,” or bankruptcy, “to ensure that it can compensate all victims of past abuse.” Faced with hundreds of lawsuits, with more probably to come, BSA plans to establish a fund from which it would settle claims out of court, a plan that it may ask a judge to approve. “We are committed to supporting” the victims “and to doing everything in our power to prevent it from happening to others,” Turley promises. That is, of course, the least that the Boy Scouts can do; also, at this point, the most that it *can* do. As the Catholic Church in the United States in the past 20 years has demonstrated, institutions can reduce and come close to eliminating the scourge of sexual misconduct within their ranks. BSA has taken the first step, which is to acknowledge past crimes.

■ The National Hockey League requires the home team to keep an experienced goaltender available during games, ready to fill in for either side if both of its regular goalies are injured. This happened at a recent Toronto Maple Leafs home game, when a rec-league goalie named Dave Ayres had to suit up quickly with 8:41 left in the second period after both of the visiting Carolina Hurricanes’ netminders went down with injuries. Ayres, who sometimes serves as a practice goalie for the Leafs and drives the Zamboni for their minor-league affiliate, got off to a shaky start in his NHL debut, letting in both shots he faced in the second. But between periods he regained his focus, and in the third he stopped all eight shots, helping the Hurricanes to a 6–3 victory. It’s rare that fans cheer a player on the opposing team after a loss, but that’s what happened this time. Ayres was named the No. 1 star of the game, earned \$500, got official credit for the win, and was allowed to keep his jersey. They also serve who only drive the Zamboni . . .

■ Ryan Newman was leading on the final turn of the last lap of the Daytona 500 when a car hit his, No. 6, from behind, sending it into the air and against the wall. No. 6 landed on its roof, in the path of an oncoming car, which propelled it back into the air. It then skidded down the track and past the finish line. An emergency crew doused the flames, turned the car right side up, and spent the next 20 minutes extricating Newman, who was carried away on a stretcher. He sustained serious but not life-threatening injuries and was released from the hospital two days later. Denny Hamlin won the race and later apologized for having celebrated with his team on the track, explaining that he had turned his radio

off and was unaware that Newman’s crash was so dire. Give credit to NASCAR for requiring that drivers use new, reinforced safety devices, including head-and-neck restraints, after Dale Earnhardt died in a crash at Daytona in 2001. Godspeed to Ryan Newman. His racing team reports that he and his family “are grateful for the unwavering support of the NASCAR community and beyond.”



■ Given the music industry’s lax standards, it’s hard to behave badly enough to get kicked out of a rock band, but it does happen. The Beatles fired Pete Best for being a lousy drummer; the Rolling Stones fired Brian Jones for taking too many drugs; the Sex Pistols fired Glen Matlock for liking the Beatles (and replaced him with Sid Vicious, who had never played bass before, but that’s not a problem in punk rock). Hip-hop has always been more fastidious, of course, and now Chuck D, a founding member of the rap group Public Enemy, has fired his clock-wearing co-founder Flavor Flav for declining to appear at a Bernie Sanders rally. In response, Mr. Flav’s lawyer sent Mr. D a cease-and-desist letter proclaiming that “there is no Public Enemy without Flavor Flav.” The letter ends with “Bernie, his name is Flavor Flav and he does NOT approve your message!”

■ For 30 years Hosni Mubarak was the president of Egypt, a dictator in all but name. He perfected the holding of referendums that he won by means of running unopposed. An efficient and ruthless secret police had the heavy duty of keeping him in power. Among thousands imprisoned without charges were opposition politicians. Islamists had murdered his predecessor Anwar Sadat, and Mubarak survived numerous attempted assassinations. Arab leaders came to see his Egypt as a force for order and stability. There was some sense that he wished to do his best for a population with worsening problems of livelihood. Washington’s annual subsidy in his day was some \$2 billion, a proportion of which finished in the pockets of himself and his two sons. In Egypt, the Arab Spring turmoil of 2011 took the form of open revolution. Arrested,

Mubarak was the first Arab leader to be tried in his own country. Final years in prison, in military hospital, or under house arrest brought this cautionary tale to its conclusion. Aged 91, he died. R.I.P.

■ Ever been to a Trader Joe's? It is an offbeat grocery store, and there are more than 500 of them in the country. The chain was founded by Joe Coulombe, a Californian. Born in 1930, he went to San Diego High and studied economics at Stanford. In the 1960s, he owned a small chain of convenience stores in the L.A. area. But then 7-Eleven came in, dwarfing him. He figured he ought to come up with something else. And he came up with a store catering to somewhat exotic tastes, and having a laid-back, California-cool vibe. As he put it in 2011, he wanted a store for the “overeducated and underpaid”—people such as classical musicians, museum curators, and journalists. He made it go. Trader Joe Coulombe has now died at 89. A country can't be nothing but politicians and central planners. We need the entrepreneurs. R.I.P.



■ “An American hero.” That is what current NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine called Katherine Johnson after news of her death at age 101 was released on February 24. Johnson's story received long-deserved recognition after the release of the 2016 book *Hidden Figures* (and movie of the same name), which detailed the remarkable life of this African-American woman and her major contribution to putting man into space and on the moon. Born in West Virginia in 1918, Johnson had an uncanny aptitude for mathematics, which culminated in her gradu-

uating summa cum laude from West Virginia State in 1937. After a decade teaching high-school math and raising a family, she began working at Virginia's Langley Research Center in 1953 and remained there for the next three decades. Barack Obama presented Johnson with the Presidential Medal of Honor in 2015 for her dedicated service during this chapter of American history. It is difficult to convey how brilliant Johnson was and the extent to which her work enabled America to pull ahead in the space race. Her passion for mathematics and love for her work should be an inspiration to all. R.I.P.

■ Martha B. Apgar was a Florida lady and a woman of the world. She loved God, freedom, and America. Once, she was sitting in a restaurant, next to a festive, somewhat rowdy table. She remarked, “I love the sound of Americans having a good time.” She also loved music, nature, and WFB. Virtually everyone who knew her, loved her. She was kind, smart, lively, moral, and beautiful. She was a generous donor to NATIONAL REVIEW, and a bright presence on our cruises—for many years, in the company of her elegant sister, Louise Garmy. Mrs. Apgar wanted to perpetuate free enterprise and liberal-democratic values. To that end, she created the Apgar Foundation in 2009.

Born in 1928, she has died at her home on the Gulf of Mexico, outside Tampa. She leaves her family and friends, and the many whom she benefited through her philanthropy, full of gratitude. R.I.P.

POLITICS

Biden's Time

AFTER the South Carolina primary and Super Tuesday, it is looking much less likely that the Democrats will pin their presidential chances on a self-declared socialist. Enough Democrats were alarmed by that possibility to consolidate with stunning rapidity behind the candidacy of former vice president Joe Biden. They have compelling, albeit mostly negative, reasons for doing so: He hasn't praised Castro's Cuba, he isn't calling for outlawing most Americans' health insurance, he doesn't want to ban fracking. Democratic voters forced Amy Klobuchar, Pete Buttigieg, and Michael Bloomberg out of the race. All have now endorsed Biden.

Yet Biden, notwithstanding his impressive turnaround, is not obviously a stronger general-election candidate than Bernie Sanders. He is old, and he wears his age poorly. No sober observer will ever call either Biden or President Trump a great orator, but the latter is much better at getting his point across. Then there are Biden's decades as a Washington insider.

And while Biden counts as a moderate within the Democratic Party, that party has itself been moving left, and Biden has been pulled along. Biden wants a \$3 trillion tax increase, an expensive expansion of Obamacare, a reduction in enforcement of the immigration laws, limits on energy use, and taxpayer-funded abortion. And that's before he has tried to mollify Sanders and his supporters, who are not suddenly going to turn reasonable. Already they are treating the result of a free vote as an illegitimate “coup.”

That's what Marianne Williamson, now a Sanders surrogate, called it. She sounds like she is ready to put a hex on the Democratic Party. Maybe someone already has.



Joe Biden speaks at a Super Tuesday campaign event, March 3, 2020.

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Negligible ‘Never Bernie’

Sanders and the Democrats are birds of a feather

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

IN 2016, there was a groundswell of conservative and Republican opposition to Donald Trump, led in no small part by this magazine. In 2020, there is not much sign of a comparable movement among Democrats in opposition to Senator Bernie Sanders, the socialist from Vermont from Brooklyn who is running for the presidential nomination of a party to which he does not belong as a confessing socialist calling for revolution.

Why is there no “Never Bernie” movement to speak of?

The *New York Post* went looking for one in early February and did not come up with much: some rumors of discontent, but only vague ones. Democratic activist Jim Kessler of Third Way was exemplary: “I’ll still put a Bernie Sanders bumper sticker on my car,” he told the *Post*, “but a lot of people won’t.” Who? Donna Brazile, the former DNC chair, denied that there was any effort from any high-level Democrats to stop Sanders—only a few “moody” donors.

There is a purely strategic anti-Sanders effort, to be sure, typified by the Big Tent Project, which works to promote less radical candidates (it helped Joe Biden in South Carolina) and warns Democrats that “nominating Bernie means we reelect Trump.” There is a very large difference

between worrying that a candidate will lose and believing that he does not deserve to win—that he is, as many conservatives said of Trump in 2016, fundamentally unfit for the office he seeks. Which Senator Sanders manifestly is. Democrats may be concerned that his radicalism is likely to be a political loser, but there is not much intellectual or moral pushback against the radicalism itself.

To the extent that one exists at all, the supra-strategic “Never Bernie” tendency consists of 7,844 nobodies on Twitter and David Brooks, a conservative-leaning *New York Times* columnist who interned for William F. Buckley Jr. and who has been an ex-Republican for about as long as Donald Trump has been a Republican. The Twitter nobodies are mostly disappointed partisans of the campaigns of other Democratic-primary contenders who cannot forgive Senator Sanders’s often brutish supporters for their abuses, e.g., field director Ben Mora’s mockery of Amy Klobuchar and Elizabeth Warren’s looks (“chunky” and “looks like sh**,” respectively) and Pete Buttigieg’s sexuality, threatening violence at Joe Biden events, etc. Tom Watson, a Democratic strategist, reports “a level of pure antipathy I’ve never seen before” among anti-Sanders Democrats, but other than the

desultory social-media stuff, it is not much in evidence.

If you want to see “pure antipathy,” consider the Democratic response to Brooks’s column arguing that Sanders, with his socialism and his calls for revolution, is illiberal, something like a left-wing Donald Trump. In a hysterically stupid but terribly typical response, Paul Waldman complained in the *Washington Post* that Brooks wrote “as though Sanders has proposed herding us all into collective farms, starving half the population and establishing a gulag where he’ll send his political enemies” but—get this!—failed to produce a single quote from Sanders calling for that.

Well.

As it turns out, Lenin did not publicly advocate starving millions of Ukrainians to death, Castro did not publicly advocate murdering librarians and imprisoning homosexuals, Chávez did not publicly advocate turning Venezuela into a basket case . . . Senator Sanders says that what he has in mind is Denmark, but the policies he proposes are nothing like Danish policies, which he evidently knows absolutely nothing about, and he has spent his life as an apologist for the Soviet Union (where he vacationed), Castro’s brutal regime (literacy programs!), Chávez’s Venezuela (his Senate website posted an article praising that socialist backwater as the new home of the American dream), etc. In fact, if you listen to Kim Jong-un talk about his philosophy of government, it turns out to be—SURPRISE!—rather different from how things actually work in North Korea. I have yet to find a single quotation from the Dear Leader in which he argues that his fellow countrymen should be starved until they are reduced to cannibalism.

Progressives in general rallied to Senator Sanders in defending him against criticism of the agenda that he himself describes as “socialism.” Tom Scocca of *Slate* dismissed Brooks’s column as a “grotesque pack of lies,” while Jonathan Chait of *New York* insisted that “Bernie is an economic socialist but a political liberal.” Senator Sanders proposes, among other things, to gut the First Amendment in order to put political speech under direct federal control—that is not liberalism, but its opposite. Brooks’s characterization of Sanders’s populist demagoguery and the mode of politics it implies—“majoritarian domination”—not only is

apt and accurate, it is precisely what Senator Sanders himself promises: a revolution that will leave his political opponents unable to oppose his agenda because they will be regulated into silence or politically bullied into acquiescence.

Don't expect to see an anti-Sanders movement comparable to the anti-Trump movement of 2016, for at least four reasons.

First, there is no principled anti-Sanders movement because Democrats' principles are Sanders's principles. Whereas Republicans in 2016 had good reason to doubt Trump on everything from abortion to the Second Amendment to taxes, Democrats have no such qualms about Sanders. Sanders calls himself a socialist, Warren insists that she is a capitalist, but they come down pretty close together on health care, business regulation, taxes, and much more. (With capitalists like these, who needs socialists?) Sanders wants a monopoly health-care system, punitive taxation, a (further) weaponized regulatory state, and a radical expansion in federal spending and federal power. Democrats may quibble, but they simply are not in the position of 2016 Republicans who doubted Trump's reliability on their core issues.

Second, Democrats do not actually believe socialism to be outside the boundaries of respectable opinion. They may worry about it as a marketing matter, but Sanders's enthusiasm for left-wing autocrats from Moscow to Havana to Caracas is not, from the progressive point of view, morally comparable to disreputable right-wing enthusiasms—for Pinochet or Franco, once upon a time, or for Orban or Alternative für Deutschland today. They are committed to their belief that Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs were “on the right side of history,” that those who opposed them were monsters, and that those who rallied to the flag of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao were only humanitarians with excessive enthusiasm—“liberals in a hurry,” as they used to say.

Third, unlike 2016 Republicans, 2020 Democrats do not believe that Sanders's performative outrage, rhetorical incontinence, facile extremism, defects of judgment, etc., disqualify him from the office. They only worry that voters might think this and punish his campaign and their party—which, let us remember, are not the same thing—for these excesses. Trump abominates CNN, and Democrats

see a would-be censor and a threat to the First Amendment. (Never mind that every single Democrat in the Senate voted to effectively repeal the First Amendment only a few years ago.) Democrats complain about Fox News—and Senator Sanders complains more generally about the “corporate media”—and progressives hear only a call to arms. Both Senator Sanders and Senator Warren have taken the lead in outlining repressive new measures curbing political speech in the name of “campaign-finance reform,” but practically every major Democrat accepts these or similar measures enthusiastically.

Fourth and finally for this discussion, the Democratic Party's transformation into the Party of Oberlin is, if not quite complete (see South Carolina and the resurgence of Joe Biden), then very far along. When James Carville warns about driving away blue-collar and rural voters, Democrats in Brooklyn hear that Southern accent and quietly whisper, “Good riddance.” The Democrats are in the mood for culture war, not for coalition-building and reconciliation. They do not wish to win with moderation and compromise, because they do not wish to govern with moderation and compromise. They feel themselves to have been humiliated by the Trump administration, and they have set upon Sanders as the instrument of their vengeance. That Senator Sanders has so much in common with Trump—an outsider to the party who loathes the party leadership, a demagogue who detests compromise and bipartisanship, who has a funky outer-boroughs accent and zany hair, who until the day before yesterday voiced remarkably Trumpian views on immigration and trade, etc.—is no accident, and it is not something that Democrats are having to hold their collective nose and swallow. Democrats speak in public as though the Republican Party has been ruined by Donald Trump, but in truth their detestation is larded with envy. Trump has given the Republicans something the Democrats want for themselves.

For better and for worse, the Trumpiness of Senator Sanders is the sizzle *and* the steak, and not only for the hardline left-wingers. They could have had a Buttigieg or a Klobuchar, and they may yet nominate Biden as a kind of placeholder and caretaker. But Senator Sanders, a man with the freshest ideas from the 1930s and the cultural affect of the 1970s, is the future of the Democratic Party.

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Plagues And Panics, Ancient and Modern

The world's reaction to the coronavirus is disproportionate to the threat

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

MOST preindustrial mass plagues were bacterial, caused by urban overcrowding and poor-to-nonexistent garbage and sewage disposal. In the disruptive aftermath of pandemics, fundamental social and political change sometimes followed—wars lost, governments ended, wealth and power reversed. Of course, cheap antibiotics, modern medical care, and sophisticated sewage treatment and refuse collection have mostly ended the epidemic threat of typhus, typhoid, and bubonic plague. Apparently, our trust in modern drugs is such that we arrogantly do not even consider the chance of pandemic danger posed by 500,000 or so homeless Americans, who live outside in harsh weather, amid vermin, excrement, and rodents on our major urban-center sidewalks.

Instead, in the modern age, viruses have mostly replaced bacteria in posing theoretical threats of mass infection, illness, and death. While modern Western medicine, given enough time, can sometimes prevent many pandemic viral infections through mass vaccinations, they are, unlike many bacterial illnesses, often impossible, or at least difficult, to treat.

If bacterial plagues are far more unlikely in our postmodern society, globalization has still made the specter of an epidemic of a viral disease—Ebola, Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and, most recently, COVID-19—not impossible. The A and B influenzas, despite mass inoculations, infect about 20–30 million Americans per year. Depending on the particular

annual mutating strain, anywhere between 10,000 and 80,000 die from seasonal influenzas, mostly the elderly or chronically sick. In addition, given the easy ability to weaponize diseases in labs, and especially given the recent spread abroad of the sophisticated Western sciences of bacteriology and virology to first-generation high-technological and authoritarian societies—China in particular—the idea of a historic pandemic is not always fanciful.

The great plague at Athens (430–29 B.C.) that broke out in the second year of the Peloponnesian War, according to the historian Thucydides, wiped out as many as 80,000 people (a fourth of the population of Athens), including rural refugees from the Attic countryside. Nothing, the historian claimed, did more damage to Athens.

Some 2,500 years later, it remains a parlor game among classicists to identify the precise infectious culprit. Some form of either typhus or typhoid seems most likely. Most historians agree that the epidemic that killed Pericles was likely a result of his policy of forced evacuation of the Attic rural population from the country to inside the walls of Athens during the Spartan invasion in late May 430 B.C. The busy port at Piraeus was an incubator and force multiplier of the disease.

Thucydides' contemporary description of the pestilence inaugurated a tradition in Western historiography of envisioning plagues as reflections on the pathologies of contemporary society. He focuses not just on the deaths and the demographic swath of the disease but even more so on the psychological and sociological damage the disease wrought. In his view, such natural and manmade calamities, like war and revolution, by the nature of their illogical violence and unpredictable mayhem, eventually rip off the thin veneer of civilization. They reduce people to their animal essences. In their instinctual and deadly competitive efforts to survive one more day, the mob in extremis will do almost anything—and blame almost anyone and anything.

In the ancient world, then, plagues usually arrived in early summer from the non-west (Egypt or Asia). They entered European ports, usually in the south and east, and accelerated through filthy and densely populated cities. Pandemics triggered debates on the value of the minority scientific method—which focused on

symptomology, diagnoses, therapies, and prognoses—versus the majority popular embrace of religion and superstition, which equated plagues with divine wrath or hubris and therefore fixated on particular villains and customs that had provoked such godly wrath.

After the Athenian plague, Athens could still ward off a Spartan victory, but it lacked the resources to vanquish the Spartan empire and its growing number of allies. In some sense, the grandiose visions of imperial Athens ended with the plague—even as a wider Greek interest in both medical science and popular religion increased.

Sophocles' greatest play, *Oedipus Rex*, was staged a year after the plague began to wane. Its chief protagonist, Oedipus, a good and wise man whose sin is to believe that his haughty reason can defeat cosmic fate, resembles in his arrogance the recently deceased Pericles, the renaissance man with a worldly consort of philosophers, libertines, and artists.

Again, it was the statesman's strategy of withdrawing tens of thousands of rural Athenians into the city to ride out the invasion of Spartan hoplites that ensured that the city became the petri dish for the plague. Of course, Pericles' strategy, in theory, might have worked, had his celebrated reliance on reason included knowledge of the relationship between sanitation and infection. In the end, even the rationalist Pericles was reduced to clutching amulets to ward off the plague.

The lifelong quest of the Byzantine emperor Justinian (c. 482–565) focused on reestablishing the lost Roman Empire in the West under new Byzantine Greek auspices. Over some 30 years of constant campaigning, his brilliant marshals Belisarius and Narses reconquered much of southern Europe, North Africa, the Balkans, and Asia Minor, while Justinian dedicated the monumental church of Hagia Sophia and codified Roman law.

But the bubonic plague of 541–42 soon spread from the port capital at Constantinople throughout the empire. The pandemic would go on to kill 500,000 Byzantines and render the military agendas of Justinian—who also got the disease but recovered—inert.

The chatty contemporary historian Procopius, in Thucydidean fashion, blamed the Egyptians for the pandemic's origins. He went on to describe the disease as the catalyst for the same

uncivilized behavior so chillingly described nearly a millennium earlier by Thucydides: the crass treatment of the unburied, the avoidance of the infected, the desperation to live wildly in the expectation of impending death, and an equally pernicious outbreak of nihilism, superstition, and self-pity.

The medieval outbreak in Europe of the Black Plague (1347–51) likely killed more than the Athenian and Justinian plagues combined, perhaps eventually half of the European population, or somewhere around 50–80 million people. Like prior bacterial plagues, it too was believed to have spread from the east and entered Mediterranean ports. It went ballistic in the heavily populated, fetid, and numerous cities of Europe.

In *The Decameron*, his brilliant collection of novellas, Boccaccio follows the same Western tradition of describing the symptoms, collating the various religious and superstitious exegeses for the sudden arrival of mass death, and for the general breakdown in popular mores. He too notes that the stricken public believed they were shortly to per-

ish and should therefore satisfy their appetites in the time they had left.

As I write, there have been only a few deaths from COVID-19 in the United States and fewer than 100 known cases. No child anywhere in the world under ten is known to have died from the disease. No matter. We are in the midst of a frenzy greater even than the 1976 “pandemic” threat of a new “swine flu” that had supposedly returned in the manner of the lethal 1918 pandemic.

The panicked U.S. stock market in recent weeks suffered its worst days since the 9/11 attacks—before rebounding when profiteers saw the economy stronger than the virus. The entire economy of China, ground zero of the pandemic, has become calcified, despite suffering fewer than 70,000 reported cases and fewer than 3,000 deaths in a population of 1.4 billion. Hundreds of millions of Chinese remain in both voluntary and forced quarantines, amid fuel and food shortages. As a result, China’s trillion-dollar supply chains to foreign importers stagnate. The modern world may be technologically savvy and medically sophisti-

cated, but it has not escaped the rumor, panic, and hysteria that break out when unknown diseases strike, as Thucydides and Procopius so chillingly once detailed.

Global population is nearing 8 billion, and little more than 3,000 worldwide are known to have died from COVID-19. Still, in my rural hometown of Selma, in isolated central California, I conducted an experiment today to see whether disposable medical gloves, face masks, and hand cleansers were still in full supply at the three national chain drug and food stores. All were sold out.

For all our millennia of scientific advancements, we know approximately as much about COVID-19 as Sophocles and Thucydides knew about the effects of the Athenian plague. How exactly does it spread differently from the flu? Are there unknown millions of infected who are not sure when, or even if, they became sick? How did COVID-19 originate—from Chinese bats, snakes, and pangolins in the open-air food markets of Wuhan? Or did the coronavirus strain escape from the oddly proximate Wuhan Institute of Virology of the Chinese Academy of

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Sciences, the only level-four Chinese center that conducts biological-weapons research? The Internet remains fervid with such theories and rumors. It would take a gossipy Procopius to hunt them all down.

Was COVID-19 a mutated virus that jumped to humans from the many known animal viruses in China? Did profit-minded technicians and doctors sell sick lab animals to the open markets? Were Chinese military researchers on the hunt for a coronavirus vaccine or an offensive super-weaponized strain—or both? The variety of these conspiracy theories seem no different from Thucydides' own speculations in book 2 of his history.

The known unknowns of our pandemic remain endless. Why were there epidemic foci in Iran and Italy, of all places? And why for such a supposedly virulent coronavirus were the ratios of dead to infected still below 2 percent, and like the flu, why was it mostly lethal to the elderly and chronically sick?

Globalization may have lifted billions out of poverty, but open borders and same-day transoceanic jet travel had helped to spread the disease. Meanwhile, the electronic ability to shut down social media and curtail free use of the Internet, cell phones, and dish and cable TV enabled the Chinese government to downplay the nature of COVID-19 for the first critical weeks of its outbreak.

Certainly, so far China is the world's great loser in the "pandemic" that is not yet really a pandemic. Beijing's initial suppression of news of the coronavirus confirmed a continually deteriorating global portrait of Communist China, especially when collated with its losing trade war with the U.S., the Hong Kong democracy protests, the million-person Uighur reeducation camps, and the Orwellian point-system surveillance of Chinese citizens.

In the end, we are left with the irony that the hysterias of a multibillion-person postmodern world in reaction to a rather puny virus are about the same as those of premodern societies that sometimes lost nearly half their populations from horrific plagues. But moderns—unlike ancients, who were without effective medicines and vaccinations—apparently believe that the good life means that pandemics of any sort belong to another era and have no business daring to pop up in their own. In terms of hysterias, the more the world changes, the more its people certainly remain the same. **NR**

The Counterweight To China in Asia

The importance of the American relationship with India

BY DANIEL TENREIRO

JUST ten days after Chinese Communist Party (CCP) chairman Mao Zedong inaugurated the People's Republic of China in 1949, Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru landed in Washington for a three-week tour of the United States. *Time* magazine called it "one of the century's most important visits of state"—a statement that would have been inconceivable a few years earlier, when India was still a British colony of limited geopolitical consequence for the U.S. But after the loss of Beijing to Communist rule, the newly independent India suddenly became, as the *New York Times* put it, "potentially a great counterweight to China." Though American leaders made overtures to Nehru, India's policy of neutrality during the Cold War, as well as its recognition of Mao's government, precluded a full-fledged alliance between the two countries.

Seventy years later, India has once again emerged as a possible bulwark against a rising China. Beijing loomed large as Indian prime minister Narendra Modi received President Trump at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad on February 24. Trump neglected to call out China by name during his stay, but his references to countries that "seek to claim power through coercion, intimidation, and aggression" left no doubt as to China's influence on the U.S.–India relationship. Though marred by ongoing religious violence in the streets of Delhi, the visit exhibited the mutual affinity between Trump and Modi that may finally turn intermittent alignment into lasting alliance.

After India gained independence, it often found itself strategically aligned

with the U.S. Despite India's Cold War neutrality, Washington provided economic aid to the country throughout the 1950s, reasoning that "if the United States helped India succeed and win the development race versus China, it could demonstrate to the 'uncommitted' world that democracy and development could co-exist and thrive," according to the Brookings Institution's Tanvi Madan.

As Beijing grew more hostile to Delhi in the late 1950s, the U.S. and India engaged in military as well as economic cooperation. In 1959, skirmishes erupted on the Sino–Indian border, and an uprising in neighboring Tibet alarmed Indian leaders. These disputes culminated in the 1962 Sino–Indian War, during which the Kennedy administration provided military assistance to Nehru's government. The following year, Nehru and Kennedy signed an air-defense agreement that included arms provisions and joint training exercises, as well as a somewhat veiled commitment to defend India against Chinese attack.

But differences in the two countries' strategic outlooks stood in the way of a lasting bilateral alliance. India's reluctance to become dependent on the U.S. led to its collaborating with Moscow, while disagreements as to the nature of the Chinese threat impeded more robust cooperation. Vis-à-vis China, Washington prioritized its long-term struggle against Communism, whereas Delhi focused on the urgent threat of Chinese encroachment on its border. Soon thereafter, the Nixon administration's policy of rapprochement with China nullified the latter's role as a mutual adversary of the two countries. Over the ensuing decades, India became functionally a client state of the Soviet Union, and the U.S.'s support for Pakistan soured relations between Delhi and Washington.

After the Cold War, India's economic liberalization in the 1990s and concerns about terrorism in the 2000s aligned the two countries' interests—up to a point. For one thing, the U.S. and Pakistan remained allies; for another, in keeping with its history of avoiding strong alliances, India preferred a diversified "portfolio" of partners to call on as needed.

Today, Beijing's increased belligerence has the potential to change that. Through its Belt and Road Initiative, China has expanded its reach into the Indian Ocean with a naval base in Djibouti, strategically located on the Gulf of Aden, and investments in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Because both

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India and China depend on energy resources transported through the sea-lanes of the Indian Ocean, control of the region's infrastructure and trade routes is of utmost strategic importance. On land, border disputes persist: In 2017, China's attempt to build a road through Doklam, on the border of India's ally Bhutan, led to a two-month military standoff between the two countries.

These simmering tensions provided the backdrop for the meetings between Trump and Modi in late February. Modi rolled out the red carpet for his fellow populist, hosting an extravagant state dinner and parading Trump around the Taj Mahal. The "Namaste Trump" rally held at the world's largest cricket stadium, in Ahmedabad, drew a crowd of 125,000.

The two sides announced an expanded defense partnership, including \$3 billion in arms sales. With the Indian military largely reliant on Russia, Delhi's purchase of American helicopters points to a belated reorientation of India's Cold War alignment. For its part, the White House's agreement to transfer sensitive military technology to Delhi is a sign of trust in the Modi government. The deal also includes industrial collaboration and—in a rebuke of Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei—collaboration on 5G networks.

The announcement fits into the Trump administration's policy of a "free and open Indo-Pacific," which sees the Indian and Pacific Oceans as a "single strategic arena" in the ongoing confrontation with China. Twice in the past two years, the White House has held high-level discussions with Indian defense officials, in addition to reviving "the Quad"—an informal strategic dialogue among the two countries, Australia, and Japan.

China has taken note, but much as in the 1960s, competition between Delhi and Beijing remains most consequential on the ideological rather than the military front. The Chinese have largely avoided responding to India's strategic realignment, in order not to lend credibility to India's democratic system. Georgetown professor Oriana Skylar Mastro argues that confronting India would undermine the CCP's assertion that "there is no developing country in the world that achieves prosperity and stability under Western-style democracy." Economic supremacy outranks military struggle in the Indo-Pacific struggle.

But on the critical economic front, the U.S.–India relationship has deteriorated. In May 2019, the White House stripped India

of its preferential trading status under the Generalized System of Preferences, which had exempted Indian imports to the U.S. from billions of dollars in tariffs. New U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum, which reduced Indian exports of steel products by 46 percent, drew retaliation from Modi.

At the 2018 World Economic Forum in Davos, Modi cautioned world leaders against protectionism, saying, "Many countries are becoming inward focused and globalization is shrinking, and such tendencies can't be considered lesser risks than terrorism or climate change." Yet his government has steadfastly rolled back the slow liberalization of trade that took place under its predecessors.

India's Most Favored Nation applied tariff rate is the highest of any major economy, and that rate has increased over the past two years. Modi's 2018 budget raised duties by up to 20 percent on items ranging from auto parts to toiletries. While the country had previously made progress in unifying tariff rates across products—which streamlines customs and reduces uncertainty for importers—the Modi government's incoherent, ad hoc approach has created huge variation in duties. The country also places strict limits on foreign ownership of businesses, a policy that squelches competition domestically.

Having once overtaken China as the world's fastest-growing major economy, with consistent growth of 8 percent, India has seen its GDP growth fall to its lowest rate in the last eleven years. Starting in the early 2010s, massive red tape and corruption began to weigh on production, bringing growth rates down to 5 percent. Modi ran on a platform of "minimum government, maximum governance," promising to liberalize the economy. His government has introduced some encouraging reforms: reducing barriers to foreign investment, cutting subsidies, and unifying India's states into a common market. In a country still suffering from a half century of socialism, these measures—though limited—are not inconsequential.

Yet by mimicking Beijing's protectionist trade policies, Modi's government evinces a lack of commitment to earnest economic liberalization. This is not surprising, as Modi's brand of populism, much like Trump's, is committed to strengthening domestic manufacturing, protecting small businesses, and promoting domestic agriculture. A greater hazard is his religious nationalism, which has ignited social strife

that could become a broader upheaval. The biggest story out of India during Trump's visit was attacks by Hindus against Muslims who were protesting a new citizenship law—the last in a series of nativist measures that have rolled back social progress in India. Modi's assault on religious freedom may permanently taint Indian democracy.

If the Indian government corrects course, the country is well positioned to grow by liberalization rather than central planning. Its dependency ratio—the proportion of children and the aged relative to the working-age population—is projected to shrink to 47 percent by 2050, when China's will hit 63 percent. Moreover, India sorely lacks the high-quality infrastructure that exists in China. Inadequate infrastructure is low-hanging fruit for the Modi government, which need only make room for private-sector investment. And if it enters the multilateral trading system in earnest, India will boost its subpar export numbers and streamline domestic production with more competition.

In the run-up to Trump's visit, officials on both sides had hinted at a "phase one" trade deal that would roll back some tariffs and pave the way for a broader free-trade agreement. Though that didn't happen, the two sides committed to concluding the current round of negotiations promptly. Trump's love for tariffs makes negotiating with India difficult: the president has little credibility to dissuade Modi from protectionism. But observers still expect a trade truce in the near future. For that truce to become a free-trade agreement, the two sides will have to prioritize addressing the Chinese threat over playing to their political bases.

There is a difference "between a nation that seeks power through coercion" and one "that rises by setting its people free. . . . And that is India," Trump said during his visit, extolling the "natural, beautiful, enduring friendship" between India and the U.S. That free nations prosper remains critical to world order. Beijing is determined to prove the superiority of its development model; its increasing belligerence has starkly demonstrated the choices facing the developing world. However challenging, an upgraded U.S.–India relationship remains possible. Consummate populists though they are, Modi and Trump have an opportunity to build a future for the free world—one that channels national grievances toward the pursuit of shared international interests.

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The Example Of Oyub Titiev

On a brave soul from Chechnya

BY JAY NORDLINGER

CHECHNYA is the worst place in Russia, “a nearly totalitarian enclave,” as Tanya Lokshina says. She works for Human Rights Watch in Moscow. Oyub Titiev says that Chechnya is “a testing ground for repression and terror.” Techniques perfected there can be applied elsewhere in the country.

Titiev works for the Memorial organization, about which I will say more in a moment.

Chechnya, or the Chechen Republic, is in the North Caucasus, with Georgia on its southern border. Since 2007, it has been ruled by Ramzan Kadyrov, a classic brute. He may be seen as Vladimir Putin’s viceroy in Chechnya. Kadyrov is a little Stalin, with some Caligula thrown in.

He likes to call his opponents “enemies of the people” and “foreign agents.” As he would have it, he and his comrades are “patriots” whereas their opponents are “traitors.” Oyub Titiev will have none of that. “They are patriotic toward Putin,” he says, “not toward the Chechen or Russian people. What kind of patriot robs his country, making millions for himself, while fighting his own people?”

Titiev is from an old Chechen family, and he was the Memorial director in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya. Memorial is the organization founded at the instigation of Andrei Sakharov in 1989. (Sakharov, you recall, was the great dissident and physicist.) Memorial’s purpose is twofold: to promote the truth about the past, and to promote democracy in the present. In 2017, I wrote in these pages about another Memorial worker, Yuri Dmitriev, from the Republic of Karelia. He is a political prisoner today, as he was then.

Oyub Titiev was a political prisoner from January 2018 to June 2019. Unable to work in his home republic, he lives

and works in Moscow. I will tell you a bit of his story.

He was born in 1957 and grew up in his ancestral village, Kurchaloi. His father worked in the passport office of a police station. (These were internal passports, necessary to move within the Soviet Union.) Like many boys in the Soviet Union, and especially in Chechnya, he says, he aspired to be an athlete. He was a wrestler and weightlifter. As an adult, he taught physical education and founded a sports club, for youth. He also worked other jobs—in a furniture store, for example.

In 2001, five Memorial workers came to Kurchaloi, to investigate the usual horrors (abduction, torture, murder). Titiev met them by chance. He assisted them, driving them to homes and hospitals and the like. In due course, they offered him a job.

“What motivated you to do human-rights work?” I have asked this question of many people, and their answers tend to be the same: *I don’t know. How could you not, given the circumstances?* In a Q&A with me, Titiev says essentially this.

It has long been very, very dangerous to investigate human-rights abuses in Chechnya, and to defend innocents there. Anna Politkovskaya, the journalist, did so. She was murdered in 2006. Stanislav Markelov, a lawyer, did so. He was murdered in 2009. Zarema Sadulayeva was murdered later that same year. She had founded a children’s-rights organization. She was murdered along with her husband, Alek Dzhabrailov.

Natalia Estemirova, a journalist, worked for Memorial. In 2007, she won a prize named after Politkovskaya. Two years later, she herself was murdered—abducted from her home, shot up, and left in the woods.

At this point, the director of the Memorial branch in Grozny left the country with his family. This was understandable, not only in view of Estemirova’s killing but also in view of explicit death threats to him. The work of Memorial in Chechnya was suspended for six months. Then Oyub Titiev convinced the national organization to start it up again. He himself became director.

Under Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechnya is a festival of extrajudicial killings, collective punishment, secret prisons, “disappearings”—again, the usual. Titiev and his colleagues did what they could

to expose these horrors. They did all they could to help victims and prevent new ones.

Titiev always figured they would stop him, sooner or later—one way or another. For example, they might plant drugs on him and arrest him. That would be the least they could do (the most being murder). The authorities had planted drugs on other critics of the government. And, on January 9, 2018, they did it to Titiev.

That morning, police stopped his car and made him get out. While they were “inspecting” the car, lo, they “found” 180 grams of marijuana under the passenger seat.

Why then? Why did the authorities move on Titiev at that moment? He thinks it was because he was working on a particularly sensitive case, known as the “Case of the 27.” On January 26, 2017, the authorities killed at least 27 people extrajudicially in Grozny.

The idea of Oyub Titiev as drug possessor or seller was laughable to anyone who knew him. Titiev is a devout Muslim who neither smokes nor drinks. Moreover, he is devoted to physical fitness, running or using the gym daily.

For the first ten days of his confinement—in the dead of winter, mind you—he was kept in a tiny windowless cell without heat. They told him they would harm his family if he did not confess. This rattled the prisoner, obviously, and he thought of ways to protect his family—but he did not, and would not, confess.

Indeed, he wrote a letter to Putin in Moscow, along with other high officials. The message: *If you ever hear a confession from me, it will be because I was tortured into it.*

Police went to Titiev’s home, looking for his son and his brother. They were not there. There were women, however, whom the police chased out. They evicted them from their own home. Titiev’s family left the country for safety.

In the midst of all this, Ramzan Kadyrov took to the airwaves—state television—calling Oyub Titiev a “drug addict.” He also railed against human-rights defenders generally: “They have no motherland, no ethnicity, no religion. . . . They have interests. . . . They keep smearing our Chechnya, trying to provoke us. . . . We are going to break the spines of our enemies.”

Say what you will about Kadyrov, he is not guilty of subtlety.

During these same days—January 2018—the Memorial office in Grozny was raided, and the staff threatened. A Memorial office in a neighboring republic, Ingushetia, was torched. The car of a Memorial lawyer in another neighboring republic, Dagestan, was torched. And so on.

As for Oyub Titiev, his trial lasted eight months. He had great support, internationally, nationally, and locally. Human-rights organizations publicized his case. The president of France, Emmanuel Macron, spoke to Putin personally about it. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe gave Titiev its Václav Havel Human Rights Prize (in absentia). Amnesty International declared him a prisoner of conscience.

Amnesty made a blunt, and true, statement: All the fuss about Titiev, around the world, was affording him “a level of protection against torture.”

Amazingly, some 20 of Titiev’s friends and neighbors came to the court to testify. They vouched for the defendant’s integrity. This was amazing, says Titiev, because Chechens had seldom done such a thing in recent years. It was too risky. They would incur the wrath of the government. Even family members would not testify for family members. (“I do not judge them,” Titiev tells me.) But for Titiev, people showed up.

The trial was a sham, with many comical elements. Among those who wrote about the trial was Simon Cosgrove, of the U.K.-based group Rights in Russia. I will relate just one detail, reported by him and others.

On the day Titiev was arrested, CCTV cameras, oddly enough, were not working. There were 17 of them, on the road, in the police station, and at many other points in the relevant area. But every single one of them was under repair on that particular day, according to the prosecution.

The boss, Kadyrov, weighed in on the trial, confident of its outcome (for good reason). “Once the trial is over,” he said, “Chechnya will become forbidden territory”—forbidden territory for human-rights defenders such as Titiev and Memorial at large.

Near the end of the trial, in March 2019, Titiev himself made a statement to the court. It was a long and stirring address. “I’m a troublemaker,” he said. “I tried to get the authorities to pay attention



Oyub Titiev during his trial in Chechnya, Russia, 2019

to violations of people’s rights.” He also said, of himself and his colleagues, “If, over the years, we have managed to save even one person—and I know we have saved many more than that—our labor was not in vain.”

Titiev’s sentence was a relief, in that it was relatively light: four years of “corrective labor” in a minimum-security colony, with the possibility of early release.

One of the questions I put to Titiev is, “How did the other prisoners treat you?” They treated him royally, in a word. They knew of his case and respected him greatly. What’s more, they hated those who had framed him. They would not let Titiev clean his own cell or carry out other such tasks, wanting to do them for him.

Titiev was released on June 21, 2019, having been in custody for about a year and five months. It could have been so much worse, as you know. The attention of the broader world made a critical difference.

The ex-prisoner is still working for Memorial, but in Moscow, as I’ve said. There is no Memorial office in Chechnya. How could there be? In a sense, Kadyrov and his goons have won, driving the human-rights defenders out of Chechnya. But the final chapter has yet to be written. (It never is.)

Titiev hopes to live to see a better day for Chechnya. Putin despises Chechens, he says, deriving pleasure from Kadyrov’s depredations. Faith is the most important thing in Titiev’s life. If rulers had a deeper, higher sense of faith, he says, “I am sure there would not be so much hatred and anger toward people.”

Titiev’s friends and colleagues speak of him in almost reverent tones. They admire his quiet courage, his modesty, his fortitude—the example he sets. There are lots of names to remember in this crowded, turbulent, often impressive world, but add Oyub Titiev’s to your list.

NR



Nanny-State Napoleon

Mike Bloomberg proves money doesn't buy you love

BY KYLE SMITH

I'LL take the Uber and vote for someone else." It's the 21st-century analogue to "You can lead a horse to water . . ." and it's the problem vexing the Michael Bloomberg campaign. Especially in primary season, people vote out of love. Barack Obama didn't have to guess for whom all the people his vans picked up in minority neighborhoods and brought to the polls would vote, but Mike Bloomberg has no clue whether offering voters an open bar, catered meals, and ultimately maybe even an Uber to the polls, as his aide Howard Wolfson hinted it might in the quotation above, will even make them fall in line. At a typically insane Bloomberg rally on February 4 across from Liberty Hall in Philadelphia, there was a groovy Pink Floyd-style light show, booze for the asking, and free T-shirts. There was a buffet and a rap act. There was everything a politician's money can buy, except attack ads and maybe voters. Sure, 2,000 people turned up, but how many of them were there to get a snootful and a full meal? I've seen the expensively educated stampede into a New York City book party on a promise of

not-quite-cold Chardonnay and a passed bag of Funyuns. Bloomberg did everything but spray a money cannon at the Philadelphia crowd. He's been issuing his staffers iPhones and free MacBook Pros and three meals a day and paying them double what other campaigns offered. But can he sell himself? How many will just take the goodies and pass on the candidate?

Bloomberg's best pitch is this: *Attention, citizens*, he will say in his broad, nasal voice, *do you think the country is in a state of chaos? Then flash a giant dollar sign in the air like a Bat Signal*. That devil-may-care billionaire-turned-Gotham fighter of crime will swoop down from an unseen aerie and . . . quietly sit down in his vogueish open-plan office and efficiently tap away at the national keyboard. Vote Mike, he will type in the correct country-straightening-out commands. That was how he operated as mayor of New York City from 2002 to 2013, anyway. Obesity is a problem? Clackity-clack, large sodas, trans fats, and smoking are banned, and a new bike path for every commute. Don't like gun violence? Snickety-snick, Bloomy will buy another

gun-control commercial. Maybe he can even control-alt-escape us from climate change. At least he doesn't seem like he wants to abandon capitalism to do all this.

Who are his base, though? Upon whom will Bloomberg build his movement? A *Politico* story citing in its headline "Buyer's Remorse" for the Napoleon of East 79th Street led with this image: "A corporate attorney and his gynecologist wife rolled up soundlessly in their silver Tesla to canvass for Mike Bloomberg." In Charlotte, they "joined a group of roughly a dozen people, about half of whom were paid campaign staff."

"Tesla Owners and Paid Staff for Bloomberg"? It could be worse, I guess. "Coronavirus infectees and Harvey Weinstein for Mike"? "IRS employees and the guy who banged the trash can for the Houston Astros for Mike"?

Super Tuesday was Bloomberg's first appearance on state ballots, but he may have peaked before he got in the game. As the votes were being counted, he looked set to emerge with a modest number of delegates, having won only American Samoa. The anti-Bernie Sanders vote appeared to be consolidating around Joe Biden, not Bloomberg. Maybe being a Democrat-turned-Republican-turned-Independent-turned-Democrat who brags about all the black men he had thrown up against the wall as mayor isn't the way to win this season. Or maybe Bloomberg's problems go deeper than that. Exit polls taken in South Carolina on Saturday showed him with a 66 percent disapproval rating, against 26 percent approval. A 66 percent disapproval? LSU probably polls better than that in the Palmetto State. People seem not to like Bloomberg, not after they've seen him live in person instead of in canned ads.

Bloomberg presents as an experienced manager with all the right progressive bona fides on gun control and climate change. In the first six weeks of this year he shot up in polls. A mid-February survey showed him leading the pack (by one point) in Florida. On Valentine's Day betting markets put him in a strong second place, less than five points behind Bernie Sanders, for the Democratic nomination. Bloomberg was starting to cultivate some social-media swagger, pantsing Donald Trump on Twitter by informing POTUS that all of their plutocrat mutual friends had always laughed at Donald behind his back (are they still laughing, though?) and winning chuckles at rallies with his favorite one-liner: "People ask what it'll be like to have two billionaires in the race. I say who's the other one?"

This Bloomberg must have intrigued Dems: Instead of a sorrowful nod and a meek little plea that "this is not who we are," Bloomberg promised to punch Trump in the giblets. Unlike the frail and distant Biden, who is so confused that last month he said, "My name's Joe Biden. I'm a Democratic candidate for the United States Senate," Bloomberg speaks from an unassailable height: atop Mount Money. With a net worth of over \$60 billion, he could buy 20 Trumps and have a few billion left over for lunch money. Indeed, Bloomberg's fortune is accumulating at such a rate (\$107 million a day, according to the *Washington Post*) that he could blow \$5 billion on this campaign and be richer at the end of this year than he was at the start of it. Last week there emerged an exception to his policy of supporting the eventual nominee, though: Bernie. Sanders's campaign said

it wasn't interested in Bloomberg's money ("hard pass"), and Bloomberg said he saw no point in writing checks no one would cash. In the event that Sanders prevails in the primary, though, would Bloomberg be happy to sit out the general election? Would he really prefer a socialist who says billionaires are the fons et origo of American iniquity over his old golfing buddy Trump? Maybe. Certainly Bloomberg appears likely to be a major financial backer of Joe Biden, should he be the nominee.

FEBRUARY 19 looks like the most important day in this race so far. Bloomberg didn't just lose the Las Vegas debate, he got his posterior first skewered, then handed to him on a platter, like a piece of chicken satay at one of his rallies. America can handle a leader—don't we know it!—whose past includes a few lawsuits and some politically incorrect jokes. What we simply cannot have is a cringing little dillweed who makes Charlie Brown look macho. If your brand is Ninth Richest Man on Earth, that brand cannot withstand a public arse-whipping from a tiny faculty nerd who looks like she shops at Kohl's. Inept, awkward, hunted, haunted, and most of all, *small*, were the adjectives that came to mind in Bloomberg's first debate in eleven years, the debacle that was watched by 20 million Americans, more than any of the previous Democratic fora. Bloomberg should have done what Trump does—return Elizabeth Warren's attacks in kind. He should have put political correctness—which poll after poll shows even Democrats broadly hate—on trial and said, Yes, I was part of a culture in which guys used to make tasteless jokes. So what? "Relax, Elizabeth. Move on. The country's at stake."

If you're apologizing, you're losing. Trump understands this, and the press understands it too, which is why it is always trying to make him say he's sorry. Bloomberg fell for it. In Las Vegas he did nothing but apologize, cringe, and blanch. He needed to come off as the new whale in the water. Instead Warren turned shark. Bloomberg got exsanguinated as grotesquely as Robert Shaw when he got bisected at the end of *Jaws*. Most embarrassing of all, Warren appeared taller than Bloomberg. America can learn to love a heel but cannot abide a sniveler, a loser, a wimp. In North Carolina, voters "were excited about Bloomberg," chemist turned activist Carolyn Eberly told *Politico*. "But I think the debate in Nevada just kind of killed all that. At least that's what I've heard locally."

It seemed nearly superfluous on February 29, when Trump himself kicked Mini Mike around at the Conservative Political Action Conference, crouching down to Bloombergian level and doing a priceless impression of The Incredible Shrinking Mayor at the Vegas debate: "Get me off of the stage!," Trump imagined Bloomberg crying. At the same appearance, Trump said, "I'd like to spend \$700 million and end up with nothing." Bloomberg's actual "spend" is already north of \$500 million. Bloomberg spent even more, per capita, in his three mayoral contests. In the third one, he spent \$102 million, which turned out to be \$174 per vote, and still won only 51 percent against a sacrificial lamb (a milquetoast named Bill Thompson) he had outspent by 14 to 1. Mayors are limited to two terms, per

Can the Spirit of FDR, Truman, and JFK Save the Democrats' Political Soul?

By Lawrence Kadish

The political drama surrounding the trial of President Trump may have grabbed the nation's attention, but future historians will note that it only served to obscure a far larger crisis: an existential threat to the Democratic Party.

Bitter and blocked by their failed impeachment gamut, we can expect the party to ratchet up the venom and the vitriol in the wake of their defeat. Given their seething anger, the pathological Inspector Javert of the classic novel "Les Miserables" may have some very important lessons for the Democratic leadership. Much like the tortured antagonist in that novel, in their fanatical pursuit of President Trump, their party has lost its soul... and perhaps its very future.

**Gone is the party of FDR.
Missing is the party of Truman.
Absent is the party of JFK.**

Instead, the zealots and ideologues, with agendas **at odds with the fundamental principals upon which our nation was founded**, have kidnapped the party and refashioned it into their own image. Some have done it with their billions of dollars. Others have done it with door-to-door political campaigns that appeal to class warfare. Others, and their families, simply self-deal. The result is an unrecognizable political party that, until President Trump upended them, had a long history of working with their Republican colleagues across the aisle in the give-and-take of a robust and bruising democracy.

No more.

Unfortunately, this would not be the first time that the Democratic Party has faced an existential threat from within. During the tenure of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, fellow Democrat Huey Long, a charismatic orator from Louisiana, mesmerized an American constituency still struggling to escape the ravages of the Great Depression. While in the Senate, he leveraged his demagoguery with the arrival of radio and newsreels, giving him national exposure for his pseudo-populism. Unlike other Southern members of Congress, he avoided obvious race-baiting. Instead, he served up a **now, time-tested tirade against the wealthy, the well-heeled, and the well-born**. He came up with a "Share the Wealth" slogan and a motto of "Every man a king." **He also aligned himself with the rabid Anti-Semitic cleric, Father Coughlin. Given those credentials, Senator Long would be right at home among today's Democratic Socialists.**

FDR saw clearly the threat to democracy from both Long and the wealthy business interests that sought to quietly fund their own agenda. In a 1938



address to Congress that still resonates today, he warned, *"The first truth is that the liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is fascism - ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or by any other controlling private power..."*

In the postwar era, President Truman saw his Democratic Party divided by the "Dixiecrats," Democrats elected from throughout the segregated "Jim Crow" South. They would have dismantled their party's Presidential nominating convention rather than allow the nation to make a cautious advance towards civil rights. The breakaway Democrats formed their own party in 1948, calling themselves the "States' Rights Democratic Party," running South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond against Truman during that election year. (South Carolina would overwhelmingly vote for Thurmond.) While political historians say the party was never a viable national force, it represented the depth of segregationist ideology in Truman's Democratic Party.

John F. Kennedy had to navigate an updated version of the Dixiecrats during his Presidential run. Their staunch opposition to civil rights would remain such a powerful force inside the Democratic Party that it would take the martyrdom of President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and four little African-American children murdered in the firebombing of a Baptist church in Alabama before their chokehold was finally broken.

The question for today's Democratic Party is to decide which path it is prepared to follow in the months and years to come. Will it abandon its role as a strong, moderate voice that differs with its Republican counterparts only in **how best to protect our nation**, or will it succumb to a radical shift to the left that would create **a party unrecognizable to FDR, Truman, and Kennedy**? Will the voices of thoughtful national Democratic leadership be demonized and shouted down by the Progressive Left? Will the current Democratic Party break in two, requiring moderates to stake claim to their party's traditional principals while, in the interest of full political disclosure, **the Socialist Democrats simply drop the name "Democrats" and run on what they are**?

We know this much: In the wake of a failed impeachment strategy, the future of America's Democratic Party is now up for grabs. History has shown it has been under assault before by those who would replace grounded patriotism with destructive ideology. In times past, the party has been strong enough to overcome those self-inflicted wounds. This may not be one of those times. As the current version of radical "Democrats" continues to pursue Trump at all costs, party leaders should remember the grim ending of Inspector Javert. **He commits suicide.**

It is now up to all Americans of good will, grounded in patriotism, to stand tall and embrace the politics of mutual respect and, by doing so, honor the legacy of our Founding Fathers.

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two referenda, but Bloomberg managed to get an exception passed for him, meaning the thing that people most fear about Trump—that he'll discover some extralegal way to stay in office past prescribed limits—is actually true of Bloomberg.

“Anti-charisma” is a phrase that keeps popping up in Bloomberg stories. Here is a guy who has a knack for not having the knack. As mayor he used to zip off on a private plane to Bermuda for the weekend without informing anyone in city government. Did New Yorkers have a right to know roughly where their mayor was?, reporters asked. Nah, said Bloomberg. Bloomberg has the emotional I.Q. of one of his eponymous data machines. “Don’t ever take a lunch break or go to the bathroom, you keep working,” Bloomberg said in 2011, as if all outputs could be controlled with a keystroke. In 1999, he said that if he let women have flexibility in their schedules to allow for family commitments, he’d have to give men time off to play golf. Even his employees, staffers, and supporters can barely muster a kind word for him. “The thing about Mike is he actually isn’t that interesting,” an ex-employee told *New York*. “The first time I met him, he started complaining about some soup he got that didn’t taste right. I just met the guy, and he was, like, complaining about his sweet-and-sour soup.” He’s old, Jewish, immensely rich, and running a campaign about nothing—Larry David is not just a perfect Bernie Sanders, he could be Bloomberg too.

In TV commercials, Bloomberg was Master of the Universe. Behind the electronic curtain, though, he’s a dull, hapless little man—the Wizard of Blahs. He has some of the Trump attributes that turn people away but none of the ones that make them feel like pumping their fists in the air and putting political hats on their heads. Periodically in American politics a businessman comes along promising to sort out the mess and run things like a blue-chip corporation. It almost never works. Wendell Willkie tried it, and Ross Perot, and Steve Forbes, and remember Herman Cain? Mitt “I like to fire people and also let Detroit go bankrupt” Romney tried it, in his fashion. The businessman shtick worked for Donald Trump because he’s the nation’s blue-collar billionaire, a talk-radio caller (“Don from Queens”), a guy who eats McDonald’s food on his private plane and never sounds like he’s imitating the speech patterns of regular folks. The hotshots with the silver Teslas and the gynecologist wives *loathe* Trump, just as most of the country loathes *them*.

And how does “I’m a billionaire businessman” square with today’s Democratic Party, which doesn’t mind money but is kind of embarrassed about it? The Democrats regard capitalism as an irksome relative you have to invite to Thanksgiving (or maybe, exhilaratingly, you don’t, not anymore, not at Bernie’s place anyway). Is an Asperger’s-y Wall Street tycoon the guy they want today? Is that the guy they want ever? Is Bloomberg’s pitch simply that he’s not senile, not a socialist, and not a congenital liar? Is being None of the Above enough to make him the Democratic nominee? “We need somebody who can . . . do the mundane but essential tasks of pushing legislation and executing laws,” writes David Brooks in the *New York Times*. One of the country’s most astute minds makes his best case for Bloomberg, and it’s “mundane but essential”? That’s quite the bumper sticker. Might as well go with “Dukakis, only shorter.”

NR

The Next Coalition of The Right

Some lessons of reform conservatism

BY RAMESH PONNURU & YUVAL LEVIN

THE Trump era has been a period of intellectual ferment on the right. New ideas are being proposed and old debates renewed. Conservatives are arguing with one another about capitalism, nationalism, the Founding, classical liberalism, the Enlightenment, and the proper relationship of church and state. We’re debating whether to increase antitrust enforcement, regulate social media, adopt policies to expand domestic manufacturing, and rethink some civil-rights laws.

The same period, however, has been marked by policy-paralysis. And while intra-Republican debate has often centered on degrees of support for and opposition to Trump, that paralysis has been a party-wide phenomenon transcending the Trump divide. When Republicans controlled the Congress and the White House in 2017 and 2018—the first time they had wielded so much power since 2006—they passed only one major piece of legislation, a tax-reform bill. They tried but failed to replace Obamacare. After those two efforts, they ran out the clock, attempting no major legislation for much of 2018 and running in the midterm elections without a legislative agenda.

Since the Democrats took control of the House of Representatives in that year’s election, there has been even less legislative action. The House has passed symbolic liberal measures that had no prospects of passage in the Senate, and the Senate barely even tried its hand at any meaningful bills, focusing instead on confirming conservative judges. A measure approving minor changes to the North American Free Trade Agreement has been about the only bipartisan legislation to pass. There has been no action in Congress on health care, infrastructure, immigration, higher education, religious liberty, or any of the other policy priorities Republicans have highlighted over the past decade. The GOP now talks about trying to retake control of the House but offers no sense of what it would want to do if it managed it.

The Trump administration has sought to partially fill this vacuum with regulatory measures. Some of these have been valuable: reversing some of the most egregious abuses of the Obama administration’s final two years, reinstating pro-life rules enacted by past Republican administrations, and relieving some of Obamacare’s upward pressure on insurance costs. But few

have broken new policy ground or changed the character of the administrative state, and essentially none would survive the next Democratic president.

It may seem counterintuitive, given how intense and action-packed the last few years have felt to political junkies, but if the Trump era ends next year, it will have changed next to nothing in domestic policy. Its lasting accomplishments would then mainly be the indirect consequences of Trump's judicial appointments—important, to be sure, but hardly on the scale of what a party in power in both elected branches might expect.

This inaction on policy may actually help explain some of the intellectual ferment. In some respects, the Right's internal debates have felt like those that might happen when Republicans are out of power: Nothing seems plausibly achievable in the near term, so policy entrepreneurs try to formulate what they would do in the future if they could. Yet these scenarios are getting debated without the living specter of a Democratic president exercising the powers of the executive, so the Right's arguments lack the humility that comes with losing and the caution that comes with a vivid sense of the harm that government power can do in the wrong hands. Lacking both the responsibility to enact and implement policy and the burden of resisting an assertive progressivism in Washington, the Right's policy thinking has been short on discipline and mooring, and the relationship between theory and practice has become confused.

This lack of disciplining pressures has been particularly evident as a loss of interest in coalition-building among conservatives. The Right's internal arguments have naturally come to be

attitudes of both a governing-majority conservatism and a defensive-minority conservatism, but it also arose out of a critique of what the Right had become since the latter years of the Reagan era.

The central contention of the “reformocons” was that the Right needed to update its policy agenda, which had been formulated to address the circumstances of the late 1970s and had gradually hardened into a set of dogmatic slogans. In part because of the success of the conservatives of the Reagan era and in part because of new challenges that called for new applications of enduring principles, the Right's agenda was no longer suited to advancing conservative ideals and solving public problems. Republicans were left repeating the ends of Ronald Reagan's sentences long after they forgot how those sentences had started, and conservative politics was losing touch with the concerns of voters.

This problem grew worse in the early Obama years, as conservatives were driven by concerns about the Democrats' agenda into rhetoric that quickly became too Randian and individualistic—culminating, in the 2012 presidential campaign, in the language of “makers and takers” that sought to answer Obama's “you didn't build that” and “life of Julia” progressivism.

In response to these excesses, reform conservatism asserted the centrality of social conservatism (broadly understood) against a lowest-common-denominator agenda of economic libertarianism. Family, community, traditional religion, civil society, and civic republicanism needed protection and support. But taking these social concerns seriously did not mean abandoning the Right's affinity for market economics; it meant putting that

The Right's **internal arguments** have naturally come to be focused, as they often have been over the past half century, on a conflict between libertarian economic thought and conservative social thought.

focused, as they often have been over the past half century, on a conflict between libertarian economic thought and conservative social thought. Recurring (and unavoidable) tensions between the two have shaped the story of American conservatism since the middle of the last century. But the Right has tended to succeed when it has treated those tensions as an impetus for balance and for concrete policy innovation and has tended to fail when it has let them become a source of polarizing discord and blinding abstraction.

To close the gap between conservative policymaking and theorizing, it might be helpful to revisit a previous attempt to think through what a contemporary conservative agenda should look like. That attempt (in which we were both involved) took a variety of allied if loosely affiliated forms that came to be known as “reform conservatism.”

WHILE reform conservatism was influenced by earlier conservative intellectual efforts, notably the domestic neoconservatism of the 1970s, it began during George W. Bush's second term and then developed further during Barack Obama's presidency. As such it had elements of the

affinity to use in the service of empowering working families and renewing society's wellsprings. Roughly speaking, social conservatism (with its emphasis on family, faith, community, and country) would clarify the *ends* of politics and help articulate some crucial problems to be solved, while the logic of the market could point toward some plausible *means* of addressing these problems and remind conservatives of some inherent limits of centralized knowledge and action.

This approach sought to take account of the familiar tensions between libertarians and traditionalists on the right, but to drive the two toward a coalition that could work to resist progressive incursions when Democrats were in power and to advance a concrete agenda that could appeal to broad swaths of the public when Republicans had the opportunity.

The prescription, in essence, was to apply conservative insights to the challenges of our own time, rooted in a more realistic appraisal of the American situation. Most Americans were neither swaggering job creators (as Republicans sometimes cast them) nor hapless victims of fate (as Democrats did): They were mothers and fathers, workers and citizens who were both concerned and hopeful for the future of their families, the character of their communities, their economic prospects, and the state of

their country's culture. What they wanted from politics was a sense that government could be on their side, helping them live well and relieving some of the burdens they face rather than adding to them.

THE reformocons argued that there is a role for better public policy in addressing problems created by bad public policy—such as cost inflation in health care, housing, and higher education; unfair burdens placed on parents and workers by the structure of federal payroll taxes; and oppressive, illiberal mandates imposed by overreaching bureaucracies in the service of progressive social policy. And they argued there is a role for better public policy in empowering Americans to build stronger families and communities: by supporting child-rearing, providing some security against the risks of the modern economy, and protecting the most vulnerable. Conservatives had, for various reasons, paid too little attention to these concerns, and the costs to the country—and the political costs to themselves—were mounting.

Redirecting conservative energies accordingly would have to mean explicitly prioritizing America's working and middle-class families. Republicans would have to return to thinking of those Americans, rather than only of the small-business owner and the corporate titan, as their core constituencies. Republican politicians were slow to listen, and the dynamics of the Obama era made it harder for them to do so. They faced powerful incentives to run a purely oppositional campaign in 2012 and 2014, and then

supply—as an alternative tone: an aggressive populism disdainful of elites and mistrustful of institutions but not especially concerned with changing what government does.

Because policy has not been at the center of the political movement that now dominates Republican politics, the modest amount of policymaking that has happened in the Trump era has been a mix of the traditional Republican agenda (picking constitutionalist judges, pursuing some deregulation, reducing corporate taxes), modest versions of some reform-conservative ideas (expanding the child tax credit, paid-leave proposals), and populist priorities (especially on trade and immigration).

Above all, however, the policy agenda in this era has been largely stalled, and the Right has been focused on more-theoretical debates. Because Trumpism has for the most part not been embodied in particular policy proposals, different factions on the right have tried to claim its power for their own, and to insist that Trump's success in 2016 is proof of principle for a new direction.

This has meant that the reform-conservative effort itself has fractured a bit. Some politicians, analysts, and young activists or staffers who had been part of the reform effort have come to advocate a more market-skeptical, government-centric approach or to declare libertarianism the Right's biggest problem. They believe the crisis of American life (or at least of the American working class) was deeper, and the sclerosis of the Republican coalition more severe, than the earlier reformist diagnosis allowed. They tend not to worry about how government power developed with one party in mind might be used or abused by the other. And while many reformocons (including both of us) were

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fell into the comfortable posture of leaving their eventual 2016 nominee to set the agenda, so most could never see the case for change. And there was pushback. Before 2016, the populist energy on the right (channeled through the filter of the tea-party movement) was understood to demand libertarian purism, and many self-appointed guardians of conservative dogma (from the *Wall Street Journal* editorial board to leading talk-radio figures) complained that any hyphenated conservatism was a betrayal of principle, not a modernization of practice.

Reform conservatives believed that rank-and-file Republican voters were open to a different agenda and that the electorate as a whole would reward it. The political case rested on the notion that Republicans couldn't hope to win majorities in the long run if they did not change course along these lines. The 2016 primary campaign delivered a mixed verdict on these premises. On the one hand, it showed that reform conservatives had, if anything, underestimated the political weakness of the old Republican agenda: Republican voters were not just open to something different; some of them were hostile to the old agenda, and many more were uninterested in it. But on the other hand, it showed that what could fill the void effectively within the party was not so much an alternative agenda—something Trump did not really

moderate restrictionists on immigration, and many were China hawks of various sorts, this group has argued that those issues deserve much greater emphasis, seeing them as central to the social crisis reshaping our politics.

For some others once identified as reformists, concerns about President Trump and the direction in which he has pushed Republican politics (when it comes to trade or immigration, the integrity of our system of government, or other issues) have overwhelmed concerns about the rigidity and inadequacy of the pre-Trump Republican agenda, and they have been driven back toward a more libertarian conservatism.

These differences, however, are largely about Trump and Trumpism—and therefore aren't exactly ways of thinking about the future of American politics. Notwithstanding the best efforts of many on the right, Trumpism has not taken shape as a coherent political outlook, and it is possible to imagine its moving sharply in any direction at any time as the president reacts to the events of the day and Fox News programming priorities. So thinking through these differences may not be as significant for the future of the Right as it now appears.

This is not to deny that the last few years have offered many crucial lessons for students of our politics who wish to help our

country find its way. If some future version of reform conservatism aims to apply conservative principles to contemporary circumstances, then it must learn the lessons of the Trump era. These include lessons about the Left and the Right, the country and its culture, and the priorities of the electorate. They are lessons about the significance of immigration politics, about the degree of the public's loss of trust in American elites and institutions, and about much else besides. But lessons like these will still need ultimately to inform a governing agenda and a political disposition, in the fullest sense. And the general disposition of reform conservatism likely does remain a plausible fit for what appears to be the character of the American electorate and a better way to think about what seem to be our country's foremost challenges and the weaknesses of the Right's pre-Trump agenda, even in light of the last several years.

A CONSERVATIVE governing agenda needs to be rooted in what voters want and in what the core ideals of the American republic demand of both the public and its government. Americans today are, on the whole, prosperous and hopeful but frustrated and skeptical. And conservatives still struggle to speak to this combination of attitudes.

At this point, the disposition of reform conservatism would demand a much more profound transformation of conservative politics than populism or national conservatism or an integralist social conservatism would, even as it would demand a less profound transformation of American society than any of those would. But more important, it demands some realism about the nature of political victory and defeat—and about the limited application of the example of 2016 and the importance of learning but not overlearning its lessons. The grievance and anger of some of Trump's supporters during the 2016 primaries should not, for example, be taken as representative of all Trump supporters, let alone of the electorate as a whole. Nor should Bernie Sanders's fan base in the Democratic Party, as consequential as its dedication may turn out to be, delude us into thinking that much of the country is in a genuinely revolutionary frame of mind.

For a political movement, and a political party, most elections are followed either by wielding power (and the constraints that involves) or by having one's opponents wield it (and the dangers that carries). The Trump era has not quite meant either one for Republicans, so its lessons are more complex than usual, and its by-products may be less useful.

The next effective Republican governing philosophy likely won't be called reform conservatism. But whatever name it goes by, it will need to be serious about both using the power of government and restraining it. It will need to apply enduring American principles to a new American reality. It will need to make the most of the strengths of the market economy while acting to address its costs, risks, and dark sides. It will need to put family, community, and country first, to consider where solidarity comes from, and to recognize how freedom can serve it up to a point. And it will need to unite the partisans of markets with the partisans of tradition into a functional coalition—practically at least, if not philosophically.

Whatever name it goes by, it will have to do these things—if, that is, its goal is to see conservative reforms to the way our country is governed.

NR

End The FISA

It's an unconstitutional mess that weakens national security and threatens civil liberties

BY ANDREW C. MCCARTHY

IN December 2019, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court upbraided the Federal Bureau of Investigation over its serial deceptions in persuading the tribunal to issue warrants to monitor Carter Page, who served in 2016 as a Trump-campaign foreign-policy adviser. The FISC's four-page directive, issued by Rosemary Collyer, the FISC's then-presiding judge, came on the heels of a voluminous report compiled by Justice Department inspector general Michael Horowitz, after a multiyear inquiry into investigative irregularities in the bureau's Trump–Russia probe.

Horowitz lambasted the FBI, specifically identifying 17 instances of misrepresentations to the court. These included the alteration by a bureau lawyer of a key document: a communication in which the Central Intelligence Agency had informed the FBI that Page, whom the bureau was depicting to the court as a clandestine agent of Russia, was actually a CIA informant. Seizing on the IG report, Judge Collyer scolded the bureau for its shocking misconduct and demanded answers about what remedial measures it was taking, and why the court should have any confidence that the Page surveillance applications were not part of a longstanding pattern of deception.

The court's public order was extraordinary in light of its customary secrecy—FISC hearings and decisions are highly classified. The startling rebuke was surely merited. Yet the FISC's tack of focusing on the cure rather than dwelling on the pathogen deftly deflected attention away from the court's own performance.

So did the follow-up. Collyer, a Bush 43 appointee to the federal district court in Washington, D.C., quietly resigned at the end of December as the FISC's chief judge, nine weeks before her scheduled departure, citing health reasons (though she planned to remain on the FISC and the district court). By statute, FISC judges are appointed by the chief justice of the Supreme Court, choosing from the pool of federal district judges. To replace Collyer as presiding judge, Chief Justice John Roberts quickly named Judge James Boasberg, an Obama appointee whom Roberts had placed on the FISC in 2014.

Astoundingly, Boasberg appointed David Kris as an adviser to the FISC in examining the FBI's handling of the Page surveillance. Until 2011, Kris had served as the Obama Justice Department's first chief of the National Security Division (the

DOJ unit that shepherds the FBI's surveillance requests through the FISC). After leaving the government, he became a fixture on MSNBC and the *Lawfare* blog, home to anti-Trump champions of the notion that Trump was an agent of Russia and that the FBI had performed with integrity. In that incarnation, Kris zealously defended the bureau's investigation of the Trump campaign; derided a congressional probe of that investigation led by Representative Devin Nunes (R., Calif.), the then-chairman of the House Intelligence Committee; and confidently predicted that, once more facts about the FISC-authorized surveillance were revealed, Page would be inculpated and the FBI vindicated.

There is no doubting Kris's relevant experience, but he is also a partisan. That the court would retain him, when the controversy was politically fraught and his analyses had proven spectacularly wrong, was mind-boggling. There is also no doubting Kris's entrenchment in the FISC system. His selection signaled that Washington's agenda does not include questioning the wisdom of that system, despite its suspect history and constitutionality. Indeed, as the FBI has scurried about to respond to the court's order and proclaim its intention to implement sweeping reforms, none less than Attorney General Bill Barr has described the judicially managed system for gathering foreign intelligence as a "critical tool" for national security.

Barr is a stellar attorney general in his second tour of duty. (He was AG in the final years of the Bush 41 presidency.) And unlike the vast majority of government attorneys, he came to the job steeped in intelligence matters, having worked as a young lawyer at the CIA (he originally envisioned a career as an agency expert on China). With due respect, though, what is critical for national security is the intelligence community's capacity to collect information covertly, analyze it, and use it to address threats posed to the United States by foreign powers—particularly hostile regimes and international terrorist networks. This capacity has not been advanced by the legal regime imposed on intelligence gathering for nearly half a century. Nor has adapting to this regime made intelligence agencies more sensitive to civil rights.

To the contrary, the FISC's creation, even for the modest purpose originally envisioned, was a mistake, an overreaction to the spy scandals of the 1960s and 1970s. And in Washington's signature blend of confusion and inertia, the FISC's portfolio has been drastically expanded even as it has repeatedly shown itself to be pointless at best and often dangerous.

THE "necessity of procuring good intelligence is apparent and need not be further urged," remarked General George Washington while commanding the Continental Army. "Upon Secrecy, Success depends in Most Enterprises . . . and for want of it, they are generally defeated." The acquisition of intelligence is and has always been a security imperative. It is also a textbook political responsibility, in the sense of being committed to the political branches of government.

That is an observation worth pausing over. While the FISC's creation was controversial, it is rare nowadays to hear proposals for scrapping it. The inevitable rejoinder to any such suggestion is that the proponent seeks an imperial, uncheckable executive. Nothing could be further from the truth. While the conducting of intelligence operations is left to

the executive branch (and has been since the inception of constitutional governance), a *political* responsibility is one assigned to *both* political branches: the presidential administration in carrying it out and the Congress in underwriting, regulating, and overseeing it.

The contention here is not that the president should get carte blanche. Intrusive government actions taken under the guise of safeguarding the nation against foreign perils have a high chance of suppressing our liberties. The Trump–Russia fiasco launched by the Obama-era intelligence services reaffirms that executive intelligence operations must be subjected to searching scrutiny. Politicized excesses dating back to the John Adams–era Alien and Sedition Acts demonstrate that our own government, under the pretext of protecting us, can do more damage to republican democracy than anything Russia or a similarly treacherous foe can do.

No, my argument for abolishing the FISC is twofold. First, intelligence is not fit for judicial management. As the Supreme Court expressly recognized (in its 1948 *Chicago & Southern Air Lines* ruling), intelligence is an innately political function. The most significant decisions a body politic makes are the ones about its security. If a society is to be free and self-determining, those decisions must be made not by politically unaccountable judges but by the elected officials—the president and Congress—answerable to the Americans whose lives are at stake.

Second, aggressive congressional oversight would be significantly more effective than the FISC system. The judiciary is not institutionally competent to oversee intelligence operations. That is not a knock on the courts. It is a recognition that they have a different and vitally important role to play in addressing governmental overreach.

Congress has investigative power and other superior tools for reining in executive excess. And Congress is constitutionally responsible, along with the president, for national security. The courts have no such responsibilities, much less the ability to carry them out. Their duty is to provide an independent forum for redressing governmental abuses—not potentially to participate in those abuses. Perversely, inserting the judiciary into intelligence operations ratchets up due-process rights for anti-American foreign operatives, gives executive misconduct the patina of court approval, and incentivizes the intelligence agencies to obstruct inquiries by the people's representatives—the Congress that created those agencies and funds them to the tune of over 80 billion taxpayer dollars every year.

THE FISC was created by FISA, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978. This was the post-Watergate era, when Democrats controlled both houses of Congress by substantial margins. The impeachment articles adopted by the House Judiciary Committee that drove Richard Nixon to resign the presidency included allegations that he had used the FBI to conduct political spying on the pretext of national security and also had tried to use the CIA for similar purposes. The Left's Vietnam revisionism recast domestic terrorists as the victims of lawless surveillance tactics. In their appeasement of the Soviet Union, Democrats regarded Cold War covert operations as gratuitously provocative.

Determined lawmakers undertook to pare back what they saw as the “imperial presidency,” whose powers of unilateral action had been expanded by the 20th century’s wars and America’s emergence as a global superpower.

The purpose of FISA seems modest now: to provide a modicum of due process to people inside the United States, particularly American citizens, who were targeted for national-security monitoring on suspicion of acting as foreign agents. Because the purpose of such monitoring was not to collect evidence for court prosecution, warrants were not required and judges had no involvement. In marked contrast, for the surveillance (i.e., wiretapping, bugging, and physical searches) of persons suspected of committing crimes, judicial warrants based on probable cause were mandated, under the Fourth Amendment and statutory law.

The ground began to shift in 1972, when the Supreme Court required judicial warrants for domestic terrorism cases, on the theory that violence by American radicals was bound up with constitutionally protected dissent. But the justices took pains to say that they were not addressing *foreign* threats to national security; with such threats, it was assumed that the president maintained inherent constitutional authority to conduct surveillance. This echoed Congress, which had excluded foreign threats from its 1968 legislation regulating electronic surveillance, expressly observing that obtaining foreign intelligence was a “constitutional power of the President.”

FISA ostensibly provides due process, but the reality is that the FISC relies heavily on the executive branch.

FISA blew by this caveat. The law created the FISC and purported to require that, before commencing domestic surveillance to collect foreign intelligence, the executive branch—specifically, the FBI and the Justice Department—would have to obtain judicial authorization based on a showing of probable cause that the subject was acting as a clandestine foreign agent. We must say “purported to require” because the judiciary’s authority to manage what Congress and the courts had repeatedly acknowledged was a constitutional power of the president was a contentious issue.

As we often saw when President Obama adopted most of the Bush-Cheney counterterrorism measures he had campaigned against as a candidate, Democrats tend to be strident opponents of the “imperial presidency” right up until the moment they find themselves in the Oval Office. Both President Jimmy Carter, in signing FISA for electronic surveillance, and President Bill Clinton, in agreeing to its expansion to cover physical searches, committed to cooperate with the FISA system. They insisted, however, that the executive’s constitutional power to order monitoring without court approval remained undiminished. Of course, if the decision is ultimately the president’s, the court’s rulings on warrant applications are merely advisory. That itself is constitutionally problematic, because the jurisdiction of federal courts is limited to cases and controversies suitable for judicial resolution. Unlike courts in many countries, our judicial branch is not empowered to issue opinions that are merely advisory.

Yet this is how things stood for nearly a quarter century. The Justice Department maintained, as a matter of abstract principle, that the president could conduct surveillance unilaterally, but it adhered to FISA to avoid a constitutional dispute. For its part, the FISC ruled as if its decisions were final but avoided a major dispute by granting nearly 100 percent of warrant applications.

This led to complaints that the FISC was a rubber stamp. The accusation, though, was part misconception and part exaggeration. Since national security is a duty of the executive, not the judiciary, it’s only natural that the court would defer to the intelligence professionals on the matter of foreign threats. If the agents responsible for protecting the country have sketchy but frightening intelligence that, say, al-Qaeda is plotting a mass-murder attack, what judge would want to risk thwarting their investigation? The vast majority of the time, when there is some evidence of foreign threats, the judges *should* green-light surveillance. Nevertheless, the FBI and Justice Department do engage in dialogue with the FISC about warrant applications (these exchanges are classified because of the subject matter, and “ex parte”—i.e., only the government officials and a judge are present—because covert surveillance requires that the target not be alerted). If the court is uncomfortable with a scant probable-cause showing, the government will often voluntarily withdraw the warrant application for that target. Statistically, that

does not count as a ruling denying the application, but it is a denial in effect.

That said, there is no gainsaying that an extremely high percentage of warrant applications have been granted. FISA ostensibly provides due process, but the reality is that the FISC relies heavily on the executive branch. The court thus knew it was enmeshed in a key political function and that its authority was questionable. This bred a natural reluctance to second-guess. That reluctance was all the stronger because the FISC lacks any practical means to be an effective check. There is no adversarial process in FISA, as contrasted with standard judicial proceedings in criminal-justice cases. In the latter, once criminal charges have been filed, due process allows the attorneys for a suspect to inspect the representations made by government officials in warrant applications, probing their sufficiency and truthfulness. There is nothing like this in FISA. Therefore, the court had no capacity to conduct such investigations on its own. Congress, in the meantime, deluded itself that, by delegating its oversight role to the judiciary, it had achieved adequate insurance against executive overreach.

The Soviet Union’s collapse in late 1991 led to an irrational end-of-history exuberance—the conceit that Western democracy and its institutions, very much including the rule of law, had prevailed and would inevitably be universally adopted. When jihadists bombed the World Trade Center just 14 months later, the obvious existence of international terrorist

networks backed by anti-Western state sponsors was not permitted to spoil the mood. The Clinton administration was adamant that it would regard terrorism as a crime problem, not a national-security challenge fit for a forcible response.

In this zeitgeist, Justice Department officials were agitated over the possibility that rogue criminal investigators might abuse FISA, using national-security surveillance powers to steer criminal investigations when they could find no probable cause of a crime. To prevent this abuse, Clinton's Justice Department imposed "the wall"—internal procedures that effectively discouraged the FBI's foreign counterintelligence division from sharing information with its criminal division and federal prosecutors. The idea was to avoid using FISA surveillance to taint criminal prosecutions.

But the consequences were catastrophic. Most obvious was the inability of our security agencies to map the jihadist threat. Less apparent but just as real: This transmogrification of a security threat into a legal morass, in which terrorist prosecutions (usually after attacks occurred) were prioritized over counterintelligence measures (meant to stop attacks from occurring), made the FISC the wall's guardian. There was no empirical evidence of FISA's being invoked pretextually, and there is nothing inherently illegitimate about the use of lawfully collected foreign intelligence to bolster criminal prosecutions. Yet the wall created just the kind of hypertechnical legal complication that a judicial tribunal could sink its teeth into. It seemed to validate the FISC's existence.

THREE things changed everything. The 9/11 attacks exploded the serene illusion that America was confronted by a mere crime problem; the Lawyer Left's tireless crusade against aggressive Bush-Cheney counterterrorism provoked a judicial backlash; and the revolution in telecommunications technology eviscerated core assumptions about limitations on FISA's reach.

The shocking murder of nearly 3,000 Americans, in Pearl Harbor-style sneak attacks on iconic economic, military, and political targets, fleetingly brought into sharp relief the absurdity of pretending that international terror networks backed by anti-American state sponsors could be quelled by indictments and judicial proceedings. In marshaling a forcible response that prioritized military and intelligence operations designed to prevent future attacks, President George W. Bush reasonably asked whether his administration was doing everything that could be done on a proper war footing.

Logically, this prompted two internal administration proposals. First, the wall needed to come down. It was legally unnecessary and reckless from a security perspective. And it had also made investigators miss at least one thread of the 9/11 plot—FBI headquarters having directed its criminal investigators not to assist intelligence agents in hunting suspected terrorists who, just weeks later, plowed American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon. Second, the president's inherent authority to order national-security surveillance of potential foreign enemy operatives in wartime should not be subordinated to the constitutionally dubious FISA process—at least not in all instances. President Bush endorsed both changes. The Justice Department issued a directive that razed the wall, relieving the FBI of blinders that had artificially

compartmentalized vital information streams. Moreover, the president authorized a warrantless surveillance program, directing that agents were free to monitor American-based suspected terrorists who were believed to be communicating with overseas terror networks.

The FISC rebelled. Our armed forces had been dispatched to Afghanistan; the intelligence agencies were scrambling to map jihadist cells seeking to reprise the 9/11 atrocities; and, with the PATRIOT Act, Congress endorsed the dismantling of barriers to intelligence sharing. Yet the FISC tried to re-erect the wall by judicial fiat. The court was finally overruled by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court of Review—the first-ever decision by the appellate court that had been created by FISA 24 years earlier. The higher court also pointed out that if the president's authority to collect intelligence against foreign powers stemmed from Article II of the Constitution, it could not be repealed by FISA or any other statute.

This is rudimentary constitutional law. Yet it counted for nothing when, in late 2005, the *New York Times* published a story, based on illegal classified leaks by intelligence officials, revealing that Bush had authorized the National Security Agency to conduct warrantless surveillance of suspected cross-border terrorist communications. It should have been clear that the president had the constitutional authority to do this, and that the action was a measured response in a state of war provoked by a massive enemy attack that prompted a congressional authorization of military force.

Nevertheless, the NSA program got entangled in the Democrats' political and philosophical opposition to Bush's determination that the Clintonian law-enforcement approach to counterterrorism was folly. The opposition was led by progressive academics—many of the same ones who later fell silent as President Obama unilaterally directed targeted assassinations and military interventions. Warrantless surveillance joined a bill of particulars that included detentions of enemy combatants at Guantanamo Bay, trials by military commission, the PATRIOT Act's enhancement of counterintelligence investigative powers, and enhanced interrogation (including forcible waterboarding) of high-value terrorist detainees—all framed by the Left and many libertarians as a betrayal of the rule of law.

Concurrently, the telecom evolution to digital technology—supplanting the analog technology regnant when FISA was conceived—created a new quandary. The evolution was a boon to the NSA, which now could sweep up hundreds of millions of communications globally and screen them through sophisticated algorithms. But it also meant that vast quantities of innocent communications, including those of Americans, were being captured (even if they were unlikely to be monitored). Further, even if non-Americans outside the United States were conversing by phone, email, or text, the Internet's architecture zoomed the digital packets of these communications through transmission hubs in the United States—meaning that they now fell within the physical jurisdiction of the federal courts.

In the Lawyer Left's anti-Bush fervor, it was only a matter of time until courts began ruling that the new technology brought surveillance of even wholly foreign communications into the FISA framework. This morphed FISA into something that its pioneers had foresworn. It had been conceived as a

modest due-process grant to U.S.-based Americans caught up, perhaps inadvertently, in the intrigues of foreign intelligence services; it was now being reimagined into a sort of global Fourth Amendment. Court-enforced privacy protections could be extended to aliens outside our borders—including those plotting against Americans.

The legal battles over warrantless surveillance and the court's oversight jurisdiction threatened to shut down essential foreign intelligence operations—during wartime, no less. The beleaguered Bush administration decided that the better part of valor was to cut a deal with Democrats. The NSA program was brought under FISC supervision. FISA was also amended so that extensive overseas intelligence operations against foreign targets—the kind FISA was not supposed to intrude on—were also brought under nominal court supervision.

It is a fig leaf: Unlike traditional judicial warrants, or even FISA warrants as originally conceived, these surveillance warrants were not to be based on particularized suspicion of individual suspects. Under the revamped FISA, the FISC puts its imprimatur on sweeping executive-branch intelligence-collection programs, implicating hundreds of millions of people. Of course, it is all classified, so there are no actual judicial proceedings involving claimants whose purported rights have allegedly been violated. But the Left gets to

might be engaged in a cyber-espionage conspiracy with the Kremlin to influence the 2016 election. The bureau relied on the now-discredited former British spy Christopher Steele. Even by his own account, Steele's information was based on hearsay multiple layers removed. The FISC let it pass when the FBI risibly sought to corroborate Steele with a media report (for which the bureau implausibly claimed Steele was not the direct source). When FBI officials sheepishly acknowledged that Steele had been removed from the investigation because he was leaking to the media (though they nonetheless continued relying on his unverified claims), the FISC just kept signing off on the warrants. The highly intrusive surveillance begun weeks before the election continued for nearly a year into Trump's presidency.

No surprise, then, that the FISC wants to move on from the Page surveillance to haggling over how to improve the FISA system. No surprise that it has brought in David Kris, who is sure to vouch for the system's splendor while focusing laser-like on the FBI's malfeasance, gliding by the FISC's own shoddy performance.

There is a telling vignette about the Trump–Russia investigation. In March 2017 House testimony, the FBI's then-director, James Comey, conceded that he did not brief the investigation to the congressional “Gang of Eight”—the senior bipartisan leadership of both chambers and their intelligence committees. His preposterous rationale was that the matter was too

Counterintelligence is a political obligation that requires intense congressional oversight, not illusory judicial oversight.

pretend that foreign security threats really can be quelled by legal process and court orders.

Except the emperor has no clothes. The FISC has repeatedly approved collection programs only to have the Justice Department and NSA confess that communications are being collected in violation of the court's instructions—an inevitable outcome. Technologically, it is a cinch to capture heaps of communications; the challenge for the NSA is sifting through the heaps for the relevant morsels without invading the privacy of Americans suspected of no wrongdoing. It's not a matter of bad faith; it's just very hard to do.

And now, in the Trump–Russia debacle, the FBI has been caught doing exactly what the well-intentioned but irresponsible “wall” of the mid '90s was designed to prevent: pretextually using FISA to conduct a criminal investigation in the absence of a crime. Except it was done not to further national security but to interfere in an American political campaign.

While the FISC's orders in December stress the FBI's many misrepresentations, the court fails to mention the inconvenient fact that the Carter Page surveillance applications were appalling on their face, and the court signed off on them anyway. Perusing the redacted versions that have been made available publicly, one sees that the government agents gave the FISC no basis to believe that the FBI was relying on sources who had any direct knowledge of the allegations undergirding their sensational claim that the Trump campaign

sensitive. Of course, the point of having the Gang of Eight is to make sure that Congress can perform its constitutional duty to check executive national-security operations, to ensure their propriety and prudence. In stark contrast to this silence vis-à-vis Congress, the FBI and the Justice Department anxiously described their probe to the FISC, again and again. They did so confident that tough questions would not be posed by senior lawmakers—Republicans stunned by the use of FISA to investigate a political campaign, or Democrats mindful that what's done to the goose can be turned on the gander. In the FISA process, executive officials knew that their applications were apt to be approved with little or no examination. They also knew that, in the unlikely event that FISA's top-secret carapace were ever breached, they would be able to claim that their investigation must have been proper because a prestigious, specialized United States court approved it four times.

FISA is a terrible system built on an unconstitutional foundation. It foists political functions on the judiciary, indulges the fiction that judges are institutionally competent to oversee foreign counterintelligence operations, undermines national security, and does not meaningfully safeguard the civil rights of Americans. Counterintelligence is a political obligation that requires intense congressional oversight, not illusory judicial oversight. There is no mending FISA. It should be ended.

NR



OUR TECHNOLOGICAL RENAISSANCE

Claims of stagnation are not persuasive

BY CHARLES C. W. COOKE

PUT on a record today.

Well, I didn't put on a *record*, so much as I put on a . . . well, a *what*?

It wasn't a vinyl plate or a spool of tape or even a piece of shiny circular plastic. Indeed, whatever physical medium was being used to store the music I was listening to wasn't available to me at all. It simply came in through the air—like lightning. From the comfort of my chair, I picked up my iPhone, chose the album I wanted from the million-strong list that loaded instantly before my eyes, and directed the sound to the speakers in my vicinity, all of which started to play my choice within a few milliseconds. And then, when I tired of it, I shushed it with my voice.

I think about this sometimes when I hear people complain that the bright technological future we were all promised has steadfastly failed to appear. How, I wonder, would I even begin to explain Spotify and Sonos to my grandfather, who died in 1994? A compact disc could be comprehended by the elderly as a better vinyl record, much as the Space Shuttle could be comprehended as a faster airplane. But streaming? If my grandfather came back today, where would I start?

"Okay, so I'm using my telephone, which isn't really a *telephone* so much as a supercomputer-cum-Library-of-Alexandria-cum-high-definition-movie-

studio, to send a wireless signal to the magical speakers in my home, which, upon my request, will contact a set of servers 3,000 miles away in San Francisco, and request instant access to the closest digital copy of—"

"Wait, what's a *server*?"

"—hold on—to the closest digital copy of one of millions of high-quality songs to which I have full and unlimited access, but neither own nor have to store, and—"

It boggles the mind.

It may be tempting to regard this example as a mere bauble or trinket, or even as a sign of decadence. But to do so would represent a disastrous miscalculation of its significance. It is true that some of our advances have slowed since the 1970s. We do not go to the moon on a regular basis, despite the promises of the Apollo program; transatlantic travel has become slower, rather than faster—R.I.P. Concorde; our cars essentially still use the same engines as they always have; and life expectancy is no longer leaping forward. But it is also true that, unlike then, we now enjoy a magnificent worldwide communications network that offers the sum of human knowledge in the blink of an eye and is open to anybody who wishes to join it. If that is "all" we've done in the last four decades, I think we should congratulate ourselves rather heartily.

Forget my grandfather for a moment and imagine explaining that to almost *any literate person in human history*. What do we imagine his reaction would have been? Do we think he would have said, "That sounds like stagnation to me"? Or do we think he would have said, "It sounds as if you have reached the promised land, I hope you are extremely grateful for the bounties you have inherited." If not the latter, he'd be a fool.

From the desk on which I am writing these words, I have access to all of the great works in history: every song, every play, every book, every poem, every movie, every pamphlet, every piece of art. I can find every translation of the Bible that has ever been compiled and put them side by side for comparison. I can read the missives that were sent during the American Revolution, and examine the patents for the first steam engine, and listen to all of Winston Churchill's speeches between 1939 and 1945. The world's recipes are available to me without exception, and, if I desire, I can watch a cornucopia of free-to-use instructional videos in which experts show me how to cook them. At no cost or inconvenience, I can learn how to fix my sink or change my car's tires or troubleshoot my dishwasher. If I want to know where the "panda ant" lives (Chile), to which genus it belongs (*Euspinolia*), how long it is (up

to 8 millimeters), and whether it's actually an ant (it's not, it's a wasp), I can find this information in seconds. What was on the front page of the *Key West Citizen* on June 2, 1943? Easy: "City Council Takes Up Incinerator Project with Representative of FWA." Nearly 2,000 years ago, Pliny the Elder wondered if it might be a good idea to collect all of human knowledge in one place, available to all. That dream has become a reality—and we got to live when it happened. I'd say that's pretty darn good.

The airplane annihilated distance; the smartphone has annihilated geography altogether. Provided that I have a stable connection to the Internet, it takes me the same amount of time to send a digital photograph to Delhi as it does for me to send it to a person in the house next door. On Saturday mornings I can sit and watch the same soccer games, broadcast live from England, that my dad is watching in England and text him about the developments in real time, as if I were sitting next to him. If I need to keep an eye on the news, it makes no difference whether I am sitting in the headquarters of Reuters or on a beach in Australia. Wherever I am, the information flow is the same. Except by design, there is no longer any such thing as "out of the loop." As an achievement, this is monumental.

The "Spaceship Earth" attraction at Disney's Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow tells the story of human communication from the days of the Neanderthal to the invention of the computer. I have wondered at times what Disney will substantively add to this story when it comes time to update the show, and I have come to conclude that the answer is almost certainly nothing. One cannot improve on instant worldwide communication that is accessible to every person and in every place. One can tinker around the edges to upgrade its speed, its reliability, its quality, and its durability, one can add some security into the mix for good measure, but, give or take, this is a problem that has now been solved. As the Phoenicians solved the alphabet problem, so have our contemporary engineers solved the transmission problem. The dream has arrived.

Not everyone appreciates this, of course, which is why it is customary for the complaint I am addressing to be amended slightly, from "technology has

stagnated" to "technology is frivolously used and may even be bad for us." But, while the latter proposition is arguably true, it concedes my premise that something dramatic has changed in the way in which we live. It is indeed entirely possible that the volume and speed of information that the I.T. revolution has ushered in have had a destructive effect on individuals or on society. It is possible, too, that, while the benefits are immense, most people choose not to take advantage of them. I would not be the first to lament that the first thing users seem to do with their access to the Internet is to begin arguing with strangers. And yet to contend that the abuse of the personal computer in some way undermines the value of the personal computer would be equivalent to contending that the use of the airplane for bombing renders the significance of its invention questionable.

I suspect that some of our disappointment is the fault of comic books. Riffle through any *Bumper Sci-Fi Book for Boys!*—style volume that was published between the 1920s and the 1960s and you will see that the physical breakthroughs that were anticipated—spacesuits, rocket ships, jetpacks, flying cars, laser guns, etc.—are featured prominently and enthusiastically, while the less tangible mass communications that were anticipated are set quietly in the background, as if they are inevitable. In story after story, the astronauts communicate from the planet Zog in an instant using video chat, and yet *that*, evidently, is not the exciting part. The exciting part is that they are on Zog.

I must confess that I do not understand why, for it is not at all obvious to me that exploring Zog is more useful than inventing Wikipedia, or that the ability to get to Zog would represent a greater leap forward than the ability to talk to our friends from it. Certainly, Zog may have some interesting rocks, and the technical feat of sending men there and returning them safely to Earth would be worth celebrating. (I do tend to tear up watching the original Moon landing.) But in comparison to a breakthrough that allows me to enjoy the words, faces, music, food, counsel, art, and research of every other human being on Earth, whether living or dead, it would pale. I have that. In my pocket.

Stagnation? Nope. *Renaissance*, more like.

Dime-Store Genomics

Genetic testing will soon be cheap, routine, and ubiquitous

BY RAZIB KHAN

GENETICS has transformed itself in the 21st century. In the 1990s it was an abstruse and esoteric field, as it had been since its rediscovery in 1900. The public awareness of the topic was often filtered through science fiction, such as the film *Gattaca*.

The Human Genome Project changed that. In the early years of the 21st century the science came into its own, with genomics taking the study of single genes and applying it to the whole genome (i.e., an individual's complete sequence of genetic material). Scientists Craig Venter and Francis Collins became celebrities, often seen on the evening news and in glossy magazines, while the new field of genomics in the 2000s was the purview of scientific publications, and perhaps panels on Charlie Rose discussing its possibilities.

Those possibilities are now realities, even if they are not what we originally expected. We haven't cured cancer by decoding the human genome. But whereas the first genome cost over \$1 billion to compile, in 2020 we can purchase a genome for less than \$1,000. More than 30 million Americans have availed themselves of consumer DNA kits that provide genetic information. Instead of being an abstract concern of science labs, genetics has become part of the marketplace of goods and services, providing entertainment and useful information. Rather than possibilities, we are now in the domain of concrete realities.

Whereas sequencing the whole genome, all 3 billion base pairs (the vast majority of which are invariant), costs \$1,000, the companies selling mass-market DNA kits focus on around 1 million

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NR



positions that can vary from person to person. This is considerably cheaper, allowing retail costs to drop below \$100. But this was a process that began over ten years ago. The initial kits sold in the early 2010s were much less detailed and more expensive. While phones and computers can pack in more and more features, the human genome is finite. Today, with improved technology, the cost has gone down, to the point where one can imagine a price close to zero by 2030.

The 2010s was the decade when “consumer genomics” became a term that reflected something in reality. The 2020s have the potential to be the decade when genomics becomes so ordinary and ubiquitous as to be unworthy of mention or note. We will be entering the “total genomic information” world.

What does this mean? If you grew up at the turn of the century, you were familiar with some ways that genetics might be useful. There were forensic tests for crime scenes. There were carrier tests for couples whose future children might be at risk for an inherited condition. There were tests to identify paternity. Finally, there were cases where you might come down with an illness and a targeted genetic test could be ordered by your doctor.

A world of ubiquitous genomes means that all this will go away. A high-quality whole genome gives you all the information you might want to ask for. All you have to do is ask the question. Consumer genetics and high-quality medical genetic testing are already providing many important “incidental findings.” When you buy a DNA consumer kit to explore your genealogy, you may discover a half-brother you never realized you had, or find out that your father is not the man who contributed the genetic material to make you you.

Family secrets long hidden are all going to be exposed if they have a genetic angle. Here is a true story from a friend. There had been rumors in his small town that he had a half-brother due to an affair by his father. He purchased a DNA kit to see if he could find a match with 25 percent of his DNA, the proportion for half-siblings. Immediately such a match turned up. But it wasn’t a stranger; it was someone he knew. His stepfather’s sister was shown to be his aunt (aunts and uncles share 25 percent of their DNA with nieces and nephews). Looking for the product of an affair by his father, my friend came to find out that his mother had had an affair with the man who became his stepfather, and that that man was his biological father.

Genealogical genomics is extremely powerful, and its net extends far beyond close kin. With 10 percent of the American population now present in consumer databases, most individuals can be identified by matches with relatives. This was the case with the Golden State Killer, who was identified through matches between his sample and distant relatives. These matches were then used to narrow down the possible suspects. For various technical reasons, DNA was not retrievable from many 20th-century crime scenes, but we now have the technology to analyze degraded and low-quality samples.

The example in the previous paragraph shows the power of network effects and scale. DNA kits now allow for robust and massive genealogical datasets that can reconstruct nearly the entire human pedigree. That is, by taking genetic sequences from a large group of people, you can reconstruct their ancestors in terms of their genetics; it’s just a matter of computing it. But the assembling of information from massive numbers of people who are genotyped and sequenced also means that the science of discovering diseases gets better and better. Bigger numbers mean more power, and more power in the aggregate means more information returned to individuals. The more useful

information that is returned to individuals, the greater the consumer demand will be. And so a virtuous cycle establishes itself.

The drive for sequencing will also be driven by public-health concerns. Today newborns in the United States are tested for a few significant childhood diseases and conditions automatically. In some cases the diseases never present themselves if the child's diet is immediately altered. But these sorts of tests have clear limitations, and many hospitals now make recourse to rapid whole-genome sequencing for newborns who are not "flourishing." These infants cannot tell a doctor how they are feeling, making them difficult to diagnose. The new genetic technology, which searches through the whole

fortuitously "discover" long-lost relatives because they are likely to be in the database already. Indiscretions that might lead to obfuscated paternity will be impossible to hide. If a child has a genetic mutation that causes illness later in life, the parents will have the choice to know beforehand. And then they can choose to tell their child, or not.

When you begin dating someone, it is very likely that some exchange of genetic information will be the norm. After all, you may find out early on that there are mutations that both of you carry that might lead to disease in your children. Or you may discover that various immune incompatibilities mean the probability of miscarriage is high. Questions and decisions that now emerge organically over time will soon

Supply and demand have worked to bring costs down, and consumer genomics is being transformed from a niche novelty into the sort of thing that drives conversations at Thanksgiving dinner.

sequence for problem segments, has allowed for much better diagnosis of idiopathic conditions in newborns.

The path forward, then, is clear: Within a decade it is likely that all newborns will be sequenced. It will be cheap and quick, and it will need to be done only once. It also means a whole generation will grow up without ever having to do a genetic test. Their whole sequence will be somewhere in the cloud, at the ready. It will be like having a genetic Social Security card.

The development of genomics is somewhat like what has happened in the banking business. Before there were Social Security cards and credit agencies, obtaining loans involved more effort and relied on intuitive methods. J. P. Morgan famously stated that "the first thing is character." Today credit is based on a variety of measurements of your history and your demographics. The intuitive has been made precise; the opaque, transparent.

Genetics will bring transparency; that much is clear. Future generations won't

be present from the initial stage in the digital age.

The genetic revolution of the past few decades has been enabled by advances in science and technology and by the laws of capitalism. Supply and demand have worked to bring costs down, and consumer genomics is being transformed from a niche novelty into the sort of thing that drives conversations at Thanksgiving dinner. It can aid in solving crimes, foster good health, and allow one to understand one's genealogy.

But technology can also impact society, reshaping values and priorities. Capitalism is an engine of cultural "creative destruction." Secrets and hypocrisies that maintained the good health of a family might not be viable in the age of transparency. The sweet and innocent courtship that defines the early stages of a relationship may immediately be subject to the cold glare of genetic permutations.

Genetics is a powerful informative tool. But what we do with that tool is up to us.

Innovation And 'New Energy'

Batteries are great, but we still need petroleum

BY MARK P. MILLS

TO see the future of energy innovation, we need look no further than two iconic Silicon Valley inventions of our century: the Tesla and the iPhone. Both products were launched circa 2007 and catalyzed entire industries. And both were made possible by an energy-centric discovery. As the Nobel committee enthusiastically noted last year, neither would have been possible but for the discovery, a half-century ago, of the nearly magical value of lithium-battery chemistry.

If it were not for lithium, a "fuel" tank for a single Tesla would weigh more than two entire cars. Odds are that parking lots in California today wouldn't be filled with Teslas. And if we were still stuck with yesteryear's battery tech, your smartphone would still look like Gordon Gekko's two-pound brick-sized cellphone in the 1987 movie *Wall Street*.

Instead, a series of scientists, engineers, and innovators discovered and commercialized a game-changing energy technology. In a little more than a decade after the iPhone's introduction, smartphone ownership went from practically zero to 3 billion. That technology now has over 60 percent of the global market for personal communication devices.

On the other hand, in the same period, the number of electric vehicles (EVs) grew from zero to some 4 million on the world's roads. EVs now have less than 0.4 percent—that's not a typo—of the global market for personal mobility devices.

Despite billions of dollars in subsidies and mandates for EVs, the smartphone revolution achieved more than a hundred-fold greater market penetration. That, in a

Mr. Mills, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, is the author of Digital Cathedrals: The Information Infrastructure Era.



Manufacturing lithium-ion batteries in a battery-research facility

nutshell, illustrates the stark difference between the world of bits and the world of atoms. Nonetheless, analogizing energy to digital tech remains a go-to for policy-makers and pundits. One example, from an International Monetary Fund report: “Smartphone substitution seemed no more imminent in the early 2000s than large-scale energy substitution seems today.” It’s still no more imminent. Let me explain, again with the battery.

The first commercially viable lithium battery, circa 1985, had the capability to store more than twice as much energy per pound as did previous chemistry. Then, because engineers invariably squeeze more performance out of new technologies, the next two decades saw the energy per pound roughly double for lithium tech. Such progress brought us useful (if still expensive) EVs, because miles per pound of fuel is the defining metric for 99 percent of all transportation.

Meanwhile, in the digital world, performance is measured in bits, not miles, per pound of battery. Today’s smartphone gets 1,000 times more megabits per fill-up of a phone’s “fuel tank.” Such astounding gains came from the ineluctable strangeness of software and new kinds of silicon logic. Cars can’t follow such trends. If they could, one EV “fuel” tank would have a range of 300,000 miles. That won’t ever happen in our universe.

For many eager to abandon petroleum, 300 miles per EV tank is good enough. And it may be for a lot of people. But there

are no cost/performance curves for EV innovation that can remotely replicate either the performance gains or the velocity of market adoption seen in the digital world. And when the number of EVs in the world does increase by a hundredfold from today, such an outcome, arithmetically, eliminates less than 10 percent of global petroleum use. That’s a meaningful impact, but it’s not a revolution.

This reality often elicits the response that “if we can put a man on the moon, surely we can . . .” But transforming the scale of the energy economy isn’t like putting a few people on the moon a few times. It is like putting all of humanity on the moon—permanently. In other words, society-scale physical systems have, to use a physics term, a lot of inertia. Making big changes in enormous systems takes a very long time. The scales are hard to visualize, but we can try.

The world’s economies today use nearly 90 billion barrels of hydrocarbon energy per year, counted in oil-equivalent terms. That divides up roughly in equal shares: petroleum, natural gas, and coal. To visualize the physical scale: If all that energy were oil, every year it could form a stack of barrels ten *miles* high lined up from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. Changing that is a heavy lift, and replacing it with “clean tech” entails an even greater physical quantity of materials.

Batteries, windmills, and solar panels are physical systems that also require mining and processing of minerals. But

there’s one important distinction. Compared with hydrocarbons, “clean technologies” require a three- to ten-fold greater tonnage of stuff extracted, processed, and assembled to deliver the same amount of energy. The sheer quantities of materials involved are staggering. A wholesale switch to “clean tech” would be a gift to the world’s miners and result in a radical increase in U.S. imports, as America has discouraged its mining industries for decades.

As for using batteries to store grid power and thereby prop up wind and solar, a sense of scale is needed here too. The optimists at Bloomberg New Energy Finance predict that a massive, trillion-dollar level of grid batteries will be installed by 2040. Even if that happened, it would allow us to store only 15 minutes of global energy needs.

Still, let’s stipulate the obvious. There will be many more EVs, batteries, and wind and solar farms in our future. Not least because, policy aspirations aside, all are in fact far more useful than they’ve ever been in history. And innovations will continually make them better. But innovation will make oil and gas technologies better, too. And the technological innovations that unlocked shale oil and gas in the U.S. are newer and still in their earlier days of inevitable advancements.

It bears noting that, over the past decade, innovations in the extraction of shale oil and gas have added ten times more energy to the U.S. supply than wind and solar combined. As for the world, hydrocarbons still supply 85 percent of all energy; wind and solar, 3 percent. If we’re looking for innovation to launch an energy transition, two things will be required: patience and magic. Even Microsoft, in its lengthy carbon pledge, noted that aspirational energy transitions “will require technology that does not exist today.” Where might we find radically new ideas?

It’s no small irony, and it’s instructive, that Stanley Whittingham, one of the three recipients of the 2019 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, for the lithium battery, made his discovery while employed at Exxon’s R&D labs in the 1970s. Many pundits seem to think that foundational innovations are available in a kind of cafeteria line where one can pick one of these, two of those. The reality is far more complex and requires more faith, and funding, in basic science, and more patience. **NR**

The Apolitical Purchase

IT'S a relief to do something ordinary like shop for a refrigerator, because you know it can't possibly get political. The salesperson isn't going to open the fridge doors and say, "That plastic odor you detect will air out, much like the fetid stench of the Oval Office after Trump's gone," or some such polarizing remark. He's like a car salesman, except he never pats the side of the fridge and says, "What's it going to take to get you into this fridge?" Well, chloroform, for starters.

Yes, everyone should shop for major appliances now and then, just to leave behind our fractious political cacophony! Just kidding. Everything is political. Tell people you're looking at a new fridge, and you'll start an argument.

Example No. 1. Let's pretend I'm telling Bernie Sanders about my plans. He would wave his arms and get angry, I expect.

"No! One! Should have a 32-cubic-foot refridguhratuh when there are people who don't have a place to put their lettuce! And I'm not saying it has to be lettuce, it could be aruguhluh. We got lots of salad greens. And that's a good thing! But you have people who have walk-in coolers that are bigger than the jail cells where we put people who have done nothing wrong but sell some marijuana, and when I am president I will make sure that the government helps minorities, African Americans, Hispanics to get small-business loans so they can sell marijuana instead of the coh-poh-rations, so they don't go to jail. Because that's unfair."

When it is pointed out that Sanders owns three fridges, he barks, "Yes I do and I'll tell you what I like about it, they got ice that comes outta the door and that's better than ICE coming through your door, which is what we have now with this administration."

The result, in his first term, is an executive order that places a Refrigerator Excess Capacity Surtax on fridges over 23 cubic feet in size. Consumers respond by under-reporting the actual amount of fridge space they have, which leads to nationwide inspection of all kitchens and severe penalties for those who have evaded the tax. Often the fridges are cut in half on the spot and hauled off to under-chilled communities; when these broken, useless fridges do not solve fridge inequality, Sanders calls for a 50 percent tax on Häagen-Dasz and other premium ice creams. (Ben and Jerry's protests the tax and is nationalized soon after.)

Eventually Sanders uses the Green New Deal to ban all fridges, replacing them with iceboxes, trumpeting the creation of a network of carbon-neutral ice trucks pulled by horses, and the many new jobs available in the iceman, or IcePerson, field. The nation becomes reacquainted with the icepick as a standard tool in the drawer. The Sanders reelection campaign sells an ice pick called the "Trotsky" on its

website; informed that the Communist was actually murdered with an ice axe, Sanders says, "Pick, axe, I think Leon got the point."

Example No. 2. The fridge has Wi-Fi, by the way. It has internal cameras that let you see what you have. Tell that to the TechBro Privacy Scolds and you get an argument as well:

"Seriously, dude, an Internet-connected fridge? You're asking for Big Tech to snoop on your cheese preferences. You're, like, giving away your information to the Cheddar-Industrial Complex, and they're so stupid and lax there'll be a breach, and all someone has to do is go on the Dark Web and there it is, you like it sharp, not mild."

Example No. 3. Vegans, if they are the insufferable sort, will object if the salesperson says, "This is the meat drawer," since that (a) suggests a carno-normative worldview that excludes and erases the shared, lived experiences of the plant-based community and (b) spoils the fridge forevermore, since the taint of hypothetical meat can never be forgotten.

This does not work the other way. The meat-eater is not offended if the salesperson says, "This drawer keeps your vegetables crisp," since that means there could conceivably be vegetables in the fridge, and that's good! In fact, just having the drawer is a great start for healthier eating.

"It also keeps bacon crisp, too? No? Well, no harm in asking."

Example No. 4. The free trader might not argue. He'd say, "Aren't you glad you can get this amazing piece of technology for a reasonable price? The benefits of globalism!"

You: Yes, that's nice, but on the other hand, I do hate driving by the long-abandoned refrigerator factory at the end of town.

"It's got a 4K finger-print-resistant touchscreen that instantly displays your family photos!"

Yes, that's nice, but those were good jobs, and provided a good middle-class life for many—

"It's got sensors that send you a text message when the milk's 24 hours from its expiration date, and you can't get that kind of price point and full suite of features when you're paying union wages!"

Got it, but the hollowing out of industrial regions had a profound effect—

"Did I mention . . . built in fast-chiller for white wine?"

Yeah, but—say, free delivery and haul-away of the old one? Yes? Okay, I'll take it. I'm still troubled, although that will quickly fade, leave me with no lasting lessons about industrial policy, and be replaced by the peevish whines of the effete elite when I'm at the store trying to remotely log into my fridge and the app crashes.

Well, that's progress. I suppose I could just use a paper notebook—or what we'll call an "app" after socialism wrecks the power grid.

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The Long View

BY ROB LONG

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT: *HILLARYPOD! 3/24/20*

HUMA ABEDIN: From high atop the HillaryDome, in a pantsuit made entirely out of right-wing tears, it's the Hiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii lrrrrrry Cllllllinnntonnnn Podcast!

(Pre-recorded applause)

HILLARY CLINTON: Hahahaha. Hahahaha. That's a fun introduction, Huma, and I am enjoying the fun and lively nature of it, by laughing as I did just now and will again, as soon as I finish this sentence. Hahahaha hahaha. Haha. Fun!

HUMA ABEDIN: We've got a great show today, Hillary.

HILLARY CLINTON: We do! I'm really excited to dive into it. We're going to talk politics and policy and maybe even throw a little pop culture into the mix, but before we do I want to talk a little bit about mattresses. You know, on the campaign trail or at home in Chappaqua with my husband with whom I live in a normal marriage that isn't weird or transactional at all, you know, I . . . was talking about . . . um . . .

HUMA ABEDIN: Casper Mattresses! Just the right give, just the right bounce!

HILLARY CLINTON: Yes! Right! Friends, we're proud to have Casper Mattresses as a sponsor of HillaryPod, and I'm not just a fan of their advanced technology and superior construction, I'm also here to say that I get a great night's sleep on the Casper Mattress in my bedroom—our bedroom—ours. Our bedroom.

HUMA ABEDIN: Great product! Wonderful sponsor! Hey, let's talk primaries!

(Pre-recorded applause)

HILLARY CLINTON: Oh, gosh. Crazy times, am I right? Been there, done that, as the kids say. Folks, here's my analysis. Sorry to see Pete and Amy go—both of them were terrific second- or third-tier candidates—and glad that the party is focusing on choosing between Bernie or Joe, who as you know I am just a total fan of. Joe is the best, really. And from my perspective, if it has to be one or the other to face Donald Trump in November, well, hey, I say let's all give Joe the nod and hope that his current behavior isn't indicative of some kind of advanced dementia or maybe he's just tired, I don't know. There's so much here that we can't predict and can't know. But I do know that if you or your business are looking to build a world-class website, you don't need to look further than Square Space, that's right folks, Square Space. They can help you build and design a website for your business or your brand, and it all comes at a very affordable price. Check out Square Space and use the coupon code "I'MWITHHER," that's "I'm, With, Her," all one word, and get 15 percent off your brand-new website with Square Space, the leader in Web hosting and design and a proud sponsor of the HillaryPod.

(Pre-recorded applause)

HUMA ABEDIN: You know, Hills, I was just browsing around the Web and saw a fun website that's a Square Space site for sure, called—and I know this is gonna make you crazy—but it's called "hillaryin2020.com" and it's—

HILLARY CLINTON: Stop! Crazy! I am laughing really hard at this humorous and totally spontaneous thing you are saying! Hahahaha. Haha. Hahaha.

HUMA ABEDIN: Well, you know, it's interesting, because there really is a movement out there to draft you for the nomination. It's been a crazy

process and it seems like voters aren't happy with either Biden or Bernie—

HILLARY CLINTON: You know, we talked about this on the last podcast.

HUMA ABEDIN: And the podcast before that.

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, let me just make sure I'm clear with the folks that are all, Oh Hillary you have to run, Oh Hillary you're amazing and the best and a hero and you deserve it, and Oh Hillary we are unworthy of your greatness, and Oh Hillary we shall sacrifice a baby human on your altar and set fire to—

HUMA ABEDIN: You were saying? About the Draft Hillary movement?

HILLARY CLINTON: Right. Where was I? Oh, yeah, look, it's such an outlandish and unlikely-to-happen event. I mean, what are people saying? That Joe should win enough delegates to stop Bernie and then at the convention when it's time to choose, people realize that Joe thinks he's an astronaut on Planet Nutso, and then they realize that I actually got 3 million more votes than Trump and that if I just spend some time in Michigan and Wisconsin it'll be like a no-brainer? And so then they call me from the hotel where I'm staying, which is luckily really close to the convention hall, and I walk the floor and everyone is cheering and whatnot? I mean, really?

HUMA ABEDIN: So you're ruling it out?

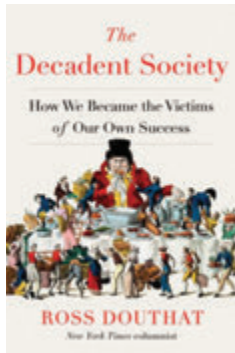
HILLARY CLINTON: The only thing I'm ruling out are high interest rates and closing costs, which is why I love Lending Tree. That's right folks, if your monthly payments are getting you down and you're carrying credit-card debt at some crazy interest rate, then Lending Tree is for you. Use the coupon code HILLARYPOD2020 and get 15 percent off your Lending Tree set-up fee!

(Pre-recorded applause)

Books, Arts & Manners

Sustainable Stagnation?

AARON SIBARIUM



The Decadent Society: How We Became the Victims of Our Own Success, by Ross Douthat
(Avid Reader, 272 pp., \$27)

‘D ECLINE is a choice,” Charles Krauthammer famously quipped. But decadence is not.

Or at least that’s one possible reading of *The Decadent Society*, Ross Douthat’s sweeping, incisive tome on the stagnant state of Western liberalism. Decadence, Douthat writes, “refers to *economic stagnation, institutional decay, and cultural and intellectual exhaustion at a high level of material prosperity and technological development.*” It does not mean excess so much as enervation, and—crucially—it needn’t imply crisis or collapse, at least not in the immediate, return-of-history sort of way often associated with the Trump era. Lest the reader begin to feel reassured, Douthat says the best analogue of our present situation is imperial Rome, which, as W. H. Auden put it, “managed to last for four centuries without creativity, warmth, or hope.”

Repetition as opposed to regression, drift rather than death—that is the order of the day, and part of the reason renewal may prove so elusive: because a society

that is only “dystopia-ish” will not necessarily inspire, or even merit, the sort of risky, history-reviving actions that might end decadence.

Especially since the forces that gave rise to it were somewhat beyond our control.

Start with productivity slowdown, stagnation’s most familiar, easiest-to-measure form. Drawing on the work of Robert Gordon and Tyler Cowen (the latter’s *Great Stagnation* in particular), Douthat suggests a variety of constraints that have made high productivity growth, and the social contentedness it brings, less sustainable than in past decades. Richer people have fewer kids, fewer kids means older societies (and thus more debt), the educational gains of the 20th century were more or less a one-time shock, and it’s no longer possible to boost growth by appropriating fallow land—the frontier has been closed, and, pending space travel, won’t be reopened any time soon.

Space travel *is* pending, moreover, because innovation in the realm of atoms has not kept pace with innovation in the realm of bits, with inventions that were predicted “fifty years ago . . . now dismissed as fantasies,” the stuff of *Star Wars* or (better yet) *Star Trek*. And this technological decadence, while not obviously inevitable, is not obviously reversible either—in part because of feedback loops between the aforementioned constraints but also, potentially, because there is an “inherent limit on possible innovation” built into our present order. “At some point, every advanced-for-its-time society has ceased advancing,” Douthat notes ominously. “There is no reason to assume that the modern world is inherently immune from the torpor that claimed the Ottomans and imperial China in the not-so-distant past.”

Likewise, there’s little reason to assume that the “consistent ineffectuality in American governance”—the gridlock, the failed presidencies, the forever wars—can be fixed through any kind of conventional reform. What Francis Fukuyama calls “vetocracy,” a system in which too many checks and balances hamstring effective policymaking, is now the default condition of the United States

and, across the sea, of Europe as well. Both have experienced sustained stalemate—Democrats vs. Republicans in America, centrists vs. populists in the EU—in which no side can achieve lasting legislative victories, stymied as they are by interest groups and institutions that seem increasingly endemic to the liberal order.

Overcoming such obstacles will require a great deal of imagination and ambition . . . which, according to Douthat, are two things today’s West sorely lacks—not just in technology and politics, but also in culture, and in our recurring battles over it. “Famous 1970s-era texts such as Christopher Lasch’s *The Culture of Narcissism* . . . seem entirely relevant” to America today, Douthat observes, as do ’90s-era critiques of affirmative action, postmodernism, feminism, and progressive myopia more generally. The buzzwords may have changed, but the underlying debates have not, and concerns about their being decisively resolved in the Left’s favor seem exaggerated, to say the least. Instead, writes Douthat, “today’s changes are aftershocks” from “the genuine revolutions of fifty or sixty years ago . . . rather than new earthquakes”—hence the striking “similarities between the Clarence Thomas Supreme Court confirmation fight in 1991 and the 2018 Brett Kavanaugh confirmation fight, between the current Black Lives Matter moment and the O. J. Simpson— and Rodney King—era debates about police brutality, . . . even between the sexual scandals of Donald Trump and the sexual scandals of Bill Clinton.”

Equally telling, and arguably more depressing, is the state of popular culture, which has traded the creativity and cultural ferment of the Boomers for endless reboots and recyclings, often of Boomer-era IP. “Thirty years after 1985, the year’s biggest blockbuster was a *Star Wars* movie about Darth Vader’s grandchildren . . . which was directed by a filmmaker, J. J. Abrams, who was coming off rebooting *Star Trek* . . . which was part of a wider cinematic landscape dominated by ‘presold’ comic-book properties developed when the baby boomers were young,” Douthat notes wryly. The problem is that the

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counterculture from which these properties arose was so successful that it became the culture, full stop, thereby destroying the “forms and structures that once gave rebellion purpose.”

Indeed, *Star Wars* is in many ways a synecdoche for the West that Douthat describes: a once-novel pastiche of competing ideas and traditions undone by its own success, stuck in an endless cycle of banality, increasingly unsure of where it wants to go or what it wants to be, and yet still rich enough to ensure its own recrudescence for the foreseeable future, provided nobody gets *too* bored, no executive *too* adventurous.

Also, in America as in *Star Wars*, people aren't having sex.

This last development, termed “the sex recession” by *The Atlantic*'s Kate Julian, is a symptom of what Douthat calls “sustainable” decadence, in which an ever-expanding suite of virtual vice—Playstation and pornography, TikToks and Twitter—numbs us to the frustration,

New Hope kind of pastiche—of two different conservative arguments.

The first finds its most forceful champion in Patrick Deneen, whose 2018 *Why Liberalism Failed* emphasized the ways in which our notionally free society really isn't—how a kind of soft despotism can emerge from the uncoordinated interactions of private agents, few of whom are willing to risk their wealth or comfort or status to challenge the existing system. Douthat's treatment of the panopticon, and his Huxleyesque concerns about virtual opiates, are a variation on this theme.

The second argument comes from George Will, whose 2019 *The Conservative Sensibility* was essentially one long subtweet of Deneen: a brief for free markets and limited government, for classical liberalism, for the Founding, for the revolution that created it—and above all for the churn, the unpredictability, the *dynamism* that this tradition always promised, its commitment to individual

creativity drew, but hell, Douthat seems to concede, at least they did something other than masturbate.

At the same time, it's unclear how small-l liberalism alone could deliver us from decadence. Even if one rejects the idea that decadence is a logical consequence of liberalism (and Douthat does reject it, effectively, by stressing the way technology has induced inertia), liberalism offers no obvious guarantee *against* decadence, and in certain cases may even exacerbate it. Freer markets do not automatically translate into higher growth, checks and balances create gridlock, and a public philosophy of individualism hasn't stopped the West from slouching toward conformism—if anything, it has abraded the social bonds that uphold diversity.

This may be why Douthat is loath to offer prescriptions in his final chapters, choosing instead to sketch some plausible (and not so plausible) paths out of decadence—paths, not policies. It's telling

Detectable in Douthat's prose is a **note of nostalgia**—not just for the tight-knit culture of days past, but for the pesky Boomers who blew it all up.

the *angst*, that stasis often brings. Simulated stimuli, the one area where we *haven't* stopped innovating, thus reinforce stagnation in other realms of life, with threats of “real turbulence and disruption” blunted by tweeting, smut, and video games. (The return of radicalism, Douthat notes, such as it is, has been a mostly online affair.)

Then, in addition to these Huxleyan balms, technology has enabled new forms of social control: vast distribution networks for propaganda and disinformation and fake news, the soft censorship of Silicon Valley, a panoptic social-credit system run not by China but by Google, and an archive of digital memory of which the Soviets could only dream. This regime intimidates critics without quite oppressing them and is too decentralized to be attacked (well, *plausibly* attacked) as totalitarian—suggesting, again, that our decadence could continue for a while yet, immune to the paroxysms and anxieties it generates.

All of which means that *The Decadent Society* is itself a pastiche—the good,

freedom the ultimate bulwark against slowdown and sclerosis. To be sure, Douthat is less bullish than Will on small-government conservatism (he has jokingly expressed sympathy for “a multiracial, multilingual Catholic aristocracy ruling from Quebec to Chile”). But in defining “decadent” as the opposite of “dynamic,” he is implicitly granting Will's political vocabulary. And in insisting that decadence “needs critics,” that “stagnation and repetition . . . crowd out essential human goods,” he is implicitly agreeing with Will about the value of flux—and implicitly *disagreeing* with Deneen about the value of rootedness, the normative lodestar of *Why Liberalism Failed*. It's important, sure, and in some ways our era could use more of it. But also detectable in Douthat's prose is a note of nostalgia—not just for the tight-knit culture of days past, but for the pesky Boomers who blew it all up, in “the last great burst of creativity in Western history.” Yes, they were “destructive and solipsistic,” yes, they dissolved the traditions on which their

that many of these involve catastrophe—a climate apocalypse or debt crisis, maybe a migration-fueled civil war—while the rest involve external shocks that are hard to predict or engineer: a Euro-African renaissance of Christianity, an unforeseen technical breakthrough, a new political dispensation, or some combination of all three. In each case, individual agents can do only so much, and what they do could very easily backfire, hastening the dystopia rather than forestalling it.

Which would in turn explain why, when all is said and done, Douthat isn't holding out for a *deus ex machina* so much as a *deus ex deo*—something providential, “something extra, that really can come only from outside our present frame of reference.” “I'm not predicting the end of the world or the arrival of the millennium here,” he assures readers on the final page. “I'm just saying that if this *were* the age in which some major divine intervention happened, . . . there would be, in hindsight, a case that we should have seen it coming.”

Time will tell.

NR

The Unclassifiable Orwell

JOHN J. MILLER



Becoming George Orwell: Life and Letters, Legend and Legacy, by John Rodden (Princeton University Press, 384 pp., \$29.95)

“THE whole experience of being hit by a bullet is very interesting,” wrote George Orwell—a line that bursts with dry humor, written by a man who could be witty but rarely was comic. Yet there was nothing funny about what happened to Orwell at dawn on May 20, 1937, as he fought in the Spanish Civil War. With the rising sun at his back and probably outlining his head, he was struck in the throat by a sniper’s bullet. It passed through his neck and blood gushed from his mouth. He couldn’t feel his right arm. “I took it for granted that I was done for.”

If he had been done for, readers never would have learned that “some animals are more equal than others” or that “Big Brother is watching you.” They never would have wrestled with his essays on the dangers of imperialism or the politics of language. If they had known him at all—and even this is doubtful—it would have been as a minor English novelist and journalist. It certainly would not have been as “the most important writer since Shakespeare and the most influential writer who has ever lived,” as the Texas-based scholar John Rodden calls him in *Becoming George Orwell*.

Readers were lucky, and so was Orwell. The bullet had penetrated between his

windpipe and his carotid artery. A millimeter’s difference in either direction probably would have finished him. His comrades put him on a stretcher, a doctor bandaged the wound, and Orwell recovered in a hospital.

In the weeks that followed he had to escape death again. He had gone to Spain to fight for socialism and against fascism. (This was an era in which writers took up arms for the causes they believed in, rather than just tweeted about them.) Yet Stalin’s stooges regarded him as insufficiently loyal to their master in Moscow. They targeted him for execution. Orwell evaded these would-be murderers in Barcelona long enough to flee by train to France and safety. This experience, according to Rodden, became “the decisive event that transformed Orwell into a fearlessly outspoken anti-Communist for the rest of his life.” It made possible the work for which he is most remembered: his essays and novels of the 1940s, his final decade. It also launched a debate about the true nature of Orwell’s politics—one that still rages today.

Last year witnessed an anniversary of equidistance for Orwell’s best-known work, called “Nineteen Eighty-Four” in Britain and “1984” in the United States. In other words, 2019 marked 35 years from the novel’s eponym, which arrived 35 years after its first publication, in 1949. Lots of people who know the book only by reputation are familiar with its major themes as well as its vocabulary of “thoughtcrime” and “memory holes.” They may even use the adjective “Orwellian”—a word that, ironically, has come to mean the freedom-crushing systems and methods that Orwell himself despised.

Rodden has devoted much of his career to Orwell, starting with his 1989 book *The Politics of Literary Reputation*, which examines the sources of Orwell’s fame. This latest volume is a grab-bag of Orwelliana. In one piece, Rodden observes that Orwell’s memoir *Homage to Catalonia*—in which the author describes getting shot—is “the most widely read nonfiction book on the Spanish Civil War in any language.” In another, he makes a case for the importance of an early essay on a hanging in Burma. He also considers Orwell’s connections to the French writer Albert Camus, the ways in which American

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Catholics have responded to his ideas, and more. The chapters can stand on their own or, taken together, form an idiosyncratic biography of a consequential life. To read them is to sit in the presence of a veteran scholar at the peak of his powers.

Orwell was a political writer, but the exact nature of his politics is disputed. He started out on the left but grew dismayed at its refusal to break with Soviet tyranny: “The sin of nearly all left wingers from 1933 onwards is that they wanted to be anti-Fascist without being anti-totalitarian,” he wrote in 1946. The question is how far he drifted from his roots. In the years after Communist killers failed to get him in Spain, did he ever become an actual conservative? Or would he have become one if he had lived longer? What would he have thought about, say, Brexit? (My own guess is that he would have voted Leave.) Rodden, for his part, avoids speculating: “I have sought to clarify with scholarly accuracy

socialist. He seems not to have appreciated the link between political and economic freedom that animates so many on the free-market right. Plenty of conservatives nevertheless have tried to claim him. Norman Podhoretz once argued that a long-lived Orwell would have joined his tribe of neoconservatives. Before that, the proto-alt-righters of the John Birch Society also tried to appropriate him: As Rodden discovered by scouring old phone books at the Library of Congress, the Birchers used 1-9-8-4 in the phone number for their Washington office in the 1950s.

Progressives want Orwell on their side, too. In 2007, George Soros and the Open Society Institute published *What Orwell Didn't Know*, a book that savages the supposed “far-right-wing political agenda of the George W. Bush administration and the Christian Right.” More recently, liberals delighted in the fact that sales of *1984* had boomed following the inauguration of President Trump and the unfortunate introduction of the term

One of his main influences was James Burnham, the Communist-turned-conservative who would become a senior editor of *NATIONAL REVIEW*: Burnham’s 1941 book *The Managerial Revolution* helped Orwell conceive of Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, the three superpowers at war in the world of *1984*.

Perhaps these complexities and contradictions make Orwell sound like a vivid character in a compelling novel. “George Orwell,” in fact, was not a real person but rather the invention of Eric Blair, a young man who adopted a pen name so that his writings wouldn’t embarrass his parents. (“George” paid tribute to St. George, the patron saint of England; “Orwell” was the name of a favorite river.) “This incarnated *nom de plume*,” writes Rodden, was “the only fully rounded, three-dimensional character that the novelist ever created.” This refers to a traditional knock on Orwell’s fiction: His characters lack the richness of those found in a story by the likes of Charles Dickens. As it happens, Orwell admired Dickens, and a

Orwell has been called every conservative’s favorite liberal and every liberal’s favorite conservative—a category that sounds impossible amid today’s divisiveness.

his legacy and not to indulge in the practice of robbing his grave or moving his coffin to the left or to the right for my own political purposes.”

Yet readers will wonder. Orwell has been called every conservative’s favorite liberal and every liberal’s favorite conservative—a category that sounds impossible amid today’s divisiveness. Part of Orwell’s accomplishment is simply a matter of timing. By dying on January 21, 1950—the same day as the perjury conviction of the Soviet spy Alger Hiss—Orwell didn’t have to take a side in a series of bitter controversies. If he had lived beyond his 46 years, he probably would have annoyed conservatives or liberals or both by announcing his views on McCarthyism in the 1950s, the Vietnam War in the 1960s, and perhaps even the policies of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s.

Nobody can say for sure what he would have written about any of this. The trouble for conservatives is that Orwell never quit calling himself a

“alternative facts” into political parlance. Yet they couldn’t limit themselves to a few reasonable comments. A headline in *The Nation* blared: “Trump’s America Is Worse Than Orwell’s ‘1984.’” It’s one thing for Orwell to instruct and inspire, and quite another to turn him into a boot for stamping on partisan rivals.

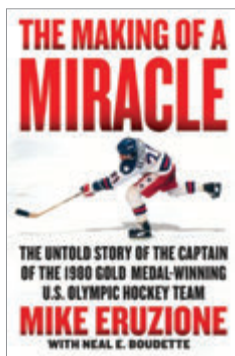
Orwell once called himself a “Tory anarchist,” a term that clarifies nothing because it confuses just about everybody. Lots of other potential and conflicting labels present themselves. Here are a few that Rodden deploys, citing his own views or the views of others: Orwell was “a heterodox socialist,” a “leftist yet anti-Stalinist,” and a “left-wing patriot.” He was “an unrelenting critic of his fellow socialists.” He was an “adamant atheist” but also possibly a “crypto-Christian” who had “a dislike of feminism” and “opposed abortion.” He was a “utopian skeptic” who displayed a “conservative streak” and became “a cult hero among American conservatives.”

1939 description of the Victorian author might serve as a self-portrait: “I see . . . the face of a man who is *generously angry*—in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls.”

Perhaps it’s enough to stop the smelly little orthodoxies of our time from trying to reshape Orwell in their own image. (The next time someone claims that Orwell would have favored Brexit, roll your eyes.) As Rodden notes, Orwell was “an intellectual who wrote for the age,” i.e., the one in which he lived and not ours. What happened, though, is that his words transcended their moment and Orwell rose to the status of “a world-historical figure.” And so rather than study him with Rodden’s care and diligence, we fight over him, confident in the truth of a line from *1984*: “‘Who controls the past,’ ran the Party slogan, ‘controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.’” **NR**

The Miracle That Never Ceases

RICHARD LOWRY



The Making of a Miracle: The Untold Story of the Captain of the 1980 Gold Medal-Winning U.S. Olympic Hockey Team, by Mike Eruzione with Neal E. Boudette (Harper, 288 pp., \$27.99)

I'M an aficionado of sports highlights and calls, and a repeat viewer on YouTube.

There are some classics that never grow old. The Shot Heard Round the World ("The Giants win the pennant!"). The gimpy Kirk Gibson home run ("In a year that has been so improbable, the impossible has happened"). The California Golden Bears' last-second, five-lateral kickoff return against Stanford ("The band is out on the field!"). The classic Texas high-school matchup, John Tyler versus East Plano, with the wildest finish of any football game ever played—look it up ("Oh, no!! Oh, my God!!"). And because I'm a Yankees fan of a certain age, Bucky Dent ("Deep to left . . .").

But nothing matches the last seconds of the U.S.–Soviet Olympic hockey game in 1980, with the great Al Michaels making the call of a lifetime.

"Eleven seconds, you've got ten seconds, the countdown going on right now! Morrow up to Silk. Five seconds left in the game. Do you believe in miracles? . . . Yes!" Goosebumps.

Every. Single. Time.

The 4–3 U.S. victory in that game 40 years ago was easily the greatest American



The American Olympic hockey team celebrates a 4–3 victory over the Soviet Union, February 22, 1980.

sporting event of the 20th century. It packs an extra emotional punch because of the geopolitical context and the win's contribution to national pride at an emotional low point for the country.

I can still get verklempt watching not just those final seconds but the Mike Eruzione go-ahead goal halfway through the third ("Eruzione, he scores! Mike Eruzione!"), the iconic dog-pile celebration of the star-spangled players at the game's end, and the St. Crispin's Day pregame speech of coach Herb Brooks, in which he tells his underdog team, "This moment is yours." (There's no video of the Brooks oration, but it is movingly enacted by Kurt Russell in the movie *Miracle*.)

Given my tender emotions around this event, I found myself misty-eyed a couple of times reading Eruzione's new autobiography, *The Making of a Miracle*.

It is not quite, as billed in the subtitle, "the untold story" of anything. The details of Eruzione's young hockey life may not be well known, but they run so smoothly in the ruts of a tale of an unlikely working-class American sports star that they are almost a cliché, from Eruzione's having to use his sister's figure skates when he started playing pick-up hockey as a kid to the lucky breaks, coupled with grit and hard work, that got him in a position to attain hockey immortality.

As for the Olympic team, any somewhat plugged-in sports fan is aware of the broad outlines of its achievement. Yet when a story is this good it is worth constant retelling, and Eruzione's book is an enjoyable refresher (an excellent, more journalistic version from some years ago is *The Boys of Winter*, by Wayne Coffey).

After an accomplished hockey career at Boston University, Eruzione bounced around minor-league hockey a bit. The brawling world of the likes of the Toledo Goaldiggers took some getting used to. In his second game with Toledo, he got in a fight, although he only realized what was happening after a brief delay. His coach's advice afterwards: "If it seems like it might be a fight, it's a fight."

In the fall of 1979, Eruzione was still eligible for amateur hockey and made it onto the Olympic team, which was the project of Herb Brooks, the inspired coach whose strategic genius, psychological acuity, extremely demanding style, and idiosyncratic ways made the 1980 team what it was.

As a young player, Brooks had been dropped from the 1960 U.S. Olympic team at the last minute. He watched from home as that team won a gold medal, his dad commenting, not very

sensitively, “Well, I guess the coach cut the right guy.”

Brooks was obsessed with Soviet hockey and wanted to turn its insights against it. No more dump-and-chase, the one-dimensional style dominant in North America that, in effect, served constantly to turn the puck over to the exceptional skaters and passers of the Soviet team. His team would be physically tough, but would be able to skate and pass, too, and be better conditioned than anyone else, giving it better legs in the third period.

Brooks told his players that he didn’t intend to be their friends and stayed true to his word. The team had a robust exhibition schedule, and when Brooks didn’t like the effort during a 3–3 tie against the Norway team, he kept his team on the ice afterwards, running it through a murderous round of skating drills, even after the rink attendant had turned off the lights and left.

In the movie version, Brooks is trying to beat the regionalism out of his players—they brought their college

10–3. The cunning Brooks seemed uncharacteristically relaxed about the game, content for the Russians to be complacent.

At the Games themselves, the U.S. team opened against Sweden and almost stalled out before it got started. Down 2–1, with a minute left, the U.S. pulled its goalie, Jim Craig, and Bill Baker tied it up with 27 seconds left.

I remember watching the game at home on a black-and-white TV. I had become a hockey fan via the woeful Washington Capitals, still a struggling expansion team at the time, so hockey success was a strange, if welcome feeling.

In the next game, the U.S. crushed the Czechs, presumed to be the second-best team in the tournament, 7–3. America got its introduction to Herb Brooks when he was caught on camera threatening to shove a stick down a Czech player’s throat after a cheap shot on an American player.

Three more victories against inferior teams left the U.S. undefeated and on a collision course with the Soviets in the medal round. Brooks believed that the U.S.

Now, it was really happening. Ten minutes of Al Michaels–narrated agony ensued as the U.S. had to protect the lead against an explosive Soviet team that, at this point, easily still could have won 6–4. Instead, they were shut down as the flag-waving, “U.S.A.!”-chanting, over-capacity crowd in the Lake Placid arena grew ever more frenzied.

When the U.S. won, Brooks didn’t celebrate with his players on the ice, but left for the locker room and locked himself in a bathroom stall and wept.

The game was played at 5 P.M., yet ABC chose to broadcast it on tape delay in prime time. Most people didn’t know in real time what had happened. (Some of the suspense was killed for me and other Washington, D.C.–area viewers when the preview for the local 11 P.M. news noted in a commercial break that the U.S. had indeed won.) When word began to get out about the upset, people gathered outside the Eruzione home, singing the national anthem.

The impact of the victory is hard to fathom. (The gold medal awaited a final

Mike Eruzione has become the custodian of the greatest sports story ever told. May he keep retelling it, as long as America believes in miracles.

rivalries with them—and doesn’t relent until Eruzione calls out his name and town: “Mike Eruzione. Winthrop, Massachusetts.” Who do you play for? Brooks asks. “The United States of America.”

It’s an affecting scene, and Eruzione reports that fans are always disappointed to learn that this exchange didn’t really happen.

The U.S. team compiled an impressive 41–16–3 record during the exhibition season. But the Soviets loomed. Since their loss in 1960, they’d won the gold at every single Olympics. During this run, their combined Olympic record was 27–1–1, and they had outscored the opposition 175–44.

When they played a best-of-three series against the NHL all-stars in 1979, they won the decisive third game 6–0.

The U.S. played its own exhibition against the Soviets at Madison Square Garden two weeks before the Olympic Games and, overawed by the legends on the other end of the ice, got manhandled

team didn’t need to be capable of winning nine out of ten games against the Soviets; it needed to win only one, and if it got the Soviets into the third period in a close contest, who knew?

That’s exactly how it played out. The U.S. emerged tied with the Soviets 2–2 after one period, survived an onslaught in the second, getting outshot 12–2 but trailing only 3–2, and then magic happened in the third.

The U.S. tied it on a power play before team captain Eruzione scored his historic goal out of nowhere. He used a Soviet defender down on his knees as a screen and didn’t see the shot go in. When he realized he’d scored, he bicycled his legs in a jig of joy and was mobbed by his teammates against the glass. (Brooks always encouraged the entire team to celebrate goals to work up the crowd.)

Eruzione’s friends joke that if his shot had been three inches to the left, his post-Olympics career would have consisted of painting bridges.

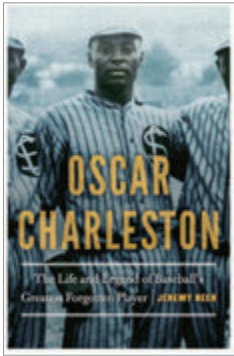
win against the Finns.) People cried, they sang, they chanted, they remembered later where they were that night. Ordinary sports creates an ersatz nationalism, with fans feeling a deep connection to their own team, to its history and its colors and its past heroes. When this sports patriotism was combined with the real thing—especially when arrayed against an aggressive, malign rival power, at a time when people were desperate to feel the satisfactions and joy of national pride again—the effect was explosive.

Eruzione has never stopped riding that wave. He didn’t make it to the NHL like some of his teammates, instead going out on the speaking circuit. He and his agent thought the speaking requests would inevitably dry up. They never have. And why should they? Mike Eruzione has become the custodian of the greatest sports story ever told. May he keep retelling it, as long as America believes in miracles.

NR

Baseball History's Invisible Man

NICHOLAS FRANKOVICH



Oscar Charleston: The Life and Legend of Baseball's Greatest Forgotten Player, by Jeremy Beer
(University of Nebraska Press, 456 pp., \$29.95)

NEGRO LEAGUE baseball embarrasses the average fan who fancies himself a student of the national pastime. We may know Major League Baseball well enough. It provides most of the material for the lore that sportswriters have been shaping since Reconstruction and that we tend to think of as the history of baseball proper. Out of the corner of our eye we see the tangle of teams, players, and traditions sprawling outside the foul lines of MLB. We dread the work we would need to do to comprehend the bigger picture, so we exclude from our mental map of the game the Pacific Coast League, for example, and the various leagues that have gone by the name “American Association.” And the rest of the minor leagues, high and low, in podunks from Puget Sound to the Florida Keys? Professional baseball as it’s been played for nearly a century in Japan? Since the 19th century in Latin America? In the Negro Leagues, which were American but neither major nor, with some complicating exceptions, minor? Please. What a lot of ground to cover that would be.

We might try to justify the narrowness of our baseball knowledge by arguing

that we focus on the cream of the crop. We assume that the top talent today, at least in the Western Hemisphere, will for the most part manage to register on the radar of MLB scouts and be signed as free agents or drafted. Once ushered into the byzantine network of minor-league clubs here in the United States, players will rise through the ranks if they’re good enough. Only 5 to 10 percent will ascend as far as The Show. Of those, only a fraction will stick around for longer than a cup of coffee. For much of baseball history, though, that *cursus honorum* was, with few exceptions, closed even to the most talented athletes unless they were white citizens of the United States.

The best player never to play in the major leagues was Oscar Charleston, in the judgment of Bill James, a dean of baseball historians, who ranks him fourth all-time, behind Babe Ruth, Willie Mays, Honus Wagner, and no one else. Charleston made his professional debut in 1915, for the ABCs, a black team in Indianapolis, his hometown. He was 18. A five-tool (if you count his arm, said to be merely adequate) left-handed center fielder, he was bouncing around black baseball in the Midwest when the first of the Negro Leagues (there would be seven, all told) was formed in 1920; he was a charter member. The bulk of the approximately 30-year existence of the Negro Leagues overlapped with the bulk of his 26-year playing career, which included nine seasons of winter ball in Cuba. The literary critic Roberto González Echevarría writes

that his Cuban uncle and grandfather considered Charleston a baseball god to whom subsequent generations of superstar ballplayers never quite compared.

Charleston in his day was known as the black Ty Cobb, the black Tris Speaker, and the black Ruth. (Ironies: Some researchers think that Cobb and Speaker might have belonged to the Ku Klux Klan, and some of Ruth’s contemporaries thought he must have been part black himself.) A speaker at Charleston’s posthumous induction ceremony into the Baseball Hall of Fame, in 1976, referred to him as “the Willie Mays of his day.” Buck O’Neil said that Mays was the best major-league player he’d ever seen and that Charleston was better.

In recorded 321 plate appearances for the Harrisburg Giants in 1925, his career year and second season as a player-manager, Charleston batted .427, with 20 home runs; his on-base percentage was .523. His 20-season managerial career includes a Negro National League championship, in 1935. As manager of the Brooklyn Brown Dodgers for a few months in 1945, he informally scouted black players for Branch Rickey, who two years later would sign Jackie Robinson to a major-league contract, thereby breaking both “the color barrier” at the highest level of professional baseball and the *raison d’être* of the Negro Leagues, which by the time of Charleston’s death, in 1954, had for all practical purposes faded away.

The preceding three paragraphs are my attempt at a thumbnail sketch of Oscar Charleston. Jeremy Beer provides

MY BETTER HALF

Full half a life ago, my better half,
We turned our backs, no more to make one beast,
And strode or shuffled, each his darkling path,
You to the West, and I to time-worn East.
What of it now? What difference does it make,
When soon our years are quaintly writ in stone?
What difference, whether wisdom or mistake,
When we are laid alike, though each alone?
If memory serves, it serves but to conceal,
Distort, dissolve, deny the life we shared,
Detritus of a dream we took for real,
That evermore we would, as once we cared.
This too will pass. And we, we too will pass.
We too will pass, we two. All flesh is grass.

—ERIC CHEVLEN
Author of *Triple Crown*

as much detail as can be gleaned and organized into a comprehensive big picture of the “life and legend” of “baseball’s greatest forgotten player,” Charleston’s designation in the subtitle of this first book-length biography of him. It’s more a landscape than a portrait, though Beer depicts him to the degree that the extant evidence allows. We have no video or audio of Charleston. Contemporary newspaper coverage of baseball outside the major leagues consisted mostly of game accounts. “Neither Oscar nor his close relatives were ever really interviewed at any length, and neither Oscar nor his family ever wrote anything about his private life,” Beer confirms. Charleston married twice. He and his second wife, Jane, never divorced, but they separated—permanently, it turned out—in the 1930s. He had no children.

So a scrapbook and a photo album become Beer’s Dead Sea Scrolls. Charleston left them behind. They were passed

ball field. Imagine Cobb’s pugnacity joined to the fabled good manners and sportsmanship of Walter Johnson. The Good Man possessed both qualities and married the opposites in his soul. It was a theme in the sports culture of the day. Perhaps it’s perennial. We see it in the “band of ferocious gentlemen,” Rickey’s description of the ideal baseball team.

Beer takes pains to correct what he insists is a mischaracterization of his subject. “Barbaric on the basepaths” and “a great big snarling bear of a man with glaring eyes and a temper that periodically drove him beyond the edge of sanity” is how a biographer of Negro Leagues legend Josh Gibson, whom Charleston both managed and played alongside, described Charleston more than 40 years after Charleston’s death. Colorful language, but might it be closer to the truth to say that Charleston was button-down and old-school? He neither smoked nor drank, as Beer points out, and was committed to such bourgeois values as punctuality.

last twelve innings. . . . If I was a cursing man, I’d curse you.”

O’Neil in his autobiography wrote of black baseball as “a *tradition* of professional men, going back to the 1800s,” adding that “people don’t realize the Negro Leagues were filled with college men, maybe more than were in the white big leagues.” Charleston’s formal education stopped at the eighth grade, but he had aspirations. At 20, he married the daughter of a high-school principal. They soon divorced and he married . . . a schoolteacher. “His scrapbook and photo album make clear that throughout his life Charleston maintained an interest in music and ideas,” Beer reports. “He tended to seek relationships with those who shared these interests and who were striving to rise socially.”

The book is organized chronologically and is more chronicle than story, which is in there, but the reader has to make some effort. Every page is testimony to the heavy, heavy lifting undertaken by the

The record that **Negro League researchers** have patiently, over many years, compiled from newspaper box scores and the like will probably remain forever incomplete.

from Jane to his sister Katherine to her niece Anna to Negro Leagues historian Larry Lester. They’re now in the possession of the Negro Leagues Museum in Kansas City, Mo. They include photos, personal letters, and clippings from American and Cuban newspapers. The material represents the last 40 years of Charleston’s life. From that handful of dust, Beer strives to conjure his personality and character.

Charleston had a reputation for in-game brawling. He “really enjoyed a good fight,” in the words of teammate Ted Page. Bear in mind, though, Beer cautions, that “fighting and violence were integral to the game” back then. He cites Texas League rules that “allowed players who engaged in an on-field fight to finish it; the only ones to be penalized were teammates who interfered.” In Beer’s telling, Charleston was a self-made gentleman with a temper that he subordinated to rigorous self-discipline and unleashed only now and then, on occasions that might be deemed appropriate in the context, competition on the

A disciplined man who as a manager “expected discipline from others,” he immersed himself in “a close study of the game.” He ran a tight ship.

Born in 1896 to parents who had just migrated from Nashville, Charleston grew up on the mean streets of Indianapolis and came to know the inside of a jail cell, as did at least one of his five brothers; another two spent time in reformatories. At 15, Oscar enlisted in the U.S. Army (lying about his age). He played on his regiment’s baseball team in the Philippines, shone, and earned fame in the Manila press. Discharged in 1915, he returned to Indianapolis and tried out for the ABCs, managed by the estimable C. I. Taylor, a pioneer of black baseball.

The Army had taught Charleston discipline; Taylor took him to graduate school in the virtue. College-educated and the son of a southern minister, Taylor “detested rowdiness, drunkenness, and gambling.” He advocated “scientific” baseball. His idea of losing his cool was to stride onto the diamond and say, “Mr. Umpire, I’ve been watching you for the

author at archives and libraries. The challenge he faced was not only to discern and then communicate who Charleston was but even to spell out what he did—to talk statistics, the natural language of baseball. Outside the major leagues, they weren’t kept consistently, and so the record that Negro League researchers have patiently, over many years, compiled from newspaper box scores and the like will probably remain forever incomplete. Their work continues. Beer estimates that the statistical record he has compiled for Charleston—the largest yet, 6,757 plate appearances in professional ball at various levels, including exhibition games against major-league teams—represents only about a third of his playing career. We’ll take what we can get: The few pages of statistical appendix at the back of the book are baseball gold.

What we can know of the prodigy that was Oscar Charleston will always be fragmentary, like the writings of some pre-Socratic philosopher. Mourn the irredeemable loss. Celebrate the permanent mystery.

NR

Film

A Mutable Star

ROSS DOUTHAT

ELISABETH MOSS first entered cultural consciousness as the audience surrogate in the first season of *Mad Men*: the frumpy, awkward, innocent, and entirely unready for Madison Avenue secretary to whom all the ways of late-1950s advertising culture needed to be explained, and whose eventual transformation and ascent made her an ideal avatar for viewers who wanted to simultaneously luxuriate in the glamour of America before the social revolutions and imagine themselves as trailblazers who would have fused the old cool with the new female empowerment. A shot from the final season, of Moss's Peggy Olson leaving one job for another in sunglasses and a bright late-Sixties outfit, trailing a cigarette from the corner of her mouth, became one of the most widely trafficked girlboss GIFs: *You've come a long way, baby*, in one image, one character arc.

That was pre-Trump Moss; post-Trump Moss became a different kind of audience surrogate, playing Offred in Hulu's immensely successful adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*. In that show the arc of *Mad Men* is reversed: Instead of watching a talented woman rise through and despite the patriarchy, we watch the patriarchy take its revenge on upper-middle-class feminism, with Joseph Fiennes's friendly but finally malignant Commander replacing Jon Hamm's flawed but fundamentally supportive Don Draper as the archetype of masculinity, and literal physical torture replacing the social slights and cruelties that Peggy Olson once survived. And then, of course, once the show (unfortunately) leaves Atwood's book behind we get to watch Offred fight back, using a different set of gifts from the ones Olson used in her ascent, becoming not a trailblazer or a transformer but a raging revolutionary.

It's a testament to Moss's skill set as an actress that she works in both of these roles—as the naïf-turned-girlboss and as the martyr-turned-avenger. (It's also a



Elisabeth Moss in *The Invisible Man*

testament to the ironies of Hollywood that Moss has built her career on these kinds of roles while remaining a member of the Church of Scientology.) And for anyone who doesn't care to stream the whole of *Mad Men* or the whole of *The Handmaid's Tale*, you can get a sense of the secrets of her stardom in the latest movie version of H. G. Wells's old sci-fi tale *The Invisible Man*, which recenters a story that usually focuses on the disappearing scientist by making the woman he stalks and torments the protagonist instead.

Unlike some other Me Too-era gender-role reversals, this one works pretty well, mostly because it's true to the original story concept, which assumed that invisibility would breed sociopathy. And Wells's idea of a scientific breakthrough allowing adepts to pursue invisible surveillance is also easily updated for an age of digital anxiety: Here the sociopath is named Adrian and played—though he barely appears—by Oliver Jackson-Cohen, and his character is some sort of tech gazillionaire (“He’s a world leader in the field of optics,” someone says—hint, hint) who lives in a cliffside home near the world capital of paranoia, San Francisco.

As the movie begins, his Bluebeard's castle has become a prison for his wife, Moss's Cecilia, whose sleeping-pill-abetted escape past various video cameras takes up the taut opening scene and delivers her to the dubious safety supplied by her sister (Harriet Dyer) and the ranch house of their policeman pal James (Aldis Hodge) and his daughter Sydney (Storm Reid).

Cecilia is sure that Adrian will find her, but instead he (apparently) kills himself

and leaves her all his money through the offices of his lawyer brother (Michael Dorman), who seems as cowed and traumatized by his late sibling as Cecilia was. For a day she's happy, wealthy, and free, and then—well, then the stalking begins, the creepy shots of “empty” rooms, the flickers and soft noises and puffs of frosty breath as the not actually dead husband circles her, terrifies her, and makes all her friends and loved ones believe that she's gone mad.

Watching Moss's character walk the path from terror to relief to greater terror and then finally make the inevitable horror-movie transformation where she discovers a capacity to fight back, you can see in microcosm the strengths that have made her an icon on TV. And the chief of these, I would submit, is the mutability of her face, which, with its strong nose and cheekbones and deep-set eyes, can shift, depending on setting and makeup and emotion, between being striking and being forgettable, between being blithe and being harrowed, between resilience and brokenness, between looking youthful and looking middle-aged, much more sharply and dramatically than the blandly lovely visages of many movie stars.

Because of this the persecuted Moss and the ascendant Moss, the traumatized Moss and the cucumber-cool Moss, don't just feel like different variations in a performer's repertoire; they feel like very different people who are contained within a single actress's range. *The Invisible Man* is finally just a disposable thriller, but it has enough quality in its writing and plotting to show what television viewers knew already: Its star is most unusual, and her stardom is unique.

NR

Back to the USSR

It is in no way to disparage the child-rearing efforts of my beloved parents to note that the greatest gift they ever got me was obtained two years before I was even born. In the summer of 1968, my parents—both in their 20s, both with secure jobs, both beneficiaries of “free” health care, both graduates of top-flight Communist literacy programs—packed one bag each, left the small apartment they shared with relatives in Budapest, and boarded a train headed for Rome. They wouldn’t return to visit Hungary until 1990, by which time they were fully Americanized.

The summer my mom and dad defected to the United States, the Soviet Union was busy crushing the aspirations of Czechoslovakian reformers by sending 600,000 Warsaw Pact troops and tanks to Prague to end a student uprising. The scene was, no doubt, familiar to anyone who’d witnessed the Soviet crushing of Hungary’s democratic aspirations in 1956 or the crushing of East Germany’s democratic aspirations in 1953. If there was one thing Commies were able to do with ruthless efficiency, it was crush dissent.

The summer that my parents spared me a life in some soul-sucking collectivist factory—and Hungary wasn’t the worst nation in the Eastern Bloc at the time; there were no mass arrests, no gulags, just economic inertia and a tedious low-grade authoritarianism—Bernie Sanders was role-playing a Trotskyite in his class war against the *Lumpenproletariat* and kulaks of Burlington, Vt.

There’s no record of the future mayor of that prosperous city ever defending the brave men and women of the Prague Spring—why would he, after all?—though he did find the time to publicly admire the Vietcong, a group responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of Americans. Bernie would make apologizing for Communists a lifelong endeavor. You’ll forgive me if I take it personally.

My father, a year younger than Bernie, was born two years before the Nazi deportation of the Jews of Hungary got into full swing. His father would never return. His mother, a seamstress with a knack for staying alive, would take to Budapest’s perilous streets to welcome the Red Army as liberators. Soon enough the Soviets would teach Jews a thing or two about anti-Semitism themselves—not only on the home front, but in bank-rolling the most virulent and indefatigable post-war enemies of the Jewish people.

Bernie, who didn’t have my grandmother’s excuse to embrace Communists, never offered a word of support for the thousands of Jews trapped in the Soviet Union, not even on his *voyage de nocces* as a 47-year-old to the CCCP. If anyone is confused about how Marxists view “organs of bourgeois reaction”—especially the ones they grew up in—Bernie’s tapping of Linda Sarsour and Ilhan Omar as campaign surrogates offers a good clue.

Anyway, by 1969, my father, trained as a chemist but unable to find work in that field, began his new life packing bags in a warehouse while my pregnant mother assembled beads for which she was paid by the bracelet. But not for long. I doubt either of them was aware that in the United States a red-diaper baby could move to New England and become a professional revolutionary, never having to really work a day in his life. And I’m positive that the prospect of such a life would have chafed their newly adopted sensibilities.

I’ve never met anyone who has escaped Communism—not from Cuba or China or Hungary or Ethiopia—who had any interest in living on the dole. Now, perhaps not everyone is as hard-working or as lucky as my parents—and, of course, chance plays its part in everyone’s life. But when socialists such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez mock and dismiss the notion of Americans’ “lifting themselves up by a bootstrap,” they are no longer pressing some liberal case for equality, they are embracing an un-American notion. They are trolling for victims. Victims of religion. Of industry. Of race. Of circumstance. Of history. Once socialists have convinced an entire generation they’re victims, there is no way back.

Fortunately, my emotional detestation of collectivism comports perfectly with my intellectual detestation of Bernie’s movement. Capitalism saves the victims that socialism produces. Nothing achieved under socialism can’t be achieved under capitalism—other than perhaps inducing perfectly healthy people from a beautiful island to get on rickety homemade rafts and try to traverse the Caribbean to move to Florida. And yet, here we are. Again.

William F. Buckley Jr., this magazine’s founder, had typical prescience in a 1962 debate with novelist Norman Mailer, who, like Bernie, was a Castro apologist. Buckley noted that while Americans didn’t know how to deal with Communist dictators, “there is a much bigger problem: We don’t know how to deal with Harvard University. If Harvard couldn’t spot Castro for what he is and show us how to cope with him, who can?” The “dulled . . . moral and intellectual reflexes” of our elites, Buckley said, are what should scare us most.

The way we treat Bernie, as a crank or well-meaning left-winger, is itself a way to normalize Marxism—“democratic socialism,” in this iteration. We would never treat any other similarly destructive ideology with the same nonchalance. For me, it’s nearly unfathomable to accept that my parents—and thousands of others who gave up their friends and families to come to this meritocratic nation—would ever have as their president a socialist who praised the Soviet Union.

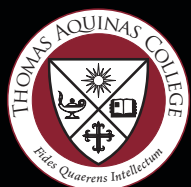
Happy warriors shouldn’t take politics too personally. When it comes to Marxists, and I have no doubt Bernie is one, I make an exception. I take history too seriously not to.

NR

California

One Program, Two Coasts

New England



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