

May 22, 2013

John Fund explains the three signs of a "cover-up."

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The phrase became infamous when both Richard Nixon and Ron Ziegler, his press secretary, deployed it to explain away Watergate without explaining who did what and when or whether any ill motive was involved.

Astonishingly, the Internal Revenue Service resurrected the Nixonian expression within hours of its clumsy revelation that it had targeted tea-party groups and other organizations with "patriot" or "9/12" in their names. "Mistakes were made initially," the official IRS statement on May 10 read, implying that the mistakes ended after a short "initial" period. We now know that the scandal and cover-up unfolded over a three-year period, and the IRS publicly acknowledged them only after the 2012 election was safely past.

Here are some other clues that a Washington cover-up is going on.

1. No one seems to be able to name the players.

Last week, former acting IRS commissioner Steven Miller claimed he had identified "rogue" employees at the IRS's Cincinnati office who were at the center of the scandal. But an IRS staffer at the Cincinnati office at the center of the scandal told the Washington Post this week: "Everything comes from the top. We don't have any authority to make those decisions without someone signing off on them. There has to be a directive."

Perhaps that's why on Friday, Miller had this exchange during his House testimony with Representative Kevin Brady (R., Texas) .

Brady: "Who is responsible for targeting these individuals?"

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Michael Barone claims the IRS and AP scandals will have a chilling effect on free speech.

Chilling effect. That's the term lawyers and judges use to describe the result of government actions that deter people from exercising their right of free speech.

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The Obama administration's Justice Department issued a sweeping demand for two months of office, cellular and home telephone records from multiple Associated Press reporters and editors to investigate an alleged breach of national security.

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That tends to undercut Attorney General Eric Holder's claim that the story was based on one of "the top two or three most serious leaks that I have ever seen" and "put the American people at risk, and that is not hyperbole." ...

Jennifer Rubin says Dan Pfeiffer's weekend efforts were the worse attempts at damage control ever.

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Democrats on oversight committees who were willing to carry some water for the White House on Benghazi appear entirely unwilling to do so both on the IRS scandal (in which Congress was arguably misled) and the Associated Press (which strikes at liberals' media allies).

Pfeiffer's outing, if nothing else, suggests that the White House is entirely tone deaf, is unaware that its excuses sound as bad as the offenses and is unable to conceal its desperation in trying to paint this as all the GOP's fault.

A president actually in command of his administration would bring in a new chief of staff and new communications personnel, and figure out how to at least appear interested in getting to the bottom of these issues. It is the only way to allow himself a sliver of a chance to keep moving forward on his agenda. But then again, his agenda may be irrelevant at this point.

David Harsanyi wonders why Justice was bugging FOX News reporters since the administration has been saying FOX isn't really a news organization.

We now know that the Justice Department kept exceptionally close tabs on Fox News reporter James Rosen in 2010, following his trips in and out of the State Department, hacking his personal emails and phone calls. Normal newsgathering activities are being treated as criminal activities by the White House. But consider what the same White House had to say about Fox News back in 2009.

You might remember the concerted effort by White House officials to brand the right-leaning Fox News as a bogus news outlet, unworthy of attention. I'm not talking administration partners like Media Matters or Think Progress, but high ranking officials.

There was Anita Dunn, then communications director, who attempted to defang Fox coverage of the White House by claiming:

"They are — they're widely viewed as, you know, part of the Republican Party. Take their talking points and put them on the air. Take their opposition research and put them on the air, and that's fine. But let's not pretend they're a news network the way CNN is." ...

Ron Fournier who was quoted above by Jennifer Rubin writes in the National Journal about how Obama can restore the public's trust and rescue his presidency. Why the hell would we want to see that done? The article is a good example of how worried the media have become.

Swamped in controversies, President Obama and his slow-footed team are essentially telling the American public, "We're not crooked. We're just incompetent."

The IRS targeting conservatives, the Justice Department snooping at The Associated Press, the State Department injecting politics into Benghazi, the military covering up sexual assaults, and the Department of Veterans Affairs leaving heroes in health care limbo – each of these so-called scandals share two traits.

First, there is some element of "spin," the cynical art of telling just enough of the truth to avoid political embarrassment. Obfuscation and demagoguery, the dirty tools of political quackery that Obama pledged to purge from Washington, enjoy top-shelf status at his White House.

Second, there is almost comical bungling. While denying involvement in high crimes and misdemeanors, the Obama administration appears to be pleading guilty to lesser crimes of bureaucratic incompetence. But that is an unsustainable position for a president who wants Americans to believe again in the power and grace of good government, particularly as it relates to the implementation of Obamacare. ...

A new bio of Thatcher is reviewed by **Daniel Hannan**. Remember him? He's the guy who said Gordon Brown was the **"devalued Prime Minister of a devalued government."**

All Britons remember where they were when Margaret Thatcher resigned in 1990. It was our equivalent of the Kennedy assassination—events that, curiously enough, both fell on Nov. 22. No British politician in living memory had provoked such strong feelings. At Thatcher's funeral in April, 23 years after she left office and a decade after her last intervention in public life, the battles she had so enjoyed were re-enacted: Many threw flowers before her coffin, while a few, their faces twisted in unfeigned loathing, yelled abuse.

The funeral was a reminder of what conviction politics looks like. These days, our leaders consult their pollsters, weigh their words, fret about how they are coming across. Margaret Thatcher, as Charles Moore shows in the magisterial first volume of his authorized biography, had a healthy interest in public opinion, but she never lost sight of where she wanted to go. While others drifted with the current, she was like a shark swimming only forward: focused, patriotic, slightly humorless and needing remarkably little sleep.

These were, happily, just the attributes that the times demanded. It is hard to convey the sheer wretchedness of the nation she was elected to govern in May 1979. Since World War II, Britons

had seen their empire vanish, their standing deteriorate, their credit expire. Successive governments had inflated away their debts, with a disastrous effect on competitiveness and productivity.

By the mid-1970s, the U.K. had reached its lowest point. These were the years of double-digit inflation, of power cuts, of shortages. There were constant strikes, and trade-union leaders were better known household names than elected ministers. A Conservative government—a government of which Thatcher was the despairing education minister—was reduced to passing laws regulating prices and incomes. ...

Andrew Malcolm has late night humor

Leno: *So many scandals now for President Obama--IRS, AP. You know it's really bad when Obama says, 'Hey, let's talk about Benghazi.'*

Letterman: *Reporters were all over Obama at his news conference. But Obama did pretty well. He'd been listening to their phone conversations.*

Conan: *A new movie coming about Bill and Hillary Clinton's early years together. The movie has a happy ending, and then Hillary walks in.*

National Review

[Three Signs There's a Cover-Up](#)

"Mistakes were made...I don't recall" and other surefire clues.

by John Fund

The late columnist William Safire once [said](#) that a good clue that someone in Washington was engaged in "an artful dodge," i.e., a cover-up, was that they used the phrase "mistakes were made." Safire defined it as a "passive-evasive way of acknowledging error while distancing the speaker from responsibility for it."

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Perhaps that’s why on Friday, Miller had this exchange during his House testimony with Representative Kevin Brady (R., Texas) .

Brady: “Who is responsible for targeting these individuals?”

Miller: “I don’t have names for you.”

Later, Representative Dave Reichert (R., Wash.) confronted Miller: “I’m disappointed. I’m hearing, ‘I don’t know. I don’t remember. I don’t recall. I don’t believe. Who knew?’ You don’t even know who investigated the case, but yet you say it was investigated. . . . You’re not instilling a lot of confidence.” Reichert pressed on, asking whom senior technical adviser Nancy Marks had identified as responsible for the targeting policy. Miller repeated his mantra of the day: □“I don’t remember.”

One possible reason for the failure to reveal names is that it takes time for all the players to get their stories straight.

2. Spinners minimize the scandal by claiming it would have been impossible to detect it.

David Axelrod, President Obama’s strategist in the 2012 election, perfected this ploy last week when he told MSNBC that the scandal was caused by “bureaucrats deep in the bowels of the IRS.” He went on to offer this civics lesson: “Part of being president is there’s so much underneath you because the government is so vast. You go through these [controversies] all because of this stuff that is impossible to know if you’re the president or working in the White House, and yet you’re responsible for it, and it’s a difficult situation.”

Apparently, mistakes can’t even be known.

3. Critics are discredited.

In July 2012, months after he was made aware of the targeting scandal, Miller testified before a House committee and dismissed the complaints about the IRS’s targeting and intrusive questioning as mere “noise.” He said many of the groups applying for tax-exempt status “are very small organizations, and they are not quite sure what the rules are.” In other words, any groups that complained were just too dumb to understand the law. In reality, it was the IRS that was making up the rules as it went along.

Even many Democrats in Congress are tired of all these evasions. Having been misled by the Obama administration for so long on the IRS scandal, they aren’t likely to go out on a limb defending the cover-up.

Representative Joe Crowley of New York, one of top-ranking Democrats on the House Ways and Means Committee, is calling for IRS official Lois Lerner to resign. Crowley told MSNBC that Lerner “failed to answer the question” when he asked her at a Ways and Means hearing on May

8 of this year whether the IRS was investigating groups that had applied for tax-exempt status. “She then two days later planted a question at a press event, only to then use that opportunity to apologize for what the IRS had been doing,” Crowley said. He added that when he later confronted her about the contradiction, she denied she’d even been asked about the political targeting at the hearing.

Democratic Senator Claire McCaskill is going further. A former state auditor, she has had years of experience with dissembling bureaucrats and errant officials. Last Friday, she issued a video statement calling for a full house-cleaning of everyone involved in the scandal: “We should not only fire the head of the IRS, which has occurred, but we’ve got to go down the line and find every single person who had anything to do with this and make sure that they are removed from the IRS and the word goes out that this unacceptable.”

Good luck with that. Washington’s political culture is completely resistant to such accountability. Recall that no one was fired in the wake of mistakes that led to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. We wouldn’t even know the names of many of those who made the mistakes without the work of an independent commission that investigated the attacks, a commission the Bush administration resisted forming.

In Washington, failure is rarely punished, and at times it’s even rewarded. Sarah Hall Ingram served as commissioner of the office in charge of tax-exempt organizations from 2009 to 2012. She collected over \$100,000 in bonuses as she oversaw the IRS at the time it was targeting White House opponents; she has since been promoted to be director of the IRS’s Obamacare office.

Yes, the old Washington adage that the cover-up is worse than the crime is true. But as far as the American people are concerned, the general failure to hold government employees accountable for the IRS scandal — and in some cases the refusal even to identify them — is the ultimate insult added to injury.

Examiner

[Obama's IRS and AP scandals cast Big Chill on free speech](#)

by Michael Barone

Chilling effect. That's the term lawyers and judges use to describe the result of government actions that deter people from exercising their right of free speech.

There have been plenty of examples in the past 10 days.

The Obama administration's Justice Department issued a sweeping demand for two months of office, cellular and home telephone records from multiple Associated Press reporters and editors to investigate an alleged breach of national security.

The AP story in question, on a foiled terrorist plot, had been withheld for days at the request of the CIA. It finally went out on the wire on a Monday, after the AP was told that administration spokesmen would officially announce it the next day.

That tends to undercut Attorney General Eric Holder's claim that the story was based on one of "the top two or three most serious leaks that I have ever seen" and "put the American people at risk, and that is not hyperbole."

I don't think enough facts are known to conclude that Holder was wrong. But it does seem likely that the AP material was less damaging to national security than some stories the New York Times ran despite pleas from the George W. Bush administration.

Those were not followed by the kind of intrusive investigation launched in this case. You might not know it from reading much of the press, but Obama's administration has been much more aggressive in investigating leaks than Bush's ever was.

Another chill came from the targeting of conservative organizations by Obama's Internal Revenue Service. IRS agents were selectively refusing to give tax-exempt status to organizations with "Tea Party" and "patriot" in their names.

Anti-abortion groups were asked to pledge that they would never picket Planned Parenthood clinics. Organizers were asked numerous personal questions, including what they said in their prayers. If that's not chilling, I don't know what is.

The acting director of the IRS was told about this activity in May 2012, and the chief counsel and deputy secretary of the Treasury Department were informed in June 2012.

Did they pass the information along to Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner? Did he tell the president? Did the president ever ask?

The excuse given in some quarters is that, in some cases, IRS agents acted on their own or contrary to instructions. That may be plausible.

As my *Washington Examiner* colleague Timothy Carney has pointed out, personnel at the IRS are heavily Democratic. That's probably true of most domestic government agencies.

But that's a reason why a Democratic White House should be especially alert for evidence that civil servants are targeting political opponents for unfavorable treatment. Especially when, as here, there were plenty of reports in the press and the blogosphere indicating that it was going on.

But maybe this Democratic White House didn't want to know. Or didn't understand the need for vigilance. Maybe someone figured, hey, let's not have this come out before the election.

The chill threatens to get even colder. It turns out that Sarah Hall Ingram, who served as head of the IRS office handling tax-exempt organizations between 2009 and 2012 -- when the targeting was going on -- is now head of the IRS office policing Obamacare.

She's a career IRS lawyer, and it's not known whether she was aware of the targeting -- though it would be a little surprising if she wasn't.

She'll have a big job. The IRS is assigned a lot of work by the Obamacare law. It will impose penalties on Americans who can afford health insurance but choose not to buy it.

It will impose penalties on companies with more than 50 employees who work 30 hours a week and don't provide government-mandated policies.

It will give tax credits to nonaffluent purchasers of health insurance on state exchanges. The IRS says it can also give tax credits to such people in states that have federally run exchanges, though many argue the law does not authorize that.

In other words, the IRS is going to possess and process a large amount of information not only on your income but on your health insurance and perhaps your health.

The IRS was given these tasks by the drafters of Obamacare because no other government agency had the capability to gain access to people's personal financial information. They may have thought that taxpayers would trust an agency that they had gotten used to dealing with.

That level of trust may not be as high as it was 10 days ago. Chilling effect indeed.

Right Turn

[The worst effort at damage control ever?](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

When a White House aide says something isn't "relevant" you can bet it actually is, and there is no good explanation for it. So it was with White House communications director Dan Pfeiffer, who got hammered again and again on the Sunday shows. Where was the president the [night of Benghazi](#)? *Not relevant*. What about actual lawbreaking at the IRS? *Not relevant*. (He later tweeted a clarification — never a good sign — that targeting conservatives was still wrong. But of course if it is illegal, then much more serious action, including civil and criminal liability, is at issue.)

This line of argument is untenable and, frankly, embarrassing. If the Obama flacks don't have answers or won't give them, then they should not send Pfeiffer out to instruct newsmen on what is and isn't relevant. And if you want to talk about relevance it's probably a good idea to stop throwing out red herrings (e.g. George W. Bush, Mitt Romney, Republicans). There was something especially childish and ham-handed in the sort of defense Pfeiffer mounted when the question of the day is whether the president is either malicious or totally out to lunch. His defense personifies the very arrogance that leads the White House to overreach in the first place.



White House senior adviser Dan Pfeiffer speaks on CBS's "Face the Nation" in Washington.

The White House's non-answers drew incredulous responses from hosts Bob Schieffer, Chris Wallace and George Stephanopoulos ("You don't really mean the law is irrelevant, do you?").

Republicans including Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Reps. Tom Price (R-Ga.) and Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) played it smart, refusing to accuse the administration of lawbreaking and instead insisting that a full investigation by someone other than the administration's own employees needs to be undertaken in all these scandals. At this stage it is more than sufficient that Republicans explain to Americans what the scandals are all about, as Price did on ABC's "This Week":

PRICE: Yeah, a good attempt to change the subject. The fact of the matter is this is about trust. And Sarah Hall Ingram, who was in charge of the tax-exempt division at the IRS between 2009 and 2012, the exact time of this challenge and affront to the American people, is now in charge of instituting and regulating and determining whether or not the IRS is doing the appropriate things as it relates to the ACA, the president's health-care law.

Remember, the IRS is the enforcement arm for the president's health-care law?

STEPHANOPOULOS: Do you think she has to go?

PRICE: I think she at least has to step back until we get to the bottom of this.

So far, the administration isn't fooling anyone. Most high-profile mainstream journalists now concede that both the underlying scandals and the defense are problematic. (Ron Fournier: "The problem with this scandal, and it actually relates to the other ones that we'll talk about later, is when you're in a position of government and saying, 'We're not corrupt, we're just incompetent,' that's a bad place to be. . . What unites all these things is it undermines the credibility of the administration and the president in a competence of government.")

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Pfeiffer's outing, if nothing else, suggests that the White House is entirely tone deaf, is unaware that its excuses sound as bad as the offenses and is unable to conceal its desperation in trying to paint this as all the GOP's fault.

A president actually in command of his administration would bring in a new chief of staff and new communications personnel, and figure out how to at least appear interested in getting to the bottom of these issues. It is the only way to allow himself a sliver of a chance to keep moving forward on his agenda. But then again, his agenda may be irrelevant at this point.

Human Events

Remember when Fox News wasn't 'real news'?

by David Harsanyi

We now know [that the Justice Department kept exceptionally close tabs on Fox News reporter James Rosen in 2010](#), following his trips in and out of the State Department, hacking his personal emails and phone calls. Normal newsgathering activities are being treated as criminal activities by the White House. But consider what the same White House had to say about Fox News back in 2009.

You might remember the concerted effort by White House officials to brand the right-leaning Fox News as a bogus news outlet, unworthy of attention. I'm not talking administration partners like Media Matters or Think Progress, but high ranking officials.

There was Anita Dunn, then communications director, who attempted to defang Fox coverage of the White House [by claiming](#):

They are — they're widely viewed as, you know, part of the Republican Party. Take their talking points and put them on the air. Take their opposition research and put them on the air, and that's fine. But let's not pretend they're a news network the way CNN is.

(Does it *really* matter how Fox is "viewed" within the Beltway? Using Dunn's formulation, one could argue that since network is more "widely viewed" by Americans than its competitors, it should have legitimacy.)

Then there was White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, who, in a "State of the Union" [interview with CNN's John King](#), said: "It's not a news organization so much as it has a perspective." (see video below.)

White House senior advisor David Axelrod also claimed that Fox is "not really a news station" and that much of the programming is "not really news."

"I'm not concerned," [Axelrod said](#) on ABC's "This Week" when George Stephanopoulos asked about the back-and-forth between the White House and Fox News.

Mr. [Rupert] Murdoch has a talent for making money, and I understand that their programming is geared toward making money. The only argument [White House communications director] Anita [Dunn] was making is that they're not really a news station if you watch even — it's not just their commentators, but a lot of their news programming.

"It's really not news — it's pushing a point of view. And the bigger thing is that other news organizations like yours ought not to treat them that way, and we're not going to treat them that way. We're going to appear on their shows. We're going to participate but understanding that they represent a point of view.

My question is this: If Fox wasn't real news, or any outlet displaying a right-of-center ideological disposition was to be treated as a Republican Party agent, why didn't anyone inform the Department of Justice?

National Journal

5 Ways Obama Can Restore the Public's Trust and Rescue His Presidency

Painful choices include appointing a special prosecutor on the IRS and offering an apology to The Associated Press.

by Ron Fournier

Swamped in controversies, President Obama and his slow-footed team are essentially telling the American public, "We're not crooked. We're just *incompetent*."

The IRS targeting conservatives, the Justice Department snooping at The Associated Press, the State Department injecting politics into Benghazi, the military covering up sexual assaults, and the Department of Veterans Affairs leaving heroes in health care limbo – each of these so-called scandals share two traits.

First, there is some element of "spin," the cynical art of telling just enough of the truth to avoid political embarrassment. Obfuscation and demagoguery, the dirty tools of political quackery that Obama pledged to purge from Washington, enjoy top-shelf status at his White House.

Second, there is almost comical bungling. While denying involvement in high crimes and misdemeanors, the Obama administration appears to be pleading guilty to lesser crimes of bureaucratic incompetence. But that is an unsustainable position for a president who wants Americans to believe again in the power and grace of good government, particularly as it relates to the implementation of Obamacare.

--IRS agents targeted conservatives. Their bosses lied about it for months.

--Justice Department investigators violated internal guidelines to secretly spy on The Associated Press.

--White House and State Department officials minimized their role in shaping initial explanations for the Benghazi attack.

--Military officers assigned to sexual assault prevention units are charged with sexual battery. The Pentagon's own study finds that 26,000 service members experienced unwanted sexual contact in 2012. It's not a new problem.

--Despite a 40 percent increase in funding, the Department of Veteran's Affairs cannot ease a backlog of cases. The typical wounded warrior waits more than 300 days for action on a claim. In major cities, the wait can be 642 days.

The backdrop to this parade of buffoonery is a decades-long decline in the public's faith in government, a trend continued under Obama. Restoring the public's trust in his governance is the only way Obama can survive the controversies with his agenda and legacy intact.

In interviews, allies of the White House privately suggested a few things Obama could do, including:

Appoint a bipartisan oversight board to oversee the implementation of Obamacare. There is no way around the fact that a vast majority of voters will not trust the IRS to implement the greatest piece of social legislation in decades. Before the tempests, Obamacare was unpopular and largely misunderstood by most Americans. The law's success hinges on the government recruiting young adults into insurance pools. And polls show young adults are the least likely to trust government.

Layer the White House communication team with experienced crisis managers. As I wrote [here](#) last week, Obama needs to realize that the dedicated public servants in the West Wing are not getting the job done.

Apologize to the AP and announce a new policy for leaks investigations. The White House needs to punish people who leak classified information that endangers national security. But the scope of the snooping at AP combined with Obama's unprecedented zeal for leaks investigations raises doubts about his commitment to transparency and to an unfettered media. He has pursued more such cases than all previous administration combined, according to the *Washington Post*. The paper [also reported](#) that the administration spied on a Fox News reporter at the State Department. Again, this is a matter of trust.

Appoint a [special prosecutor](#) on the IRS. The last thing the country needs is another subpoena-powered fishing expedition like the Whitewater inquiries. But we might need a special prosecutor with a narrowly defined mission to investigate the actions and motives of IRS agents and their superiors. Is there a better way to restore the agency's integrity? The administration investigating itself will not lift the cloud from Obama's White House.

Reset the narrative and public expectations with a major speech on trust. Obama has spoken eloquently and convincingly about this issue. If his next address included painful solutions such as the ones above, he might restore the public's audacity to hope.

WSJ

[The Woman Who Saved Britain](#)

Female, Methodist, provincial and literal-minded, Margaret Thatcher was never part of the Establishment

by Daniel Hannan

All Britons remember where they were when Margaret Thatcher resigned in 1990. It was our equivalent of the Kennedy assassination—events that, curiously enough, both fell on Nov. 22. No British politician in living memory had provoked such strong feelings. At Thatcher's funeral in April, 23 years after she left office and a decade after her last intervention in public life, the battles she had so enjoyed were re-enacted: Many threw flowers before her coffin, while a few, their faces twisted in unfeigned loathing, yelled abuse.

Margaret Thatcher

By Charles Moore

Knopf, 859 pages, \$35

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Mr. Moore, the former editor of the Daily Telegraph newspaper, captures the atmosphere of these years beautifully: the worsening trade figures, the collapse in industrial output, the IMF bailout. "Britain is a tragedy," Henry Kissinger told President Gerald Ford in 1975. "It has sunk to begging, borrowing, stealing until North Sea oil comes in." An editorial in The Wall Street Journal in April of that year was more pointed: "Good-bye, Great Britain. It was nice knowing you."

Thatcher, almost alone, would not accept what was happening. "I can't bear Britain in decline, I just can't," she blurted shortly before she became prime minister. Nowadays, those words sound unremarkable—which is the ultimate tribute to what she achieved. For, at the time, the almost unanimous view of the Establishment was that the slide was irreversible and that the purpose of politics was to make it as painless as possible.

Born in Grantham in Lincolnshire in 1925, Margaret Thatcher was never part of the Establishment. Female, Methodist, provincial and literal-minded, she never acquired, nor wanted to acquire, the amused cynicism that was the hallmark of the educated Englishman. One of the reasons that she had such a deep affection for Americans was that she recognized in them the qualities that set her apart from most of her fellow MPs: enthusiasm, optimism, guilelessness, self-belief.

Where did it come from, her self-belief? We find it in her character from the beginning. When she won a school prize at the age of 9, her principal congratulated her on her luck. "I wasn't lucky, I deserved it," replied the young Margaret Roberts, who, with her tendency to simplify everything, genuinely couldn't understand what luck had to do with it. Her single-mindedness, her obsessive self-improvement, took her to Oxford, despite the resistance of her secondary-school headmistress, who thought she should attend the local university. That headmistress was the first of many who were to find themselves knocked aside by sheer force of personality: Trade-union leaders, Tory grandees, Eurocrats and Argentine strongmen were to experience the same thing.

Willpower is not unusual in politicians, of course. What is unusual is the marriage of ambition and ideology. Many elected representatives work extraordinary hours for reasons that have to do with personal psychology. Think of, say, Lyndon Johnson, whose drive came from the humiliation of watching his family going bankrupt when he was 13. Every day that I spend in politics convinces me of the truth of P.J. O'Rourke's observation that many candidates are running for office, as he imagines one of them admitting, "in order to even the score with those grade-school classmates of mine who, thirty-five years ago, gave me the nickname Fish Face."

Margaret Thatcher, by contrast, was animated by ideas—ideas from which she never deviated. Her father, Alf Roberts, a shopkeeper and popular Methodist preacher, was a local councilor whose main preoccupation was to reduce the burden of taxes and regulations on the shopkeeping class. A model of conservative decency, he would send his daughters with loaves of bread to the families he knew to be needy, carefully telling them that he had baked too much, so that the pride of the recipients should not be hurt. He was not perfect: There are tantalizing hints in Mr. Moore's narrative that he may have been something of a ladies' man. Still, in his mind, thrift, sobriety and industry were not abstract Protestant virtues but active political principles.

Thatcherism was, in many ways, just a refinement of those core beliefs. Thatcher herself was no intellectual, though she diligently read up on the works of the great thinkers who ennobled her prejudices, including Frédéric Bastiat, Edmund Burke, Joseph Schumpeter, Alexis de Tocqueville, C.S. Lewis and, in particular, F.A. Hayek, whose "Constitution of Liberty" she used to pull from her handbag, declaring: "*This* is what we believe." Still, Hayek can be heavy going, and she was more comfortable with the homespun patriotic conservatism of Rudyard Kipling, whose poetry she had recited aloud as a girl in competitions. (Her accent, which detractors took as evidence of social climbing, was, Mr. Moore shows, the product of teenage elocution lessons.)

What surprised me most in reading this biography was the extent to which Thatcher's politics were informed by her Christianity. Without ever renouncing the Methodism of her girlhood, she drifted into attending Church of England services punctiliously and quietly. British politicians, unlike their American counterparts, almost never mention God. This is partly because our electorate is less churchgoing than yours and partly because even the most devout Britons are uncomfortable discussing religion. Thatcher occasionally broke this rule, horrifying the leaders of the Church of Scotland in 1988, for instance, when she told them that the Good Samaritan wouldn't have been of much use if he hadn't had money to help the injured traveler.

Yet so successful has been the caricature of Thatcher as a mechanical free-marketeer who thought only of economics that even her supporters have lost sight of the extent to which her doctrines had a moral base. As Mr. Moore notes, her father,

had believed in what Gladstone called "effort, honest manful effort," and it was a combination of Gladstonian economic views of retrenchment and reform with Methodism which animated Mrs. Thatcher. Denis Thatcher shared this analysis of her attitudes. He believed that some of what people thought of as his wife's "right-wingery" actually came from her religious upbringing: "She can't find a sustainable argument that people should be paid for not doing any work."

Like all successful leaders, she used speechwriters who could express her instincts in suitably elevated language. In New York in 1975, she brilliantly described the then-prevalent egalitarianism as "an undistinguished combination of envy and what might be called 'bourgeois

guilt." But her natural language was blunter. "Why does he keep talking about the boojwah?" she once asked of a sympathetic journalist. "Why not find a good plain English word for the good plain English people? The boojwah live in France."

Like her close ally Ronald Reagan, Thatcher was often attacked for her failure to grasp nuance. After listening to a talk by the distinguished historian Edward Norman, rightly predicting, as Mr. Moore writes, "that the issue of nuclear weapons, which had fallen comparatively quiet since the early 1960s, would soon reappear as a great moral struggle in the West," she declaimed above the hubbub: "I agree with Doctor Norman: we must defend Christian values with the ATOM BOMB."

Yet, as Mr. Moore shows, uncompromising beliefs could go hand in hand with tactical flexibility. The Pentagon, perhaps surprisingly, was reluctant to deploy intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe in the early 1980s, regarding them as an unnecessary expense when the U.S. already had a massive arsenal. Those Americans who favored the deployment, above all Reagan's first secretary of state, Alexander Haig, knew that the best way to convince the doubtful president would be through Thatcher. We then see her in these pages playing the unlikely role of a bridge-builder between the U.S. and Europe, securing American concessions on the sanctions Reagan had imposed on the U.S.S.R.—sanctions that disproportionately hurt Western European companies—in exchange for agreement to deploy the missiles in Great Britain, West Germany and Italy. Thank heaven she did: That deployment set in motion the events that were to lead to the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev and the end of the Cold War.

This biography gives us plenty of new material on Thatcher's relationship with Reagan, who privately called her "the only European leader I know with balls." The Gipper chivalrously allowed her to browbeat him, first over the missiles and later over American attempts to mediate during the Falklands War. She was right on this latter occasion, too: The State Department feared that the humiliation of Gen. Galtieri's junta would lead to communism in Argentina. In fact, it led to democracy.

Mr. Moore also reveals, extraordinarily, that the prime minister was in contact with the Irish Republican Army during the hunger strikes by prisoners in the early 1980s. She always denied this fact, even to herself, hiding behind a piece of casuistry: The contact was through an intelligence officer and was therefore necessarily unofficial. Thatcher had sought, reasonably enough, to find a formula that might save the hunger strikers' lives without compromising the principle that democratic governments don't deal with paramilitary organizations. Nonetheless, had the facts emerged at the time, her reputation would have suffered gravely and, to the end of her days, she could not bring herself to admit that she had had dealings with terrorists.

Such revelations are characteristic of Mr. Moore's penetrating and honest work. Broadly supportive of the Thatcher project, he is nonetheless careful never to let his politics color his story. Though this is, oddly, his first book, he is arguably the outstanding British journalist of his generation, one whose Tory sympathies go hand in hand with a determination to write from first principles, disregarding conventional wisdom. This biography was written on the understanding that its subject would never see it, which gave the author a freedom that he might not have enjoyed had he felt her presence over his shoulder. For example, Thatcher never admitted to having any boyfriends before Denis, but Mr. Moore unearths four, including one Scottish farmer whom she liked but never fancied and so, briskly, paired off with her sister, Muriel, who was happily married to him ever after.

Mr. Moore combines great narrative sweep with telling details. Following a false report of the sinking of a Royal Navy vessel during the Falklands campaign, Denis found his wife sitting on the end of the bed in tears: "Oh no, oh no, another ship! All my young men!" Denis, who had served in Italy during World War II, quietly took her hand. "That's what war's like, love." His military record made her depend even more heavily than usual on his advice during that campaign, and he emerges as a hero from these pages.

Thatcher, who published her memoirs in two volumes in 1993 and 1995, treated the 1979 election as the obvious dividing point. Mr. Moore found that this would place too much material in the second volume of the biography and so carried the first up to the moment of victory in the Falklands in 1983. He ends with a celebratory dinner at No. 10 Downing Street that, he says, "may well have been the happiest moment of her life."

It was a happy moment for the entire country. The military triumph put the seal on an economic transformation that had already begun. Having been outperformed by every Western European state during the 1960s and 1970s, Britain outgrew them all in the 1980s (except Spain, which was bouncing back from an even lower place). Thatcher's faith in her countrymen was amply vindicated. She emerges from this book more subtle, more layered than either her supporters or her opponents tend to believe. But the single-mindedness for which she is most remembered was real.

Stubbornness in itself, however, is no virtue. Thatcher's achievement lay in having got the big calls right: She saw that there could be no compromise with the prevalent social-democratic consensus, or with the trade-union militants, or with the Soviet Union, or with Gen. Galtieri. Though she showed more subtlety and suppleness on all these matters than most realized at the time, she knew that her opponents would have to be defeated. And so, in the end, they were.

That, ultimately, is what the left can't forgive. She took a country that they had made bankrupt, dishonored and demoralized and left it prosperous, confident and free. She did it all without ever losing an election to them. She ended up transforming, not just her party, but the Labour opposition, too, which had to accept her economic settlement to become electable. That, perhaps, was what pleased her most of all.

—Mr. Hannan is a British Conservative member of the European Parliament.

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Late Night Humor

by Andrew Malcolm

Conan: A Chinese man may have to pay \$26 million for secretly fathering seven children. Wow, I didn't even know that China had an NBA.

Conan: A Catholic bishop from Massachusetts was arrested for drunk driving. He told the cop, "I'm a bishop, I'm supposed to move diagonally."

Leno: According to the U.S. Geological Survey there are 7.4 billion barrels of oil in North Dakota. Dick Cheney said if we'd known that before, we would have invaded North Dakota years ago.

Fallon: A new survey finds one-third of Americans do not turn off their cellphones and iPads during airplane takeoffs and landings. In a related story, the other two-thirds are lying.

Leno: Did you see that couple that broke up on KissCam? At a game the other night, the guy wouldn't kiss her on-camera. So, she threw a beer on him and stormed out. Of course, the guy was devastated. That beer cost him 11 bucks.

Leno: We have the Benghazi scandal and the IRS scandal. Now the phone records scandal. Remember the good old days when Obama's worst embarrassment was Joe Biden?

Conan: Since Obama took office, the Democrat Party has lost nine governorships, 56 members of Congress and two Senate seats. Remember, Obama said, 'I promised change.'

Conan: The Minnesota legislature OKs same-sex marriage. As a result, the Minnesota Twins are changing their name to the Minnesota Life Partners.

Conan: Joe Biden says he spends four-to-five hours daily with Obama. Obama said, "Hiring that Obama impersonator was the best decision I've ever made."

Conan: China says it'll no longer buy recycled US trash. I'd like to give some applause to whatever genius has BEEN selling trash to China.

Leno: Reports of an amazing new Chinese drone. From more than 30,000 feet it can see into an American movie theater and record a new release.

Leno: So many scandals now for President Obama--IRS, AP. You know it's really bad when Obama says, 'Hey, let's talk about Benghazi.'

Letterman: Reporters were all over Obama at his news conference. But Obama did pretty well. He'd been listening to their phone conversations.

Conan: A new movie coming about Bill and Hillary Clinton's early years together. The movie has a happy ending, and then Hillary walks in.

Leno: An elderly New Jersey couple was charged with operating a prostitution ring from their home for seniors. A hooker network from a retirement home. ObamaCare covers everything

Letterman: Anthony Weiner. Remember him? Well, he's running for New York Mayor. His campaign slogan: "In November, pull my lever."

Letterman: So many Obama scandals these days--Benghazi, IRS, FBI. If they don't fix all these crises soon, it will bring Washington gridlock to a screeching halt.

Leno: If the Republicans want to do away with ObamaCare, they should endorse it as a conservative non-profit and let the IRS take it down.

Leno: New casual Fridays now in the Obama White House. Which means they're casually going through everyone's phone records.

Leno: Obama is looking like a new kind of Democrat. He's involved in three full scandals and not one of them involves sex. Unprecedented for Democrats.







Did you REALLY make that Marine hold your umbrella?

