

June 24, 2013

Mark Steyn on the trip to Europe.

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I suppose it might have been worse. When Angela Merkel proposed a toast to a strong West, he could have assumed that was the name of Kim and Kanye's new baby. ...

While the president is busy being a citizen of the world, his economy is proving a disaster for those he claims to want to help. NY Times OpEd has some examples. *In a working-class neighborhood in Lowell, Mass., in early 2009, I sat across the table from Diana, then 24, in the kitchen of her mother's house. Diana had planned to graduate from college, marry, buy a home in the suburbs and have kids, a dog and a cat by the time she was 30. But she had recently dropped out of a nearby private university after two years of study and with nearly \$80,000 in student loans. Now she worked at Dunkin' Donuts.*

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Young working-class men and women like Diana are trying to figure out what it means to be an adult in a world of disappearing jobs, soaring education costs and shrinking social support networks. Today, only 20 percent of men and women between 18 and 29 are married. They live at home longer, spend more years in college, change jobs more frequently and start families later.

For more affluent young adults, this may look a lot like freedom. But for the hundred-some working-class 20- and 30-somethings I interviewed between 2008 and 2010 in Lowell and Richmond, Va., at gas stations, fast-food chains, community colleges and temp agencies, the view is very different. ...

Mark Helprin writes about the degradation of our armed forces.

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And while the government's ability to protect us has diminished, the government's ability to protect itself has exploded. [HuffPo](#) has the story.

Want to make money on the drug war? Start a company that builds military equipment, then sell that gear to local police departments. Thanks to the generation-long trend toward more militarized police forces, there's now massive and growing market for private companies to outfit your neighborhood cops with gear that's more appropriate for a battlefield.

Some of this is decades-old news. For over 25 years, the Pentagon has been supplying surplus military equipment to police agencies across the country, largely in the name of fighting the drug war. In fact, in as early as 1968 Congress passed a law authorizing the military to share gear with domestic police agencies. But it was in 1987 that Washington really formalized the practice, with a law instructing the Secretary of Defense and the U.S. Attorney General to notify local law enforcement agencies each year about what surplus gear was available. The law established an office in the Pentagon specifically to facilitate such transfers, and Congress even set up an 800 number that sheriffs and police chiefs could call to inquire about the stuff they could get. The bill also instructed the General Services Administration to produce a catalog from which police agencies could make their Christmas lists. ...

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...

Cool pictures from [Amusing Planet](#) of grass covered tram tracks in Europe.

Tram tracks on many European cities are lined with grass, a practice that probably started in the 1980's to bring greenery back to city space and at the same time, provide habitable zone for numerous insects and invertebrates. These swaths of green provide a host of benefits to any urban area, like reduce urban heat island effect, provide a permeable surface for storm water to infiltrate, reduce pollution and absorb noise generated by the grinding of metal wheels on metal tracks. Not to mention, they look incredibly good in comparison to concrete or asphalt.

Green tracks have become increasingly popular in Europe and can be seen in pretty much every major European cities from Barcelona to Frankfurt, Milan, St-Etienne and Strasbourg.

Jewish World Review

G-8 Countries Find America Under Obama No Longer Matters

by Mark Steyn

Descending from the heavens for the G-8 summit at beautiful Lough Erne this week, President Obama caused some amusement to his British hosts. The chancellor of the Exchequer had been invited to give a presentation to the assembled heads of government on the matter of tax avoidance (one of the big items on the agenda, for those of you who think what the IRS could really use right now is even more enforcement powers). The president evidently enjoyed it. Thrice, he piped up to say how much he agreed with Jeffrey, eventually concluding the presentation with the words, "Thank you, Jeffrey."

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At any rate, Obama's mishap had faint echoes of a famous social faux pas during the Second World War. Irving Berlin, the celebrated composer of "White Christmas," was invited to lunch at 10 Downing Street and was surprised to find that Churchill, instead of asking what's that Bing Crosby really like, badgered him with complex moral and strategic questions and requests for estimates of U.S. war production.

It turned out the prime minister had confused Irving Berlin with the philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin, then under secondment to the British Embassy in Washington, and thought it was the latter he'd invited to No. 10.

In the Obama era, any confusion is the other way around. It would be a terrible thing for the president to invite the eminent rapper Jay-Z to lunch only to find himself stuck next to the turgid British philosopher professor Sir Jay Zed.

Although Obama's confusion went largely unreported in America, the BBC's enterprising Eddie Mair got Jeffrey Osborne on the line and inveigled him into singing George Osborne's best-known words — "Tax cuts should be for life, not just Christmas time" — to Jeffrey's best-known tune.

The following day Mangu Obama — whoops, my mistake, Mangu Obama was the prime minister of Equatorial Guinea from 2006 to 2008, and has a way smaller and less incompetent entourage — Barack Obama departed for Berlin (the German city, not the American songwriter or British philosopher). Five years ago at the Brandenburg Gate, he thrilled a crowd of 200,000 with his stirring clarion call to himself, "Ich bin ein Baracker." This time, he spoke to an audience barely a 50th of that size — 4,500, most of whom were bored out of their lederhosen.

As I wrote of Obama's Massachusetts yawnfest in 2010, he went to the trouble of flying in to phone it in. If the BBC's mash-up of Jeffrey Osborne's 1982 Billboard hit and Chancellor Osborne's recent speech at the Mansion House in London was something of an awkward fit, you could slip large slabs of "On the Wings of Love" into Obama's telepromptered pap and none of the 27 Germans still awake would have noticed the difference:

"Peace with justice means extending a hand to those who reach for freedom, wherever they live. Come take my hand and together we will rise, on the wings of love, up and above the clouds, the only way to fly ...

"Peace with justice means pursuing the security of a world without nuclear weapons — no matter how distant that dream may be, just smile for me and let the day begin. You are the sunshine that lights my heat within, and we can reject the nuclear weaponization that North Korea and Iran may be seeking, because we are angels in disguise, we live and breathe each other, inseparable ...

"The effort to slow climate change requires bold action. For the grim alternative affects all nations — more severe storms, more famine and floods ... coastlines that vanish, oceans that rise, you look at me and I begin to melt, just like the snow when a ray of sun is felt ... This is the future we must avert. This is the global threat of our time... That is our task. We have to get to work. We're flowing like a stream, running free, flowing on the wings of love ..."

The wings of love don't seem to carry Obama as far as they used to. MSNBC's Chris Matthews blamed the lackluster performance on the sun's glare affecting his ability to read the text. That's how bad it is: global warming melted his prompter.

But the speech itself was barely distinguishable in its cobwebbed utopian pabulum from the video for a nuclear-free world just released by Michael Douglas and other celebrities. And Douglas, who recently gave a fascinating interview to The Guardian in which he blamed his

cancerous walnut-sized tongue tumor upon his addiction to oral sex, at least has a better excuse as to why his silvery tongue doesn't work its magic quite the way it used to. Der Spiegel, which is the very definition of mainstream media in Germany, described the president's Berlin stop as a visit by "the head of the largest and most all-encompassing surveillance system ever invented" — and under the headline "Obama's Soft Totalitarianism".

Obama isn't a "soft" totalitarian so much as a slapdash one. His apparatchiks monitor the emails of both Jeffrey and George Osborne, but he still can't tell one from the other.

Likewise, in Syria as in Libya, "the largest and most all-encompassing surveillance system ever invented" can't tell a plucky freedom fighter itching to build Massachusetts in the sands of Araby from your neighborhood al-Qaida subsidiary whose health care plan only covers clitoridectomies.

His G-8 colleagues have begun to figure out that America no longer matters. To be sure, the trappings of the presidency are a lagging indicator: He still flies in with more limos and Secret Service agents than everybody else, combined.

Then again, the other American story to catch the fancy of the Fleet Street tabloids in recent days is that of the unfortunate Las Vegas man with the world's biggest scrotum, weighing 140 pounds, yet unable to perform.

Of his talks with Vladimir Putin, the president said, "With respect to Syria, we do have differing perspectives on the problem, but we share an interest in reducing the violence." Putin aims to reduce the violence by getting his boy Assad to kill everyone he needs to. Obama aims to reduce the violence by giving a speech about the "intolerance that fuels extremism" — or is it the other way round? The world understands that Putin means it and Obama doesn't — just as in Afghanistan everyone knows the Taliban means it and the fainthearted superpower doesn't.

Thanks to the stork delivering his bundle to Miss Kardashian (see above), Americans seem not to have noticed that the U.S. has just lost yet another war.

But in Moscow, Beijing, Teheran, they noticed, and they will act accordingly. On the wings of love, up and above the clouds, Obama wafts ever higher on his own gaseous uplift. Down on solid ground, the rest of the world must occasionally wonder if they haven't confused the U.S. delegation with the world's most empty-headed boy band.

NY Times

Young and Isolated

by Jennifer M. Silva

In a working-class neighborhood in Lowell, Mass., in early 2009, I sat across the table from Diana, then 24, in the kitchen of her mother's house. Diana had planned to graduate from college, marry, buy a home in the suburbs and have kids, a dog and a cat by the time she was 30. But she had recently dropped out of a nearby private university after two years of study and with nearly \$80,000 in student loans. Now she worked at Dunkin' Donuts.

“With college,” she explained, “I would have had to wait five years to get a degree, and once I get that, who knows if I will be working and if I would find something I wanted to do. I don’t want to be a cop or anything. I don’t know what to do with it. My manager says some people are born to make coffee, and I guess I was born to make coffee.”

Young working-class men and women like Diana are trying to figure out what it means to be an adult in a world of disappearing jobs, soaring education costs and shrinking social support networks. Today, only 20 percent of men and women between 18 and 29 are married. They live at home longer, spend more years in college, change jobs more frequently and start families later.

For more affluent young adults, this may look a lot like freedom. But for the hundred-some working-class 20- and 30-somethings I interviewed between 2008 and 2010 in Lowell and Richmond, Va., at gas stations, fast-food chains, community colleges and temp agencies, the view is very different.

Lowell and Richmond embody many of the structural forces, like deindustrialization and declining blue-collar jobs, that frame working-class young people’s attempts to come of age in America today. The economic hardships of these men and women, both white and black, have been well documented. But often overlooked are what the sociologists Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb in 1972 called their “hidden injuries” — the difficult-to-measure social costs borne by working-class youths as they struggle to forge stable and meaningful adult lives.



These are people bouncing from one temporary job to the next; dropping out of college because they can’t figure out financial aid forms or fulfill their major requirements; relying on credit cards for medical emergencies; and avoiding romantic commitments because they can take care of only themselves. Increasingly disconnected from institutions of work, family and community, they grow up by learning that counting on others will only hurt them in the end. Adulthood is not

simply being delayed but dramatically reimagined along lines of trust, dignity and connection and obligation to others.

Take Jay, for example. He was expelled from college for failing several classes after his mother suffered a severe mental breakdown. He worked for a year, then went before the college administration and petitioned to be reinstated. He described it as a humiliating experience: “It’s their jobs to hear all these sob stories, you know, I understand that, but they just had this attitude, like you know what I mean, ‘Oh, your mom had a breakdown and you couldn’t turn to anyone?’ ”

Jay got back in and graduated (after a total of seven years of college). But when I talked to him, he was still working food-service and coffee-shop jobs at 28, baffled about how to turn his communications major into a professional job. He felt as if he was sold fake goods: “The world is at my fingertips, you can rule the world, be whatever you want, all this stuff. When I was 15, 16, I would not have envisioned the life I am living now. Whatever I imagined, I figured I would wear a suit every day, that I would own things. I don’t own anything.”

I heard many people express feeling betrayed by the major institutions in their lives, whether colleges, the health care system, employers or the government.

Christopher, who was 25, stated simply, “Well, I have this problem of being tricked.” He explained: “Like, I will get a phone call that says, you won a free supply of magazines. And they will start coming to my house. Then all of a sudden I am getting calls from bill collectors for the subscriptions to Maxim and ESPN. It’s a runaround: I can’t figure out who to call. Now I don’t even pick up the phone, like I almost didn’t pick up when you called me.” He described isolation as the only safe path; by depending on no one, Christopher protected himself from trickery and betrayal.

These fears seep into the romantic sphere, where commitment becomes yet another risky venture. Kelly, a 28-year-old line cook, spent 10 years battling depression and living off and on in her car. She finally had a job and an apartment of her own. But now she was worried about risking that hard-earned sense of security by letting someone else into her life. “I like the idea of being with someone,” she said, “but I have a hard time imagining trusting anybody with all of my personal stuff.” She said she would “rather be alone and fierce than be in a relationship and be milquetoast.”

“I know where all my shortcomings come from. From the things that I either did not do, or I did and I just happened to fail.”

Men often face a different challenge: the impossibility of living up to the male provider role. Brandon, who worked the night shift at a clothing store, described what he thought it would be like to be in a relationship with him: “No woman wants to sit on the couch all the time and watch TV and eat at Burger King. I can only take care of myself.”

It is not that these men and women don’t value family. Douglas, then 25, talked about loss: “Trust is gone. The way people used to love is gone.” Rather, the insecurities and uncertainties of their daily lives have rendered commitment a luxury they can’t afford.

But these young men and women don't want your pity — and they don't expect a handout. They are quick to blame themselves for the milestones they have not achieved. Julian, an Army vet from Richmond who was unemployed, divorced and living with his mother at 28, dismissed the notion that his lack of success was anyone's fault but his own: "At the end of the day looking in the mirror, I know where all my shortcomings come from. From the things that I either did not do or I did and I just happened to fail at them." Kelly echoed that: "No one else is going to fix me but me."

This self-sufficiency, while highly prized in our culture, has a dark side: it leaves little empathy to spare for those who cannot survive on their own.

Wanda, a young woman with big dreams of going to college, expressed virulent anger toward her parents, a tow-truck driver and a secretary, for not being able to pay her tuition: "I feel like it's their fault that they don't have nothing." Rather than build connections with those who struggled alongside her, Wanda severed relationships and willed herself not to be "weak-minded" like her parents: "if my mentality were different, then most definitely I would just be stuck like them."

Working-class youths come to believe that if they have to make it on their own, then everyone else should, too. Powerless to achieve external markers of adulthood like marriage or a steady job, they instead measure their progress by cutting ties, turning inward and numbing themselves emotionally.

We don't want to go back to the 1950s, when economic stability and social solidarity came at the cost of exclusion for many Americans. But nor can we afford the social costs of going forward on our present path of isolation. The social and economic decline of the American working class will only be exacerbated as its youngest members make a virtue out of self-blame, distrust and disconnection. In order to tell a different kind of coming-of-age story, we need to provide these young men and women with the skills and support to navigate the road to adulthood. Our future depends on it.

Jennifer M. Silva is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School and the author of the forthcoming book "Coming Up Short: Working-Class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty."

WSJ

[Benghazi's Portent and the Decline of U.S. Military Strength](#)

Ten more Marines per ship won't matter if there aren't ships in the Mediterranean Sea to deploy from.

by Mark Helprin

In the rush to paper over its delinquencies in the Sept. 11, 2012, attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, the Obama administration seems unaware that its failures are fundamental rather than merely anomalous. They are, unfortunately, a portent of the future.

On March 26, this newspaper reported that "In the wake of the attack, the military has examined how to improve its rapid response forces," specifically by "adding special operations teams of

roughly 10 troops to ships carrying larger Marine Expeditionary Units." MEUs shipborne in amphibious ready groups usually number 2,200 Marines in special forces, reconnaissance, armored reconnaissance, armor, amphibious assault, infantry, artillery, engineer and aviation battalions, companies and platoons. They can get over the beach fast, and they fight like hell.

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From World War II onward, the U.S. Sixth Fleet stabilized the Mediterranean region and protected American interests there with the standard deployment, continued through 2008, of a carrier battle group, three hunter killer submarines, and an amphibious ready group with its MEU or equivalent. But in the first year of the Obama presidency this was reduced to one almost entirely unarmed command ship. No MEU could respond to Benghazi because none was assigned to, or by chance in, the Mediterranean.



U.S. Marine soldiers exit an Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV) during a joint landing operation at Pohang seashore in March last year.

Whereas during most of the Obama years the United States has kept one ship in the Mediterranean, during World War I no less than Japan deployed 14 destroyers and a cruiser there. But today—with the Muslim Brotherhood watching over the Egyptian powder keg, terrorist warlords murdering our diplomats in Libya, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb reaching up from the Sahel into the Mediterranean littoral, instability in Tunisia, Bedouin kidnappers in the Sinai,

Hamas rockets streaming from Gaza, Lebanon riding the Hezbollah tiger, Jordan imperilled, and a civil war raging in Syria —what possible reason could there be for a powerful Sixth Fleet?

Benghazi is a lesson in failings of probity writ small and large. Our policy, relentlessly pursued by the president, is to disarm. As China and Russia invigorate their defense industrial bases, we diminish ours. We are stripping our nuclear deterrent to and beyond the point where it will encourage proliferation among opportunistic states, endow China with parity, and make a first strike against us feasible.

In Korea, we depended upon tactical nuclear weapons, then pulled back after the North deployed chemical and biological weapons to check them. The obvious course was to build up conventional forces, but instead we cut them drastically. Although now with precision-guided munitions we can pick off much of what the North has, it will retain sufficient mass to make war's outcome uncertain and inflict millions of civilian casualties.

We hide behind nearly toothless Europeans who provide skittish diplomatic cover rather than substantive military support. With reduced naval, air, and ground forces, we bluff in the South China Sea, nurture adventurism in quarters of which we are not even aware, yet, and prove that though our diplomats may beg for protection, terrorists can spend eight hours attacking an American diplomatic post with utter impunity.

One finds in the Companion to British History the telling lines: "In the absence of most of the troops, there was an insurrection. . . . Colchester was burned . . . the IXth Legion ambushed and mostly destroyed."

Would that the president, or Hillary Clinton, possibly the next president, comprehend this. Her record-air-mile tenure as secretary of state, in which restless ambition was the cause of unambitious restlessness, brought one of the most confused approaches to the international system ever foisted upon the long suffering Republic, unless you think donating Egypt to the Muslim Brotherhood was Napoleonic genius. Was her January performance before the Senate Benghazi hearings, in which she accepted responsibility while at the same time angrily rejecting it, worthy more of the Queen of Hearts or the Cheshire Cat? Notably, her husband, famously confused even about the meaning of *is*, always kept an MEU in the Mediterranean.

History and the present tell us unambiguously that we require vast reserves of strength used judiciously, sparingly where possible, overwhelmingly when appropriate, precisely, quickly, and effectively. Now we have vanishing and insufficient strength used injudiciously, promiscuously, slowly, and ineffectively.

Since 1972, the Democratic Party has reflexively advocated the reduction of American military power, even at the defining junctures of the Cold War. The George W. Bush administration spent a well intentioned two terms more or less switching out Sunni for Shiite in Iraq, poking hornets in Afghanistan, destabilizing Pakistan, and decapitalizing the armed forces. The tea party, knowing only the importance of fiscal discipline, does not understand the risks it is willing to accept to national security. And to the extent the current administration actually perceives the need to provide for defense, it always seems proudly to decide not to.

Do Americans understand that war and death abhor a vacuum of strength and will rush in when weakness opens a place for them? Do we care? At the moment, the power of decision rests with those who don't.

For the sake of comfort and illusory promises, a false idea of goodness, and the incoherent remnants of New Left ideology, we as a people have chosen drastically to diminish our powers of action in the world even as they bear upon our self defense. Having established and advertised this, we will rue the day we did. Benghazi, a brightly illustrative miniature, is only a symbol of things to come.

Mr. Helprin is a senior fellow at the Claremont Institute and the author, most recently, of the novel "In Sunlight and In Shadow"

Huffington Post

[Welcome To The Police Industrial Complex](#)

by Radley Balko



Want to make money on the drug war? Start a company that builds military equipment, then sell that gear to local police departments. Thanks to the generation-long trend toward more militarized police forces, there's now massive and growing market for private companies to outfit your neighborhood cops with gear that's more appropriate for a battlefield.

Some of this is decades-old news. For over 25 years, the Pentagon has been supplying surplus military equipment to police agencies across the country, largely in the name of fighting the drug war. In fact, in as early as 1968 Congress passed a law authorizing the military to share gear with domestic police agencies. But it was in 1987 that Washington really formalized the practice, with a law instructing the Secretary of Defense and the U.S. Attorney General to notify local law enforcement agencies each year about what surplus gear was available. The law established an office in the Pentagon specifically to facilitate such transfers, and Congress even set up an 800 number that sheriffs and police chiefs could call to inquire about the stuff they could get. The bill also instructed the General Services Administration to produce a catalog from which police agencies could make their Christmas lists.

Ten years later, Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Security Act of 1997, a portion of which created what is now known as the 1033 Program. In that bill, Congress created the Law Enforcement Support Program, an agency headquartered in Ft. Belvoir, Virginia whose sole task is to make it easier for Pentagon supplies to find their way to local police stations. In just its first three years, the office handled 3.4 million orders for Pentagon gear from 11,000 police agencies in all 50 states. By 2005, over 17,000 police agencies were serviced by the office. National Journal reported in 2000 that between 1997 and 1999, the office doled out \$727 million worth of equipment, including 253 aircraft, 7,856 M-16 rifles, and 181 grenade launchers. In the October 2011 edition of the program's monthly newsletter (Motto: "From Warfighter to Crimefighter"), the office celebrated that it had given away a record \$500 million in military gear in fiscal year 2011.

The increasing role of the National Guard in the drug war also benefits military contractors. The National Guard straddles the gap between a police force and a military force. Over the years, Congress, state legislatures, and state governors have increasingly asked the Guard to take on the role of a domestic anti-drug agency, but to approach the job as the military might. Of course supply the guard with everything from uniforms to weapons to aircraft. The National Guard was first recruited into the drug war in the mid-1980s [with the Campaign Against Marijuana Production](#) program. But it was during the late 1980s and early 1990s that the Guard's role really began to expand. In 1989 Congress first gave the Guard funding for \$40 million for drug interdiction efforts -- \$40 million. The next year, funding jumped to \$70 million. Two years later it was up to \$237 million.

By 1989, fully-armed Guard troops were stationed in front of suspected drug houses in a series of drug raids in Portland. In Kentucky, local residents grew so enraged at Guard sweeps in low-flying helicopters, they blew up a Kentucky police radio tower. In Oklahoma, Guard troops dressed in battle garb rappelled down from helicopters and fanned out into rural areas in search of pot plants to uproot. Guard troops would later tell USA Today some would later tell media outlets they were told to exaggerate their haul in order to boost federal funding for future efforts.

In September 1990, the San Diego Union-Tribune sent a reporter to cover "the nation's first counternarcotics school, organized to teach military and law enforcement how to fight the war on drugs together." The curriculum stressed "the need for law enforcement agencies to wage the war with searches, seizures and arrests, while the military performs surveillance, intelligence and undercover roles."

By the 1990s, National Guard units were flying anti-drug surveillance helicopters and boarding up crack houses in Washington, D.C.; flying surveillance helicopters and cruising the streets with infrared gear to spot drug houses in Brooklyn; sealing crack houses in Philadelphia; sent to support drug raids in Baltimore; and helping serve 94 drug warrants during a massive, city-wide raid in Pittsburgh. Members of the Pennsylvania Guard assisted in raids of two factories that produced small glass vials. There were no drugs in the vials. But both states had made the vials illegal because they were often used by drug dealers to package crack cocaine. The staff of Rep. Pete Stark (D-Calif.) discovered that the Texas National Guard had received \$3 million in federal funding to dress troops up like cacti and position them along the border to hunt for drug smugglers. And in the summer of 1990, an Army helicopter circled overhead as Massachusetts National Guard troops, some of them undercover, assisted police in identifying potential drug offenders at a Grateful Dead show.

According to journalist James Bovard, in 1992 alone National Guard troops across the country assisted in just under 20,000 arrests, searched 120,000 automobiles, entered 1,200 private buildings without a search warrant, and stepped onto private property to search for drugs (also without a warrant) 6,500 times. Col. Richard Browning III, head of the organization's drug-interdiction effort, declared that year, "The rapid growth of the drug scourge has shown that military force must be used to change the attitudes and activities of Americans who are dealing and using drugs. The National Guard is America's legally feasible attitude-change agent."

The next major wave of militarization came after the creation of the Department of Homeland Security after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. In the decade since, DHS has handed out billions in homeland security grants with a program far larger and better funded than even the Pentagon giveaways. [According to the Center for Investigative Reporting \(CIR\)](#), DHS gave out \$2 billion in such grants in 2011 alone, about four times the value of gear the 1033 program gave out in its own record year. The money goes for hardware such as armored personnel carriers, high-power weapons, aircraft, and other military-grade gear.

Though these are considered anti-terror or homeland security grants, because the overwhelming majority of cities, counties, and towns that get them will never be subject to a terrorist attack, the equipment bought with them inevitably gets used in the drug war -- namely, to perform raids on people suspected of nonviolent consensual drug crimes. (The federal government laid the groundwork for conflating the two issues in 2002 when it [ran an ad campaign](#) explicitly arguing that terrorism and the drug war were inextricably linked.)

But most the most troubling thing about the DHS grant program is that it has given birth to the police-industrial complex. As the CIR reported in 2011, military contractors now market directly to police agencies with messages that encourage the mindset that the military and the police are fighting the same battle. And it's lucrative. The spokesman for Lenco, which makes armored personnel vehicles, [told me last year](#) that thanks to DHS, the company has sold at least one of its "Bearcats" to 90 of the 100 largest cities in America. The CIR reports that, "The homeland security market for state and local agencies is projected to reach \$19.2 billion by 2014, up from an estimated \$15.8 billion in fiscal 2009, according to the Homeland Security Research Corp."

That not only means that there's fortune to be made arming domestic police departments for battle, there's also plenty of money left over to set up lobbying offices in D.C., hire former politicians and their staffs, and generally lobby Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House to ensure that these programs not only stay around, but that they grow in size and influence going forward.

So if you want to make money off the war on drugs, consider starting a company that makes military gear for police departments. There's a small mountain of government money for the taking. And unlike contracting with the Pentagon, you won't even need a security clearance.

Amusing Planet

[Grass Covered Tram Track in Europe](#)

Tram tracks on many European cities are lined with grass, a practice that probably started in the 1980's to bring greenery back to city space and at the same time, provide habitable zone for numerous insects and invertebrates. These swaths of green provide a host of benefits to any

urban area, like reduce urban heat island effect, provide a permeable surface for storm water to infiltrate, reduce pollution and absorb noise generated by the grinding of metal wheels on metal tracks. Not to mention, they look incredibly good in comparison to concrete or asphalt.

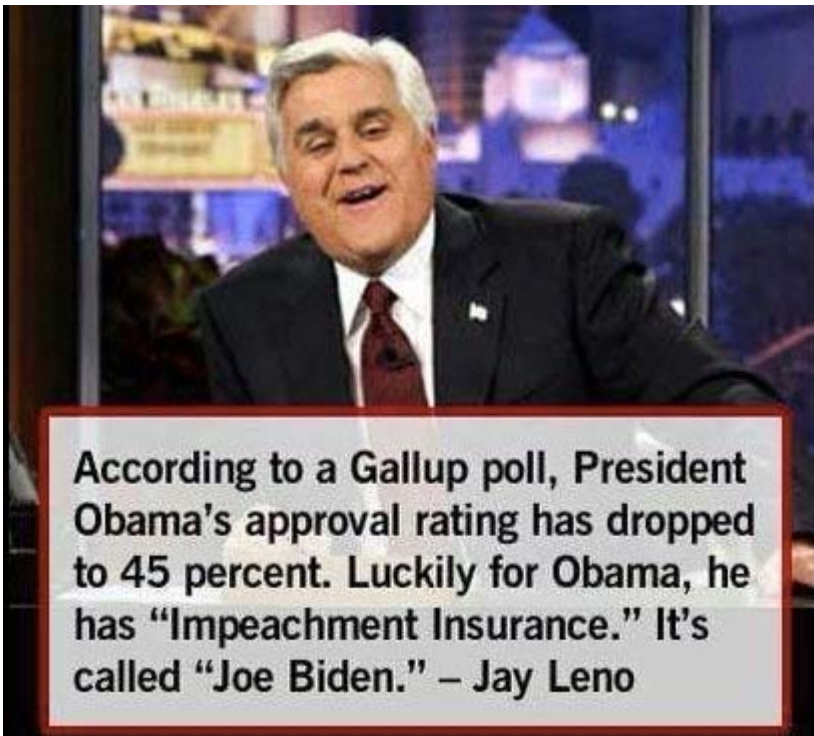
Green tracks have become increasingly popular in Europe and can be seen in pretty much every major European cities from Barcelona to Frankfurt, Milan, St-Etienne and Strasbourg.





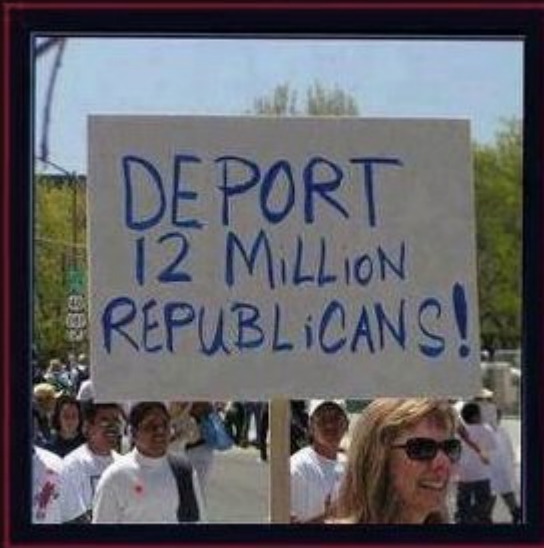
[Click here for more pictures](#)

Proof Obama attended Columbia University!





LOL! REALLY??



**Who do you think pays your Welfare
and for all those Government programs?**

**THAT MOMENT WHEN YOU REALIZED
THE PERSON BEHIND YOU TOTALLY
COPIED YOUR OUTFIT.**

