

October 2, 2013

Jonathan Tobin suggests the shutdown may last longer than we think.

*...He (Obama) has been courting a shutdown since 2011 and clearly appears to believe that he can turn his sagging second term around by facing down the GOP and winning. Since he thinks the worse things get the better it will be for Democrats, he has no incentive to compromise even on the most reasonable of Republican demands about not exempting federal employees from the joys of ObamaCare.*

*But what the president may be about to discover is that he has backed the Republicans into a spot they also have no great incentive to abandon. The assumption that the Republicans will quail in the face of media opprobrium and sob stories about furloughed federal employees doesn't take into account the fact that having stuck their necks out this far, a quick retreat may do them more harm than good. Not only would their base not forgive Boehner for cracking, but independents prepared to blame the Democrats or both parties equally for the problem might think worse of them for acting as if the whole thing was a charade.*

*If so, we may be in for a longer confrontation than anyone thought with consequences for both sides that are equally unpredictable. Fasten your seat belts; it's going to be a bumpy shutdown.*

Appearing on Morning Joe, Bob Woodward says if the economy suffers from the shutdown it is on the president's head. Free Beacon with the story.

*BOB WOODWARD: Can I enter in here just for a moment because I think it's a good question. And there is something the president could be doing. He said he will not negotiate on the debt ceiling. A reasonable position. "I will not be blackmailed" he said. But he should be talking. They should be meeting, discussing this, because as I think Steve Ratner showed earlier, the American economy is at stake and the president, if there is a downturn or a collapse or whatever could happen here that's bad, it's going to be on his head. The history books are going to say, we had an economic calamity in the Presidency of Barack Obama. Speaker Boehner, indeed, is playing a role on this. Go back to the Great Depression in the 1930s. I'll bet no one can name who was the speaker of the House at the time. Henry Thomas Rainey. He's not in the history book it's on the president's head. He's got to lead. He's got to talk. And the absence of discussion here, I think, is baffling element.*

Sean Trende of Real Clear Politics posts on the possible effects of the shutdown.

*... 4. What happens to red state Senate Democrats? Of course, the real action for 2014 is not the House, where the GOP will continue to control the agenda except in the unlikely event that it loses 17 seats. The real fight is for control of the Senate, which in turn revolves around races in eight states: West Virginia, Arkansas, Kentucky, South Dakota, Louisiana, Alaska, Montana and North Carolina. Obama lost those states by, respectively, 27, 24, 23, 18, 17, 14, 14 and two points, respectively.*

*The politics of a shutdown in these states are very different than in the nation as a whole. We can try to estimate the popularity of a shutdown by taking as a national baseline CNN's recent finding that 46 percent of voters would blame Republicans for a shutdown vs. the 36 percent*

*that would blame Obama. If we adjust these numbers according to the results of the presidential election in 2012, we would estimate that the president would shoulder the blame for a shutdown in each of those states save for North Carolina, and that outright majorities would blame the president in West Virginia, Arkansas and Kentucky.*

*The last thing Democratic candidates in these states want is a public spat over a piece of legislation that is highly controversial, that might have a problematic rollout in the coming weeks and months, and that places them on the side of an unpopular president. If there's an upside for the GOP, this is probably it. Even after the 1995-96 shutdowns, the GOP managed to gain Senate seats, largely by making gains in reddish states.*

*Of course, none of this should be read as advocating the shutdown, or predicting that it could not possibly have any negative consequences for the GOP. For starters, a government shutdown is essentially lighting a fuse without knowing exactly where it will go. This is something that could easily get out of control if the shutdown stretches out for weeks and bleeds into the debt ceiling battle, which could be potentially catastrophic for the country. ...*

Dan Pfeiffer, senior white house advisor, says the administration is "not for negotiating with people who have a bomb strapped to their chest." The GOP as terrorists has become a left meme. Just for grins, let's take a look at real terrorists. **Brendan O'Neill of Telegraph, UK** thinks it is time to talk about the barbarism of modern islamist terrorism.

*In Western news-making and opinion-forming circles, there's a palpable reluctance to talk about the most noteworthy thing about modern Islamist violence: its barbarism, its graphic lack of moral restraint. This goes beyond the BBC's yellow reluctance to deploy the T-word – terrorism – in relation to the bloody assault on the Westgate shopping mall in Kenya at the weekend. Across the commentating board, people are sheepish about pointing out the historically unique lunacy of Islamist violence and its utter detachment from any recognisable moral universe or human values. We have to talk about this barbarism; we have to appreciate how new and unusual it is, how different it is even from the terrorism of the 1970s or of the early twentieth century. We owe it to the victims of these assaults, and to the principle of honest and frank political debate, to face up to the unhinged, morally unanchored nature of Islamist violence in the 21st century.*

*Maybe it's because we have become so inured to Islamist terrorism in the 12 years since 9/11 that even something like the blowing-up of 85 Christians outside a church in Pakistan no longer shocks us or even makes it on to many newspaper front pages. But consider what happened: two men strapped with explosives walked into a group of men, women and children who were queuing for food and blew up themselves and the innocents gathered around them. Who does that? How far must a person have drifted from any basic system of moral values to behave in such an unrestrained and wicked fashion? ...*

*... My penny's worth is that this terrorism speaks to a profound crisis of politics and of morality. Where earlier terrorist groups were restrained both by their desire to appear as rational political actors with a clear goal in mind and by basic moral rules of human behaviour – meaning their violence was often bloody, yes, but rarely focused narrowly on committing mass murder –*

*today's Islamist terrorists appear to float free of normal political rules and moral compunctions. This is what is so infuriating about the BBC's refusal to call these groups terrorists – because if anything, and historically speaking, even the term terrorist might be too good for them.*

Furthermore, these people are engaged in a slaughter of Christians. Kirsten Powers posts in the Daily Beast.

*Christians in the Middle East and Africa are being slaughtered, tortured, raped, kidnapped, beheaded, and forced to flee the birthplace of Christianity. One would think this horror might be consuming the pulpits and pews of American churches. Not so. The silence has been nearly deafening.*

*As Egypt's Copts have battled the worst attacks on the Christian minority since the 14th century, the bad news for Christians in the region keeps coming. On Sunday, Taliban suicide bombers killed at least 85 worshippers at All Saints' church, which has stood since 1883 in the city of Peshawar, Pakistan. Christians were also the target of Islamic fanatics in the attack on a shopping center in Nairobi, Kenya, this week that killed more than 70 people. The Associated Press reported that the Somali Islamic militant group al-Shabab "confirmed witness accounts that gunmen separated Muslims from other people and let the Muslims go free." The captives were asked questions about Islam. If they couldn't answer, they were shot.*

*In Syria, Christians are under attack by Islamist rebels and fear extinction if Bashar al-Assad falls. This month, rebels overran the historic Christian town of Maalula, where many of its inhabitants speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus. The AFP reported that a resident of Maalula called her fiancé's cell and was told by member of the Free Syrian Army that they gave him a chance to convert to Islam and he refused. So they slit his throat. ...*

The Express, UK calls the perps "mindless youths," but we know who is attacking planes in Great Britain with lasers.

*THOUSANDS of planes coming in to land at Britain's busiest airports are in danger of crashing because pilots are being 'blinded' by laser pen attackers.*

*Britain's largest pilots' union is so concerned by a recent spate of incidents it has issued an emergency bulletin to members advising them how to avoid being blinded and losing control of their planes.*

*The British Airline Pilots' Association (Balpa) now wants the law changed so anyone caught in possession of the higher powered lasers without a "legitimate reason" to be jailed.*

*"Slaps on wrists and £150 fines are not enough - custodial sentences should be the norm," a spokesman said yesterday.*

*Most of the attacks are on large commercial jets, but even military planes carrying injured troops home from Afghanistan to hospitals in the Midlands have been targeted.*

*Police helicopters chasing criminals over densely populated areas are also regularly hit.*

*In most cases the beams are being shone by mindless youths, but pilots and security experts worry terrorists could also use them.*

*The incidents are all contained in official reports logged with the Civil Aviation Authority and obtained by the Sunday Express.*

*Planes are being struck at the rate of five times a day by beams from high intensity laser pens that can be bought online from as little as £12.*

*The more powerful products emit bright green beams and cost about £400, with a range of up to 200 miles. ....*

---

---

## **Contentions**

### **[This May Last Longer Than You Think](#)**

by Jonathan S. Tobin

Barring some miraculous turn of events, it appears the government shutdown will happen tonight. President Obama is confident that the majority of the public will blame Republicans for this and isn't budging. House Speaker John Boehner may not be so sanguine about the political wisdom of his course of action, but he is also determined to follow the desires of his members to make a stand against the implementation of ObamaCare. Moreover, he seems to feel that after weeks if not months of searching for the right way to make this stand, his party has found two issues—a call for delaying the president's signature health-care bill and a demand that Congress, its staff, and those that work in the White House not be exempt from it—that are eminently defensible reasons on which to stand their ground.

But just because both sides in this confrontation are finally where they want to be doesn't mean that they are prepared to stick out a shutdown that will last longer than a day or two. What we will learn in the next 48 or 72 hours is which (if any) of the two parties will blink first once a government shutdown becomes a reality. Most in the press as well as Congress are betting it will be the Republicans. They reason that the pictures of closed national parks and other alleged hardships, not to mention falling stock prices and the potentially dangerous impact of the standoff on the economy will cause the GOP to crack even if they manage to get to midnight without surrendering.

But having come this far, Boehner may think that it would be more dangerous for his party to have gone to the brink for a day or two only to wave the white flag once the consequences of a shutdown raise the political stakes. If a shutdown happens, he may decide it will do the GOP less harm to stick it out than to have put the country through the wringer again only to give in once the going got tough.

Republicans leading the charge for a shutdown have been insisting all along that the president would be the one to blink if only Republicans stayed united and hung tough. That proposition is about to be tested, and based on President Obama's late Monday afternoon appearance in which he once again dared the GOP to try him, it seems unlikely that he will fold so long as the liberal press is prepared to depict conservatives as a bunch of clowns.

He has been courting a shutdown since 2011 and clearly appears to believe that he can turn his sagging second term around by facing down the GOP and winning. Since he thinks the worse things get the better it will be for Democrats, he has no incentive to compromise even on the most reasonable of Republican demands about not exempting federal employees from the joys of ObamaCare.

But what the president may be about to discover is that he has backed the Republicans into a spot they also have no great incentive to abandon. The assumption that the Republicans will quail in the face of media opprobrium and sob stories about furloughed federal employees doesn't take into account the fact that having stuck their necks out this far, a quick retreat may do them more harm than good. Not only would their base not forgive Boehner for cracking, but independents prepared to blame the Democrats or both parties equally for the problem might think worse of them for acting as if the whole thing was a charade.

If so, we may be in for a longer confrontation than anyone thought with consequences for both sides that are equally unpredictable. Fasten your seat belts; it's going to be a bumpy shutdown.

## Free Beacon

### [Woodward: If Shutdown or Debt Ceiling Causes Economic Crisis, It's on the President's Head](#)

***'It's on the president's head, he's got to lead he's got to talk. And the absence of discussion here is a baffling element'***

by Washington Free Beacon Staff

Bob Woodward of *The Washington Post* said if there is a “downturn or a collapse” resulting from the failure of CR or debt ceiling negotiations it will be on President Obama’s “head” Monday on *Morning Joe*.

Woodward noted he respected President Obama’s objection to negotiating on the debt ceiling, but criticized the administration for failing to initiate any dialogue that could result in a deal on funding the government.

“It’s on the president’s head, he’s got to lead, he’s got to talk” Woodward said:

BOB WOODWARD: Can I enter in here just for a moment because I think it’s a good question. And there is something the president could be doing. He said he will not negotiate on the debt ceiling. A reasonable position. “I will not be blackmailed” he said. But he should be talking. They should be meeting, discussing this, because as I think Steve Ratner showed earlier, the American economy is at stake and the president, if there is a downturn or a collapse or whatever could happen here that’s bad, it’s going to be on his head. The history books are going to say, we had an economic calamity in the Presidency of Barack Obama. Speaker Boehner, indeed, is playing a role on this. Go back to the Great Depression in the 1930s. I’ll bet no one can name who was the speaker of the House at the time. Henry Thomas Rainey. He’s not in the history book it’s on the president’s head. He’s got to lead. He’s got to talk. And the absence of discussion here, I think, is baffling element.

## Real Clear Politics

### The Politics of the Government Shutdown

by Sean Trende

With the government having lurched into its first shutdown since the 1990s, many commentators are focusing on the potential ill effects that it might have for Republicans. Almost all of these analyses use the shutdowns of 1995-1996 as their starting point. While I don't think this development will be great for Republicans, many of the concerns are likely overwrought. Here are four points to ponder:

**1. While the GOP's tactics are similar to those employed in the mid-'90s, the goals are different.** The earlier budget debates were broad in nature and dealt with the scope of government. The 104th Congress, led by Newt Gingrich, believed that they were the culmination of the realignment supposedly begun by Ronald Reagan, that Bill Clinton's election was a fluke caused by Ross Perot's candidacy, and that they had been elected with a mandate to shrink the size and scope of government dramatically.

They entered the shutdown believing that the public would rally to their side, that Clinton's job approval would fall in the wake of the shutdown, and that he would ultimately cave on their demands. Despite the lore that has since sprung up, this wasn't a completely harebrained view of the underlying politics: An earlier shutdown, in 1990, did play an important role in persuading George H.W. Bush to abandon his famous "no new taxes" pledge a few weeks later.

Of course, that isn't how it played out at all in 1995 and 1996; Bill Clinton was widely viewed as having held the line against the Republican onslaught, although he actually did give substantial ground on taxes and a number of other issues. The budget fight became the focal point of Democrats' attempt to take back the House and Senate in the 1996 elections.

But the Democrats didn't actually use the shutdown itself as their main line of attack on Republicans. It was part of it, but the real attacks came over the Republicans' *motivation* for the shutdown. Because of the expansive nature of the GOP's cuts, the Democrats were able to focus on several unpopular portions of the GOP budget: the so-called M2E2 strategy. They commenced a mantra-like repetition of their opposition to Republican attempts to gut "Medicare, Medicaid, Education and the Environment" in favor of a "risky tax scheme" that benefitted the rich.

In other words, in evaluating 1996 as an illustration of what will happen to the GOP today, we probably have to separate the tactic of a shutdown from the substance of what motivates it. And today, the GOP is focused on defunding Obamacare, a law that isn't particularly popular. For the analogy to 1995-96 to really stick, the GOP will probably have had to try something along the lines of shutting down government to implement the Paul Ryan balance-budget plan.

While public opinion might be against the shutdown tactic, there probably won't be the same level of outrage against the underlying policy motivation, which is what 1995-96 was mostly about. If Obamacare turns out to be the train wreck some conservatives predict (I have no clue whether it will or won't), the tactic itself might be viewed as less of a negative.

**2. John Boehner is not Newt Gingrich, and Barack Obama is not Bill Clinton.** This is a fairly minor point, but Gingrich's public persona did play a part in bringing the shutdown to an

unhappy end for the GOP. He was polarizing from the start, and the media didn't bend over backwards to help him out. Case in point: The [Daily News cover](#) depicting him as a crybaby who shut down the government because he had to sit in the back of Air Force One. Boehner, on the other hand, has kept a much lower profile, and while he isn't all that popular, he isn't a lightning rod either (although Ted Cruz seems to be inching toward filling Gingrich's shoes in that regard).

At the same time, Obama is not really Clinton. The current president's ability to present himself as a cautious centrist in political face-offs with Republicans to date have been [mixed at best](#); his strength has always been energizing the liberal base for elections rather than tacking to the center. Clinton might be the most successful president of my lifetime when it comes to publicly framing a debate in a way favorable to his side (see, for example, the M2E2 strategy above). There are actually few examples, if any, of Obama rallying the public to his side in the various battles he's fought; there are plenty of failures, with the fight over sequestration being the most recent case in point.

**3. The net effect of the shutdown was small in the 1990s.** For all the talk of the sustained damage the Republicans suffered, the actual evidence for this is pretty weak. In 1994, Republicans won 230 seats in Congress. Five party switches and a special election victory later, they entered the 1996 elections with 236 seats.

They emerged from those elections with 228 seats, for a loss of eight total (including the open seat of one of the Democratic Party switchers). So while Republicans lost seats, it ended up being something of an empty victory for Democrats: Americans elected a Republican Congress back-to-back for the first time since the 1920s. Republican candidates won the popular vote for the House, albeit very narrowly (Democrats won the vote only if you split up votes cast for candidates running on multiple party lines, e.g., a Republican also running on the Conservative Party line in New York). Republicans even gained a seat in a special election held in a Democratic-leaning district in between government shutdowns, and only narrowly lost a Senate seat in Democratic-leaning Oregon immediately after the shutdown (Republicans proceeded to win another open Senate seat in the same state by four points in November).

Those Republican House losses weren't terribly surprising. Republicans were overexposed as a result of the 1994 "wave election" that swept a number of weak members into swing-to-Democratic-leaning districts. Losing representatives like Andrea Seastrand, Michael Flanagan and Fred Heineman was more a part of regression-to-the-mean than any wholesale rejection of Republicans.

Of the 21 House seats that Democrats claimed from Republicans in 1996 (it was actually 22, but I don't have presidential data for Louisiana's 7th District), Clinton had carried 18 in 1992. The other four seats were all something of special cases: Bob Dornan in California, Gary Franks in Connecticut, David Funderburk in North Carolina, and Toby Roth's open House seat in Wisconsin.

This presents a problem for Democrats hoping to capitalize on the 2013 shutdown: The seats are much better sorted these days. Going into the 1996 elections, 79 Republicans occupied seats that had voted for Clinton in 1992. In other words, they lost 23 percent of their caucus from "Clinton seats." Today, only 17 Republicans come from "Obama seats" to begin with. If Republicans suffered losses in unfriendly territory at the same rate as they did in 1996, they'd lose only four seats, before we start looking at the effect on Democrats from "Romney seats."

Perhaps Republicans would have fared better had they not attempted to shut down the government in the first place. Republicans picked up 10 open House seats and defeated three Democratic incumbents in 1996; absent the shutdown, perhaps they might have gained seats. In the Senate, Republicans narrowly lost open Democratic seats in Louisiana and Georgia, while missing good opportunities to defeat Tom Harkin in Iowa and Max Baucus in Montana.

But as [Harry Enten has ably demonstrated](#), Republicans did about as well in the House and in presidential elections as we would have expected given the performance of the economy, especially when you consider that exit polls showed Ross Perot pulling votes disproportionately from Republicans (unlike 1992, when he pulled evenly from both parties). Clinton's comeback was likely due more to the flurry of good economic news in the run-up to the election than to anything else. Indeed, while Clinton's job approval improved over the course of the shutdown, it had also [improved in the months leading up to the shutdown](#) at a similar rate.

Senate losses in Louisiana and Georgia look bad today, but in 1996 both states were more Democratic; Clinton had carried both states in 1992 and only narrowly lost Georgia in 1996 while winning Louisiana by 12 points. Republicans had only won two narrow Senate elections in Georgia before 1996 (and hadn't won the governorship since Reconstruction), while Republicans had never won a Senate election in Louisiana and were burdened by a controversial candidate in Woody Jenkins. Republicans were unable to defeat Harkin, Baucus or Mary Landrieu in the good GOP year of 2002.

**4. What happens to red state Senate Democrats?** Of course, the real action for 2014 is not the House, where the GOP will continue to control the agenda except in the unlikely event that it loses 17 seats. The real fight is for control of the Senate, which in turn revolves around races in eight states: West Virginia, Arkansas, Kentucky, South Dakota, Louisiana, Alaska, Montana and North Carolina. Obama lost those states by, respectively, 27, 24, 23, 18, 17, 14, 14 and two points, respectively.

The politics of a shutdown in these states are very different than in the nation as a whole. We can try to estimate the popularity of a shutdown by taking as a national baseline CNN's recent finding that 46 percent of voters would blame Republicans for a shutdown vs. the 36 percent that would blame Obama. If we adjust these numbers according to the results of the presidential election in 2012, we would estimate that the president would shoulder the blame for a shutdown in each of those states save for North Carolina, and that outright majorities would blame the president in West Virginia, Arkansas and Kentucky.

The last thing Democratic candidates in these states want is a public spat over a piece of legislation that is highly controversial, that might have a problematic rollout in the coming weeks and months, and that places them on the side of an unpopular president. If there's an upside for the GOP, this is probably it. Even after the 1995-96 shutdowns, the GOP managed to gain Senate seats, largely by making gains in reddish states.

Of course, none of this should be read as advocating the shutdown, or predicting that it could not possibly have any negative consequences for the GOP. For starters, a government shutdown is essentially lighting a fuse without knowing exactly where it will go. This is something that could easily get out of control if the shutdown stretches out for weeks and bleeds into the debt ceiling battle, which could be potentially catastrophic for the country.



Moreover, it could give Democrats an issue to rally around. Unlike 1996, the economy is weak; the president's job approval has suffered in recent months as a result of his perceived failure to move the Democratic agenda forward, and the aborted intervention in Syria. Many of these losses have come as a result of Democrats becoming dissatisfied with the president. If the election were held with the president's job approval at its present level, Democrats would probably lose another 10 House seats or so, giving Republicans their largest House majority since 1946 (and possibly 1928). A dustup with congressional Republicans would probably help bring these Democrats back into the fold, especially if the president emerges victorious from the fight, helping to limit Democratic losses.

Finally, we should also remember that the current weak recovery has been ongoing now for 52 months. It's already longer than six of the 11 recoveries in the post-War era. By this time next year, it will be longer than seven of them. By 2016, only the booms of the mid-'60s, mid-'80s, and mid-'90s will have lasted longer. And, well, this recovery doesn't much resemble those recoveries so far.

In other words, there's a decent chance that we'll encounter a downturn in the economy in the next year, and a very good chance that we'll encounter one in the next three years. Obama is probably reaching the end of the time period where his predecessor can be blamed for the state of the economy. But a lengthy shutdown could conceivably give Democrats ammunition to place the blame back on Republicans.

The bottom line is this: The shutdown will probably not be a good thing for the GOP, and there's a good chance Republicans won't achieve their intended goal of limiting Obamacare's reach. But at the same time, a lot of the prophecies of doom for Republicans are heavily overwrought. Unless things get too far out of control, the predictions of heavy GOP losses from a shutdown are likely overstated.

## Telegraph, UK

### [I'm sorry, but we have to talk about the barbarism of modern Islamist terrorism](#)

by Brendan O'Neill



*The aftermath of an Islamist bomb directed at Pakistani Shiites*

In Western news-making and opinion-forming circles, there's a palpable reluctance to talk about the most noteworthy thing about modern Islamist violence: its barbarism, its graphic lack of moral restraint. This goes beyond the BBC's [yellow reluctance to deploy the T-word](#) – terrorism – in relation to the bloody assault on the Westgate shopping mall in Kenya at the weekend. Across the commentating board, people are sheepish about pointing out the historically unique lunacy of Islamist violence and its utter detachment from any recognisable moral universe or human values. We have to talk about this barbarism; we have to appreciate how new and unusual it is, how different it is even from the terrorism of the 1970s or of the early twentieth century. We owe it to the victims of these assaults, and to the principle of honest and frank political debate, to face up to the unhinged, morally unanchored nature of Islamist violence in the 21st century.

Maybe it's because we have become so inured to Islamist terrorism in the 12 years since 9/11 that even something like [the blowing-up of 85 Christians outside a church in Pakistan](#) no longer shocks us or even makes it on to many newspaper front pages. But consider what happened: two men strapped with explosives walked into a group of men, women and children who were queuing for food and blew up themselves and the innocents gathered around them. Who does that? How far must a person have drifted from any basic system of moral values to behave in such an unrestrained and wicked fashion? Yet the Guardian tells us it is "[moral masturbation](#)" to express outrage over this attack, and it would be better to give into a "sober recognition that there are many bad things we can't as a matter of fact do much about". This is a demand that we further acclimatise to the peculiar and perverse bloody Islamist attacks around the world, shrug our shoulders, put away our moral compasses, and say: "Ah well, this kind of thing happens."

Or consider [the attack on Westgate in Kenya](#), where both the old and the young, black and white, male and female were targeted. With no clear stated aims from the people who carried the attack out, and no logic to their strange and brutal behaviour, Westgate had more in common with those mass mall and school shootings that are occasionally carried out by disturbed people in the West than it did with the political violence of yesteryear. And yet still observers avoid using the T-word or the M-word (murder) to describe what happened there, and instead attach all sorts of made-up, see-through political theories to this rampage, giving what was effectively a terror tantrum executed by morally unrestrained Islamists the respectability of being a political protest of some breed.

Time and again, one reads about Islamist attacks that seem to defy not only the most basic of humanity's moral strictures but also political and even guerrilla logic. Consider the hundreds of suicide attacks that have taken place in Iraq in recent years, a great number of them against ordinary Iraqis, often children. Western apologists for this wave of weird violence, which they call "resistance", claim it is about fighting against the Western forces which were occupying Iraq in the wake of the 2003 invasion. If so, it's the first "resistance" in history whose prime targets have been civilians rather than security forces, and which has failed to put forward any kind of political programme that its violence is allegedly designed to achieve. Even experts in counterinsurgency have found themselves perplexed by the numerous nameless suicide assaults on massive numbers of civilians in post-war Iraq, and the fact that these violent actors, unlike the vast majority of violent political actors in history, have "[developed no alternative government or political wing and displayed no intention of amassing territory to govern](#)". One Iraqi attack has stuck in my mind for seven years. In 2006 a female suicide bomber blew herself up among families – including many mothers and their offspring – who were queuing up for kerosene. Can you imagine what happened? A terrible glimpse was offered by this line in a

Washington Post report on 24 September 2006: [“Two pre-teen girls embraced each other as they burned to death.”](#)

What motivates this perversity? What are its origins? Unwilling, or perhaps unable, to face up to the newness of this unrestrained, aim-free, civilian-targeting violence, Western observers do all sorts of moral contortions in an effort to present such violence as run-of-the-mill or even possibly a justifiable response to Western militarism. Some say, “Well, America kills women and children too, in its drone attacks”, wilfully overlooking the fact such people are not the *targets* of America’s military interventions – and I say that as someone who has opposed every American venture overseas of the past 20 years. If you cannot see the difference between a drone strike that goes wrong and kills an entire family and a man who [crashes his car into the middle of a group of children accepting sweets from a US soldier and them blows himself and them up](#) – as happened in Iraq in 2005 – then there is something wrong with you. Other observers say that Islamists, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also the individuals who attacked London and New York, are fighting against Western imperialism in Muslim lands. But that doesn’t add up. How does blowing up Iraqi children represent a strike against American militarism? How is detonating a bomb on the London Underground a stab at the Foreign Office? It is ridiculous, and more than a little immoral, to try to dress up nihilistic assaults designed merely to kill as many ordinary people as possible as some kind of principled political violence.

We have a tendency to overlook the newness of modern Islamic terrorism, how recent is this emergence of a totally suicidal violence that revels in causing as many casualties as possible. Yes, terrorism has existed throughout the modern era, but not like this. Consider the newness of suicide attacks, of terrorists who destroy themselves as well as their surroundings and fellow citizens. In the 1980s and 1990s, there were an average of one or two suicide attacks a year. Across the whole world. Since the early and mid-2000s [there have been around 300 or 400 suicide attacks a year](#). In 2006 [there were more suicide attacks around the world than had taken place in the entire 20 years previous](#). Terrorists’ focus on killing civilians – the more the better – is also new. If you look at the [20 bloodiest terrorist attacks in human history](#), measured by the number of casualties they caused, you’ll see something remarkable: 14 of them – 14 – took place in the 1990s and 2000s. So in terms of mass death and injury, those terrorist eras of the 1970s and 80s, and also earlier outbursts of anarchist terrorism, pale into insignificance when compared with the new, Islamist-leaning terrorism that has emerged in recent years.

What we have today, uniquely in human history, is a terrorism that seems myopically focused on killing as many people as possible and which has no clear political goals and no stated territorial aims. The question is, why? It is not moral masturbation to ask this question or to point out the peculiarity and perversity of modern Islamist violence. My penny’s worth is that this terrorism speaks to a profound crisis of politics and of morality. Where earlier terrorist groups were restrained both by their desire to appear as rational political actors with a clear goal in mind and by basic moral rules of human behaviour – meaning their violence was often bloody, yes, but rarely focused narrowly on committing mass murder – today’s Islamist terrorists appear to float free of normal political rules and moral compunctions. This is what is so infuriating about the BBC’s refusal to call these groups terrorists – because if anything, and historically speaking, even the term terrorist might be too good for them.

## Daily Beast

### [A Global Slaughter of Christians, but America's Churches Stay Silent](#)

*Christians are being singled out and massacred from Pakistan to Syria to the Nairobi shopping mall. Kirsten Powers on the deafening silence from U.S. pews and pulpits.*

by Kirsten Powers

Christians in the Middle East and Africa are being slaughtered, tortured, raped, kidnapped, beheaded, and forced to flee the birthplace of Christianity. One would think this horror might be consuming the pulpits and pews of American churches. Not so. The silence has been nearly deafening.

As [Egypt's Copts have battled](#) the [worst attacks on the Christian minority](#) since the 14th century, the bad news for Christians in the region keeps coming. On Sunday, [Taliban suicide bombers](#) killed at least 85 worshippers [at All Saints' church](#), which has stood since 1883 in the city of Peshawar, Pakistan. Christians were also the target of Islamic fanatics in [the attack on a shopping center in Nairobi, Kenya](#), this week that killed more than 70 people. The Associated Press reported that the Somali Islamic militant group al-Shabab "confirmed witness accounts that gunmen separated Muslims from other people and let the Muslims go free." The captives [were asked questions about Islam](#). If they couldn't answer, they were shot.



*Pakistanis protest against violence against Christians in Lahore on Sept. 24, 2013*

In Syria, [Christians are under attack](#) by Islamist rebels and fear extinction [if Bashar al-Assad falls](#). This month, rebels overran the historic Christian town of Maalula, where many of its inhabitants speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus. The AFP reported that a [resident of Maalula](#) called her fiancé's cell and was told by member of the Free Syrian Army that they gave him a chance to convert to Islam and he refused. So they slit his throat.

Nina Shea, an international human-rights lawyer and expert on religious persecution, [testified in 2011 before Congress](#) regarding the fate of Iraqi Christians, two-thirds of whom have vanished from the country. They have either been murdered or fled in fear for their lives. Said Shea: "[I]n August 2004 ... five churches were bombed in Baghdad and Mosul. On a single day in July 2009, seven churches were bombed in Baghdad ... The archbishop of Mosul, was kidnapped

and killed in early 2008. A bus convoy of Christian students were violently assaulted. Christians ... have been raped, tortured, kidnapped, beheaded, and evicted from their homes ...”

Lela Gilbert is the author of *Saturday People, Sunday People*, which details the expulsion of 850,000 Jews who fled or were forced to leave Muslim countries in the mid-20th century. The title of her book [comes from an Islamist slogan](#), “First the Saturday People, then the Sunday People,” which means “first we kill the Jews, then we kill the Christians.” Gilbert [wrote recently](#) that her Jewish friends and neighbors in Israel “are shocked but not entirely surprised” by the attacks on Christians in the Middle East. “They are rather puzzled, however, by what appears to be a lack of anxiety, action, or advocacy on the part of Western Christians.”

As they should be. It is inexplicable. American Christians are quite able to organize around issues that concern them. Yet religious persecution appears not to have grabbed their attention, despite worldwide media coverage of the atrocities against Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East.

It’s no surprise that Jews seem to understand the gravity of the situation the best. In December 2011, Britain’s chief rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks, [addressed Parliament](#) saying, “I have followed the fate of Christians in the Middle East for years, appalled at what is happening, surprised and distressed ... that it is not more widely known.” “It was Martin Luther King who said, ‘In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.’ That is why I felt I could not be silent today.”

Yet so many Western Christians are silent. In January, Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA) [penned a letter](#) to 300 Catholic and Protestant leaders complaining about their lack of engagement. “Can you, as a leader in the church, help?” he wrote. “Are you pained by these accounts of persecution? Will you use your sphere of influence to raise the profile of this issue—be it through a sermon, writing or media interview?” There have been far too few takers.

Wolf and Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA) sponsored legislation last year to create a special envoy at the State Department to advocate for religious minorities in the Middle East and South-Central Asia. It passed in the House overwhelmingly, but died in the Senate. Imagine the difference an outcry from constituents might have made. The legislation was reintroduced in January and again passed the House easily. It now sits in the Senate. According to the office of Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO), the sponsor of [the bill](#) there, there is no date set for it to be taken up.

Wolf has complained loudly of the State Department’s lack of attention to religious persecution, but is anybody listening? When American leaders meet with the Saudi government, where is the public outcry demanding they confront the Saudis for fomenting hatred of Christians, Jews, and even Muslim minorities [through their propagandistic tracts and textbooks](#)? In the debate on Syria, why has the fate of Christians and other religious minorities been almost completely ignored?

In his letter challenging U.S. religious leaders, Wolf quoted Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed for his efforts in the Nazi resistance: “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”

That pretty well sums it up.

**Express, UK**

**Laser horror as attempts to blind pilots put UK passengers at risk**

***THOUSANDS of planes coming in to land at Britain's busiest airports are in danger of crashing because pilots are being 'blinded' by laser pen attackers.***

by: Ted Jeory



*These lasers could knock a passenger jet out of the sky*

THOUSANDS of planes coming in to land at Britain's busiest airports are in danger of crashing because pilots are being 'blinded' by laser pen attackers.

Britain's largest pilots' union is so concerned by a recent spate of incidents it has issued an emergency bulletin to members advising them how to avoid being blinded and losing control of their planes.

The British Airline Pilots' Association (Balpa) now wants the law changed so anyone caught in possession of the higher powered lasers without a "legitimate reason" to be jailed.

"Slaps on wrists and £150 fines are not enough - custodial sentences should be the norm," a spokesman said yesterday.

Most of the attacks are on large commercial jets, but even military planes carrying injured troops home from Afghanistan to hospitals in the Midlands have been targeted.

Police helicopters chasing criminals over densely populated areas are also regularly hit.

In most cases the beams are being shone by mindless youths, but pilots and security experts worry terrorists could also use them.

The incidents are all contained in official reports logged with the Civil Aviation Authority and obtained by the Sunday Express.

Planes are being struck at the rate of five times a day by beams from high intensity laser pens that can be bought online from as little as £12.

The more powerful products emit bright green beams and cost about £400, with a range of up to 200 miles.

Operated by standard batteries, they are usually used as presentational aids by teachers and lecturers, but retailers also sell the more powerful devices to astronomers and construction site workers.

One online retailer, MegalaserUK, which sells “hundreds a year” warns “they are not toys” but boasts: “The Hi-tec lasers are unreal.

“Its immense power of 500mW (milliwatt) or 800mW housed in a beautifully styled aircraft grade alloy has to be seen to be believed.

“They will light a match in a fraction of a second, melt plastics with ease and has the most incredibly bright beam you are ever likely to see.

“They are so powerful that they have to be sold with a safety system and has a unique built in cooling system.”

Videos are shown on its website to prove its claims.

Prospective buyers must tick a box agreeing not to shine the rays in the direction of aircraft or within two miles of an airport.

However, Balpa believes this is not nearly enough.

It and the Civil Aviation Authority warn that a jet could crash.

Last year, 1,570 laser attack incidents were logged with the CAA and in 2011 the figure was 1,911.

The beams have been spotted coming from moving cars, houses and hotels.

Each incident is reported to the police but arrests and prosecutions are rare.

It has been an issue with pilots for several years, but July and August saw an alarming spike in the number of attacks on commercial jets.

Entire pages of the CAA logs are littered with the phrase “green laser attack”.

Airports at Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, the East Midlands, Bristol, Heathrow and Gatwick all feature prominently.

The airlines affected are not disclosed.

One Boeing 737 approaching Birmingham Airport on August 1 filed five separate reports.

British planes are also being targeted at foreign airports.

Cairo Airport in Egypt appears to be a particular problem, with one Boeing 767 carrying up to 250 Britons was hit "in excess of 100 times" by a green laser on July 28.

Several incidents have also been reported at the country's Red Sea tourist destination Sharm el Sheikh.

Even military aircraft are vulnerable.

On May 4, 2011, a transporter plane carrying injured British troops from Afghanistan was hit by a green laser as it made its final approach to Birmingham airport.

In September that year, two other military planes were targeted.

One flying at 4,000ft was struck near Birmingham, while a fortnight later a plane at 2,000ft was targeted as it came in to land.

This month, Balpa issued a new alert to pilots and explained what to do if hit.

It wrote: "A recent spate of incidents in the UK involving lasers directed at landing aircraft is evidence that they continue to be a threat to aviation.

"In August several aircraft operating into Gatwick, Liverpool and East Midlands were illuminated with a strong laser by persons on the ground, whilst flying visual approaches.

"Although fortunately no direct eye contact with the beam was made, the potential for a temporary loss of vision was very real and the results could have been much worse."

It added: "It is possible that a laser successfully aimed at the flight deck will be presaged by unsuccessful attempts to do so; these will be seen as extremely bright flashes coming from the ground and/or visible in the sky near the aircraft.

"Treat these flashes as a warning you are about to be targeted and prepare to shield the eyes.

"Do not look in the direction of any suspicious light. Do not rub the eyes.

"If the other front seat pilot has not been affected, he or she should immediately assume or maintain control of the aircraft.





*A bright green light from a £12 laser could temporarily 'blind' a pilot*

“Manoeuvre to block the laser, if possible and subject to air traffic control.

“If on approach, consider a go-around.”

Balpa believes the law on the use of lasers needs strengthening.

While it has been a specific criminal offence to shine a laser at an aircraft since 2010, pilots argue they are too easily available.

In Australia use of the more powerful lasers is banned, but in Britain they are only removed from sale if the laser’s wavelengths are considered unsafe.

Balpa spokesman Richard Toomer said: “Laser attacks on aircraft are a growing problem.

“They are incredibly dangerous.

“We believe it is time for the Government to look seriously at the criminalisation of the possession of high powered lasers for those without a legitimate reason to have one.

“We believe the police need the power to confiscate these weapons, and the judiciary need to better realise the danger involved.

“Slaps on wrists and £150 fines are not enough; custodial sentences should be the norm.”

A CAA spokesman said: “Being dazzled and temporarily blinded by an intense light could potentially lead to flight crew losing control of the aircraft.”

MegalasersUK boss Shane Michael said he had passed trading standards tests and sells a “few hundred” laser pens a year.

He said he he sold only to adults, but added: “They could be banned at any time, especially if idiots keep shining them at planes.

“It’s like anything. People who sell knives aren’t responsible if they’re then used as



IF A TREE FALLS IN A  
NATIONAL FOREST  
AND THERE'S NO RANGER  
ON DUTY TO HEAR IT...

©2013  
MRC.org/BMI  
Dist. by King Features



DOES IT MAKE  
A DIFFERENCE ?

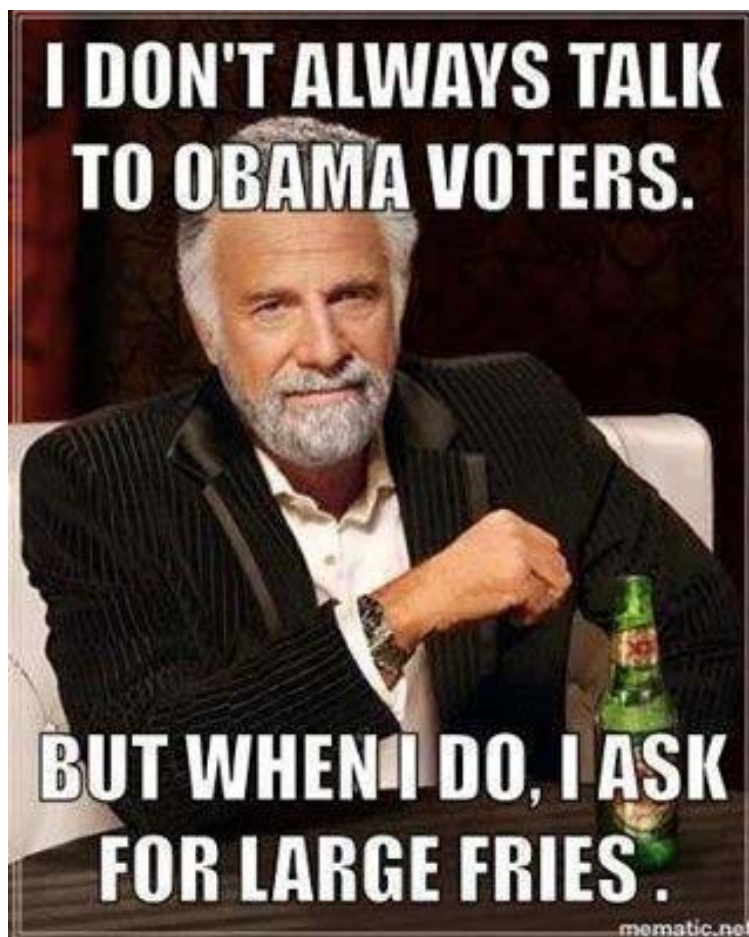
TODAY'S SCHEDULE:

9 AM: NEGOTIATE WITH SYRIA  
10 AM: TALK WITH IRAN  
11 AM: BOMB REPUBLICANS





www.investors.com/cartoons



If you build anything, they will come.

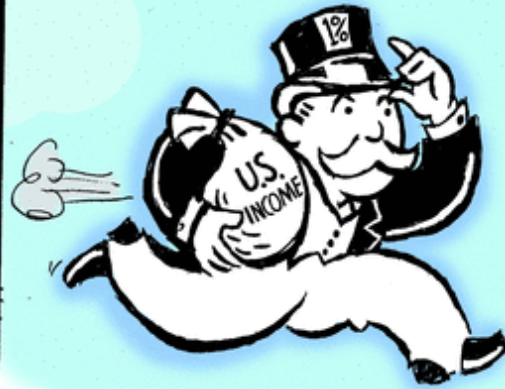


©TerrellAfterMath.com

## MAKERS



## TAKERS



MIKE LUCKENICH 12-22-12  
ALANNA JOHNSON-CHESTERMAN @ALZ.GPT