

November 21, 2013

We're so busy looking at the administration's domestic train wreck, their train wreck in the Middle East is overlooked. We'll correct that today. Craig Pirrong, the Streetwise Professor is first.

It gets better and better. And by better and better I mean worse and worse. And by "it", I mean the rubbing of the American nose in the manure pile in the Middle East. The Saudis flip out on us. Then Bibi flips out on us. (Quite an accomplishment to get the Saudis and Israelis on the same page.)

And now the Egyptians host a Russian naval vessel for the first time since 1992. Moreover, the Egyptians, who can't even afford a pot to pee in (as my grandfather used to say), are looking to buy \$4 billion in arms from Putin. Obviously the Egyptians are sending a message to Obama. ...

Spengler says Putin gets it and we don't.

Middle East politics amounts to managing the decline of a failed culture. Nothing expresses Arab failure more vividly than Egypt, a banana republic without the bananas, now living on a \$14 billion or so annual subsidy from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States. With 70% of its population living in agricultural areas, it imports half its food, and would starve if not for the Saudi check. '

Egypt is beyond the point of no return economically, and American foreign policy is beyond the point of no return intellectually. Americans of both parties—Obama and Kerry on one side, and Sens. McCain and Graham along with the Weekly Standard on the other—believed that by waving the magic wand of democracy over this cataclysmically failed state, all would be well. I characterized this consensus as "Dumb and Dumber" earlier this year.

The outcome, of course, is that Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov turned up in Cairo this week to hear his Egyptian counterpart declare that America's erstwhile Arab ally wants to restore Russian-Egyptian relations to their level during the Soviet era—when Egypt was an enemy. As the Jerusalem Post summed up the mess:

"The more persistent the denials, the clearer it is that a marked shift is taking place in international ties that until recently bound the world's single superpower with the most populous Arab state. The Russian ministerial visits were preceded by a visit by the chief of Russian intelligence and by Russian naval vessels.

More important, the visits by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu involve a major sale to Egypt of sophisticated Russian military hardware – clearly a counter move to the American halting of weapons supplies." ...

Caroline Glick takes no prisoners.

What happened in Geneva last week was the most significant international event since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The collapse of the Soviet Union signaled the rise of the United States as the sole global superpower. The developments in the six-party nuclear talks

with Iran in Geneva last week signaled the end of American world leadership.

Global leadership is based on two things – power and credibility. The United States remains the most powerful actor in the world. But last week, American credibility was shattered.

Secretary of State John Kerry spent the first part of last week lying to Israeli and Gulf Arab leaders and threatening the Israeli people. He lied to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and the Saudis about the content of the deal US and European negotiators had achieved with the Iranians.

Kerry told them that in exchange for Iran temporarily freezing its nuclear weapons development program, the US and its allies would free up no more than \$5 billion in Iranian funds seized and frozen in foreign banks.

Kerry threatened the Israeli people with terrorism and murder – and so invited both – if Israel fails to accept his demands for territorial surrender to PLO terrorists that reject Israel's right to exist.

Kerry's threats were laced with bigoted innuendo.

He claimed that Israelis are too wealthy to understand their own interests. If you don't wise up and do what I say, he intoned, the Europeans will take away your money while the Palestinians kill you. Oh, and aside from that, your presence in the historic heartland of Jewish civilization from Jerusalem to Alon Moreh is illegitimate. ...

Paul Mirengoff of Power Line demonstrates how Israel is being kept in the dark. ... *the evidence supports Israel's complaint that the U.S. kept Israel in the dark about the deal it was negotiating. Kerry gave the game away when he rejected Israeli criticism of the deal he was negotiating on the grounds that Israel did not know the details. He thus contradicted his assurances that Israel was being fully and continuously apprised of the negotiations.*

Not a clever man, that John Kerry.

Friends don't treat friends this way. But Obama is not now, and has never been, a friend of Israel.

This is the state of play as Obama and Kerry prepare to press ahead with a deal on a matter of existential importance to Israel and mainly PR importance to a foundering administration.

A Civil War historian shares his appreciation for the power of **Lincoln's Gettysburg Address**.

The surprisingly short story of the Gettysburg Address is that it was a surprisingly short speech — 270 words or so — delivered by Abraham Lincoln as part of the dedication ceremonies for the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg, on Nov. 19, 1863, four and a half months after the climactic battle of the American Civil War.

But the long story is that no single American utterance has had the staying power, or commanded the respect and reverence, accorded the Gettysburg Address. It has been engraved (on the south wall of the Lincoln Memorial), translated (in a book devoted to nothing but translations of the address), and analyzed in at least nine book-length critical studies over the last century.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow put down his morning paper's report of the address and wrote to his publisher that "Lincoln's brief speech at Gettysburg ... seems to me admirable." Longfellow's friend Charles Sumner wrote, "Since Simonides wrote the epitaph for those who died at Thermopylae, nothing equal to them has ever been breathed over the fallen dead." He added: "The world noted at once what he said, and will never cease to remember it. The battle itself was less important than the speech."

What is less clear to us today is why it struck so many people as a landmark from the start. Partly, this instant recognition of the address's power grew out of its language. It obeys the Churchillian dictum: Short words are best, and the old words when short are best of all. The address relies on crisp, plain vocabulary, over against the three-decker Latinate lexicon beloved of so many 19th-century school textbooks. Of some 270 words — there's no recording — about two-thirds are single-syllable, and a half-dozen, four-syllable. Rarely has so much been compressed into such simple and uncomplicated elements.

The Onion says someone is trapped in the healthcare website.

According to an urgent report issued today by the White House, a terrified and frantic President Obama is currently trapped inside the healthcare.gov website.

Early reports indicate the president inadvertently became physically enmeshed in the inner workings of the online health insurance exchange at approximately 11:48 a.m. this morning, and is at this very moment attempting to find any possible means of escape from the highly unstable and dangerous healthcare.gov internal network.

"Please, if anyone can hear me, I need help!" said Obama, his voice reportedly echoing endlessly in the distance as he carefully stepped along a green grid of individual and family enrollment information. "Is anyone there? Can anyone hear me? I'm Barack Obama, President of the United States of America! I need to get out of here!" ...

Late night from **Andrew Malcolm**.

Leno: *A new world record today in the 100 meters. Set by Congressional Democrats running away from ObamaCare.*

Fallon: *Homeland Security reports dozens of hacking tries on the ObamaCare website. But they didn't get in. Obama says, "When you do get in, please let us know how you did it."*

Leno: *ObamaCare's failures now reach members of Congress. Harry Reid just got a letter from his mortician canceling his embalming fluid coverage.*

Fallon: *On an Amtrak ride recently, Joe Biden runs into Whoopi Goldberg, asks her, "What's it like making millions of Americans laugh every day?" Whoopi says, "I was gonna ask you the same thing."*

Streetwise Professor The Weakest Horse

by Craig Pirrong

It gets better and better. And by better and better I mean worse and worse. And by "it", I mean the rubbing of the American nose in the manure pile in the Middle East. The Saudis flip out on us. Then Bibi flips out on us. (Quite an accomplishment to get the Saudis and Israelis on the same page.)

And now the [Egyptians host a Russian naval vessel for the first time since 1992](#). Moreover, the Egyptians, who can't even afford a pot to pee in (as my grandfather used to say), [are looking to buy \\$4 billion in arms from Putin](#). Obviously the Egyptians are sending a message to Obama.

Yeah. That hurried Kerry visit to Cairo sure worked magic, eh?

The US has always been the object of hatred in the Middle East, but the president who orated in Cairo promising to enhance American prestige in the region has made our nation even more widely hated, not that I would have thought that possible. In Egypt-the location of his allegedly transformational Cairo speech-Obama has turned the amazing trick of making the US hated by Islamists, secularists, and militarists. It's the only thing all Egyptians agree on. That's our Obama. Bringing people together.

What's worse, he's made the US an object of ridicule and derision.

[Machiavelli famously asked whether it was better for a prince to be loved than feared](#). He concluded that it would be best to be both, but that since that was unlikely, it was better to be feared than loved.

The Middle East is as Machiavellian a place as exists today. Obama's Quixotic foreign policy-faithfully represented by his Sancho Panza, aka John Kerry-has resulted in the worst of all outcomes in such a place: to be hated and not just not feared, but to be actually ridiculed and despised as an unreliable ally and craven and cowardly enemy.

Obama reveled in killing Osama. But he has given life to one of Osama's most notable observations: "When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature they will like the strong horse."

Everybody in the Middle East-and the Russians too-see the US as a weak horse. Hell, not even a horse. A donkey-or an ass-is more like it.

This cannot end well.

Spengler

Putin Gets It and We Don't

by David P. Goldman

Middle East politics amounts to managing the decline of a failed culture. Nothing expresses Arab failure more vividly than Egypt, a banana republic without the bananas, now living on a \$14 billion or so annual subsidy from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States. With 70% of its population living in agricultural areas, it imports half its food, and would starve if not for the Saudi check. ‘

Egypt is beyond the point of no return economically, and American foreign policy is beyond the point of no return intellectually. Americans of both parties—Obama and Kerry on one side, and Sens. McCain and Graham along with the Weekly Standard on the other—believed that by waving the magic wand of democracy over this cataclysmically failed state, all would be well. I characterized this consensus as “[Dumb and Dumber](#)” earlier this year.

The outcome, of course, is that Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov turned up in Cairo this week to hear his Egyptian counterpart declare that America’s erstwhile Arab ally wants to restore Russian-Egyptian relations to their level during the Soviet era—when Egypt was an enemy. As the [Jerusalem Post](#) summed up the mess:

The more persistent the denials, the clearer it is that a marked shift is taking place in international ties that until recently bound the world’s single superpower with the most populous Arab state. The Russian ministerial visits were preceded by a visit by the chief of Russian intelligence and by Russian naval vessels.

More important, the visits by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu involve a major sale to Egypt of sophisticated Russian military hardware – clearly a counter move to the American halting of weapons supplies.

The Egyptians are essentially saying that they can shop elsewhere and not have to shell out cash. According to reliable reports, another exasperated American ally, Saudi Arabia, is footing the bill for this transaction to the tune of \$4b. The Russians may receive additional compensation in the form of access for their navy to port facilities on the Mediterranean.

Like it or not, this smacks of a return – if not fully in substance then at least in appearance – to the days of the Cold War when Egypt enjoyed unstinting Soviet support, enabling Moscow and Cairo to thumb their noses at Washington.

Vladimir Putin gets it, and we don’t. He backs the Assad regime in Syria against Saudi-supported rebels. He is cracking down ruthlessly on Muslim terrorists in the Russian Caucasus, using Stalin-era forms of [collective punishment](#). Nonetheless Riyadh is footing a \$4 billion bill for Egypt to buy Russian arms.

The Saudi monarchy is fighting for survival, against Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood organized on the model of 20th-century totalitarian parties, and against Iran. Iran is fighting for survival; after its fertility rate fell from 7 children per female in 1979 to just 1.7 today, today’s youth bulge will turn into an unsupportable elderly dependent ratio. Egypt is fighting to pay the grocer’s bill every day. It is not within America’s or anyone’s power to reverse this decline. Putin understands this and exploits their struggle for survival. I have advocated a [Richelovian](#) foreign

policy on behalf of American interests; now we watch helplessly as Russia pursues such a policy in its own interest. Fair is fair: Putin has more brains and insight than anyone in the American foreign policy establishment, and he is winning by laps rather than lengths. I have no objection to the ritual denunciations of Russia in the conservative media, but a bit of reflection on why Russia runs circles around us might also be in order.

Last month I heard George W. Bush address a large Jewish gathering. He complained about the growing isolationist mood in America. Does it occur to him, or to the punditeska that egged on his “freedom agenda,” that the source of isolationism is the utter failure of our utopian efforts in the Middle East and revulsion at their human and economic costs?

Power Line

Behind the latest Obama-Netanyahu clash

by Paul Mirengoff

President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu are at odds these days. Nothing new about that.

But this time, as [Robert Satloff](#) of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy says, the fight is serious.

When Obama tries to bully Netanyahu into making concessions to the Palestinian Authority, it's disturbing but not alarming. Netanyahu knows how to maintain control over the process and can count on Palestinian intransigence to bail him out, if it comes to that.

But in the case of Iran, only France, for now, stands in the way of an unacceptable deal on what for Israel is an existential matter.

What specific differences are at the core of the current Obama-Netanyahu dispute? Satloff identifies three.

First, Obama appears to have dropped his longstanding demand that Iran fulfill its U.N. Security Council obligation to suspend all enrichment activity. Indeed, Israel worries that ending enrichment is no longer the goal of the negotiations.

Second, Israel fears that the enormous leverage created by the sanctions regime is about to be squandered. Such would be the case if negotiations fail to roll back Iran's enrichment capability and/or fail to deal with Iran's Arak plant, which provides the regime with an alternative path to developing nukes.

Third, as a matter of process, Israel complains that the U.S. kept it in the dark on the details of the Geneva negotiations.

Are Israel's grievances meritorious? Satloff thinks so. He finds no evidence that Obama is pressing Iran for full implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions requiring the suspension of enrichment. Indeed, this demand is now derided as “maximalist”. But without suspension, any deal will leave Iran with a breakout capacity.

As for sanctions, the administration argues that leverage is not being squandered because relief at the first stage will be quite limited. But Satloff points out, as we have, that even small scale relief could easily undermine the sanctions regime.

Sanctions, he notes, are only as strong as their weakest link. Once a deal has been reached, nations eager to profit from dealing with Iran might well take this as their cue to end sanctions altogether. In fact, this might occur anyway now that Obama has cast Israel as the villain in his so far unsuccessful quest for a “reasonable” deal.

Finally, the evidence supports Israel’s complaint that the U.S. kept Israel in the dark about the deal it was negotiating. Kerry gave the game away when he rejected Israeli criticism of the deal he was negotiating on the grounds that Israel did not know the details. He thus contradicted his assurances that Israel was being fully and continuously apprised of the negotiations.

Not a clever man, that John Kerry.

Friends don’t treat friends this way. But Obama is not now, and has never been, a friend of Israel.

This is the state of play as Obama and Kerry prepare to press ahead with a deal on a matter of existential importance to Israel and mainly PR importance to a foundering administration.

Jerusalem Post

The demise of Pax Americana

The US remains the most powerful actor in the world. But last week, American credibility was shattered.

by Caroline Glick

What happened in Geneva last week was the most significant international event since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The collapse of the Soviet Union signaled the rise of the United States as the sole global superpower. The developments in the six-party nuclear talks with Iran in Geneva last week signaled the end of American world leadership.

Global leadership is based on two things – power and credibility. The United States remains the most powerful actor in the world. But last week, American credibility was shattered.

Secretary of State John Kerry spent the first part of last week lying to Israeli and Gulf Arab leaders and threatening the Israeli people. He lied to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and the Saudis about the content of the deal US and European negotiators had achieved with the Iranians.

Kerry told them that in exchange for Iran temporarily freezing its nuclear weapons development program, the US and its allies would free up no more than \$5 billion in Iranian funds seized and frozen in foreign banks.

Kerry threatened the Israeli people with terrorism and murder – and so invited both – if Israel fails to accept his demands for territorial surrender to PLO terrorists that reject Israel’s right to exist.

Kerry's threats were laced with bigoted innuendo.

He claimed that Israelis are too wealthy to understand their own interests. If you don't wise up and do what I say, he intoned, the Europeans will take away your money while the Palestinians kill you. Oh, and aside from that, your presence in the historic heartland of Jewish civilization from Jerusalem to Alon Moreh is illegitimate.

It is hard to separate the rise in terrorist activity since Kerry's remarks last week from his remarks.

What greater carte blanche for murder could the Palestinians have received than the legitimization of their crimes by the chief diplomat of Israel's closest ally? Certainly, Kerry's negotiating partner Catherine Ashton couldn't have received a clearer signal to ratchet up her economic boycott of Jewish Israeli businesses than Kerry's blackmail message, given just two days before the 75th anniversary of Kristallnacht.

Kerry's threats were so obscene and unprecedented that Israeli officials broke with tradition and disagreed with him openly and directly, while he was still in the country. Normally supportive leftist commentators have begun reporting Kerry's history of anti-Israel advocacy, including his 2009 letter of support for pro-Hamas activists organizing flotillas to Gaza in breach of international and American law.

As for Kerry's lies to the US's chief Middle Eastern allies, it was the British and the French who informed the Israelis and the Saudis that far from limiting sanctions relief to a few billion dollars in frozen funds, the draft agreement involved ending sanctions on Iran's oil and gas sector, and on other industries.

In other words, the draft agreement exposed Washington's willingness to effectively end economic sanctions against Iran in exchange for Iran's agreement to cosmetic concessions that will not slow down its nuclear weapons program.

Both the US's position, and the fact that Kerry lied about that position to the US's chief allies, ended what was left of American credibility in the Middle East. That credibility was already tattered by US fecklessness in Syria and support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

True, in the end, Kerry was unable to close the deal he rushed off to Geneva to sign last Friday.

Of course, it wasn't Iran that rejected the American surrender. And it wasn't America that scuttled the proposal. It was France. Unable to hide behind American power and recognizing its national interest in preventing Iran from emerging as a nuclear armed power in the Middle East, France vetoed a deal that paved the way a nuclear Iran.

Kerry's failure to reach the hoped-for deal represented a huge blow to America, and a double victory for Iran. The simple fact that Washington was willing to sign the deal – and lie about it to its closest allies – caused the US to lose its credibility in the Middle East. Even without the deal, the US paid the price of appeasing Iran and surrendering leadership of the free world to France and Israel.

Just by getting the Americans to commit themselves to reducing sanctions while Iran continues

its march to a nuclear weapon, Iran destroyed any remaining possibility of doing any serious non-military damage to Iran's plans for nuclear weaponry. At the same time, the Americans boosted Iranian credibility, endorsed Iranian power, and belittled Israel and Saudi Arabia – Iran's chief challengers in the Middle East. Thus, Iran ended Pax Americana in the Middle East, removing the greatest obstacle in its path to regional hegemony. And it did so without having to make the slightest concession to the Great Satan.

As Walter Russell Mead wrote last week, it was fear of losing Pax Americana that made all previous US administrations balk at reaching an accord with Iran. As he put it, "Past administrations have generally concluded that the price Iran wants for a different relationship with the United States is unsustainably high. Essentially, to get a deal with Iran we would have to sell out all of our other allies. That's not only a moral problem. Throwing over old allies like that would reduce the confidence that America's allies all over the world have in our support."

The Obama administration just paid that unsustainably high price, and didn't even get a different relationship with Iran.

Most analyses of what happened in Geneva last week have centered on what the failure of the talks means for the future of Obama's foreign policy.

Certainly Obama, now universally reviled by America's allies in the Middle East, will be diplomatically weakened. This diplomatic weakness may not make much difference to Obama's foreign policy, because appeasement and retreat do not require diplomatic strength.

But the real story of what happened last week is far more significant than the future of Obama's foreign policy. Last week it was America that lost credibility, not Obama. It was America that squandered the essential component of global leadership. And that is the watershed event of this young century.

States act in concert because of perceived shared interests. If Israel and Saudi Arabia combine to attack Iran's nuclear installations it will be due to their shared interest in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear arsenal. But that concerted action will not make them allies.

Alliances are based on the perceived longevity of the shared interests, and that perception is based on the credibility of international actors.

Until Obama became president, the consensus view of the US foreign policy establishment and of both major parties was that the US had a permanent interest in being the hegemonic power in the Middle East. US hegemony ensured three permanent US national security interests: preventing enemy regimes and terror groups from acquiring the means to cause catastrophic harm; ensuring the smooth flow of petroleum products through the Persian Gulf and the Suez Canal; and demonstrating the credibility of American power by ensuring the security of US allies like Israel and Saudi Arabia. The third interest was an essential foundation of US deterrence of the Soviets during the Cold War, and of the Chinese over the past decade.

Regardless of who was in the White House, for the better part of 70 years, every US government has upheld these interests. This consistency built US credibility, which in turn enabled the US to throw its weight around.

Obama departed from this foreign policy consensus in an irrevocable manner last week. In so

doing, he destroyed US credibility.

It doesn't matter who succeeds Obama. If a conservative internationalist in the mold of Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy or Ronald Reagan is elected in 2016, Obama's legacy will make it impossible for him to rebuild the US alliance structure. US allies will be willing to buy US military platforms – although not exclusively.

They will be willing to act in a concerted manner with the US on a temporary basis to advance specific goals.

But they will not be willing to make any longterm commitments based on US security guarantees.

They will not be willing to place their strategic eggs in the US basket.

Obama has taught the world that the same US that elected Truman and formed NATO, and elected George H.W. Bush and threw Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, can elect a man who betrays US allies and US interests to advance a radical ideology predicated on a rejection of the morality of American power. Any US ally is now on notice that US promises – even if based on US interests – are not reliable. American commitments can expire the next time America elects a radical to the White House.

Americans uninterested in surrendering their role as global leader to the likes of Tehran's ayatollahs, Russia's KGB state and Mao's successors, must take immediate steps mitigate the damage Obama is causing. Congress could step in to clip his radical wings.

If enough Democrats can be convinced to break ranks with Obama and the Democratic Party's donors, Congress can pass veto-proof additional sanctions against Iran. These sanctions can only be credible with America's spurned allies if they do not contain any presidential waiver that would empower Obama to ignore the law.

They can also take action to limit Obama's ability to blackmail Israel, a step that is critical to the US's ability to rebuild its international credibility.

For everyone from Anwar Sadat to South American democrats, for the past 45 years, America's alliance with Israel was a central anchor of American strategic credibility. The sight of America standing with the Jewish state, in the face of a sea of Arab hatred, is what convinced doubters worldwide that America could be trusted.

America's appalling betrayal of Jerusalem under Obama likewise is the straw that has broken the back of American strategic credibility from Taipei to Santiago. If Congress is interested in rectifying or limiting the damage, it could likewise remove the presidential waiver that enables Obama to continue to finance the PLO despite its involvement in terrorism and continued commitment to Israel's destruction. Congress could also remove the presidential waiver from the law requiring the State Department to move the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Finally, Congress can update its anti-boycott laws to cover new anti-Israel boycotts and economic sanctions against the Jewish state and Jewish-owned Israeli companies.

These steps will not fully restore America's credibility.

After all, the twice-elected president of the United States has dispatched his secretary of state to threaten and deceive US allies while surrendering to US foes. It is now an indisputable fact that the US government may use its power to undermine its own interests and friends worldwide.

What these congressional steps can do, however, is send a message to US allies and adversaries alike that Obama's radical actions do not represent the wishes of the American people and will not go unanswered by their representatives in Congress.

NY Times

Lincoln's Sound Bite: Have Faith in Democracy

by Allen C. Guelzo

The surprisingly short story of the Gettysburg Address is that it was a surprisingly short speech — 270 words or so — delivered by Abraham Lincoln as part of the dedication ceremonies for the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg, on Nov. 19, 1863, four and a half months after the climactic battle of the American Civil War.

But the long story is that no single American utterance has had the staying power, or commanded the respect and reverence, accorded the Gettysburg Address. It has been engraved (on the south wall of the Lincoln Memorial), translated (in a book devoted to nothing but translations of the address), and analyzed in at least nine book-length critical studies over the last century.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow put down his morning paper's report of the address and wrote to his publisher that "Lincoln's brief speech at Gettysburg ... seems to me admirable." Longfellow's friend Charles Sumner wrote, "Since Simonides wrote the epitaph for those who died at Thermopylae, nothing equal to them has ever been breathed over the fallen dead." He added: "The world noted at once what he said, and will never cease to remember it. The battle itself was less important than the speech."

What is less clear to us today is why it struck so many people as a landmark from the start. Partly, this instant recognition of the address's power grew out of its language. It obeys the Churchillian dictum: Short words are best, and the old words when short are best of all. The address relies on crisp, plain vocabulary, over against the three-decker Latinate lexicon beloved of so many 19th-century school textbooks. Of some 270 words — there's no recording — about two-thirds are single-syllable, and a half-dozen, four-syllable. Rarely has so much been compressed into such simple and uncomplicated elements.

The address is also memorable because, frankly, it is short on length, too, enough to be easily memorized. Lincoln had been invited to deliver only "a few appropriate remarks" as a kind of benediction. The formal oration at the ceremonies was to be delivered by Edward Everett — former congressman, governor of Massachusetts, president of Harvard, secretary of state (under President Millard Fillmore), senator (briefly) and, most recently and most ironically, candidate for vice president in 1860 on the ticket of the short-lived Constitutional Union Party, running against Lincoln.

If we want to see what classical speech in 19th-century America looked like, Everett is the man. He delivered a two-hour-plus, 13,000-word doozy, reminding the thousands who crowded

around the speakers' platform in the new cemetery that "it was appointed by law in Athens, that the obsequies of the citizens who fell in battle should be performed at the public expense, and in the most honorable manner," that the fallen occupied a place alongside those "who fell at Marathon," that (in Horace's maxim) "it is sweet and becoming to die for one's country," and that (in the words of Pericles) "the whole earth is the sepulchre of illustrious men."

But Everett was all length and no sound bite. At the end, there was little alternative but to report the whole oration, word for word, or simply forget it.

Lincoln's strong suit, on the other hand, was his capacity to capture an idea in the fewest and clearest words possible. So, in the address, he describes the past and what it did (create a republic of equal citizens), then relates what the people at the ceremonies are doing in the present (dedicating a cemetery), and then moves to what they are to do for the future (dedicate themselves to the same principles the soldiers were dedicated to). In that way, the address is almost anorexic: It makes no mention of slavery or secession or the Constitution, paints no picture of the great battle, and even fails to acknowledge the civilian politicians — David Wills of Gettysburg, Andrew G. Curtin, the governor of Pennsylvania — who had made the purchase of the cemetery acreage possible.

Yet, for all of its famous brevity, the Gettysburg Address is not so simple or compact as it seems. It may be only 270 words long, but those words are woven into 10 complicated sentences — all more cumbersome to parse on the page than to hear in the open. And Lincoln does not mind throwing compactness to the wind when he wants to make a lilting impression on the ear. In fact, the well-known repetitive triplets — "we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground" and "government of the people, by the people, for the people" — are the exact opposite of compactness and constitute a puzzling luxury if we consider the address only as a terse alternative to Everett's.

The address is less like an oration, and more like that oldest of American genres, the Puritan jeremiad, the public sermon that warned our forebears of their sins but also offered them a path to redemption. The three-part, past-present-future movement in the address matches the same movement in the jeremiad, and like it, the address contains both a word of warning and a promise of blessing.

The warning Lincoln issues is his admission that the Civil War was testing whether or not democracies are inherently unstable — "whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure." Today, many take democracy for granted as the endpoint of political development. But it did not look that way in 1863. The French Revolution, which promised to be the American Revolution's beachhead in Europe, swiftly circled downward in the Reign of Terror and then the tyranny of Bonaparte; democratic uprisings in Spain in 1820, in Russia in 1825, in France in 1830 and across Europe in 1848 were crushed by newly reascent monarchies or subverted by Romantic philosophers, glorying in regimes built on blood, soil and nationality rather than the Rights of Man.

The outbreak of the American Civil War only gave the monarchs further reason to rejoice. The survival of the American democracy had been a thorn in their royal sides, unsettling their downtrodden peoples with dreams of self-government. That this same troublesome democracy would, in 1861, obligingly proceed to blow its own political brains out — and do it in defense of the virtues of human slavery — gave the monarchs no end of delight.

Lincoln's task at Gettysburg was to persuade his hearers, on the evidence offered by three days of battle, that democracy's sun had not set after all. Gettysburg was not only a victory, but a victory won with the Union Army's back to the wall, and its news came, appropriately, on July 4.

Above all, the victory was the product of self-sacrifice — 3,155 Union dead, 14,529 wounded and 5,365 “missing,” rivaling British and Allied losses at Waterloo. These casualties were not professional soldiers, Wellington's “scum of the earth” who had taken their shilling and their chance together, nor were they dispirited peasants, driven into battle by the whips of their betters, but precisely those ordinary citizens whom the cultured despisers of democracy had laughingly doubted could ever be made to do anything but calculate profit and loss.

Looking out over the semicircular rows of graves, Lincoln saw in them a transcendence that few people, then or now, have been willing to concede to liberal democracy. And he saw something all could borrow, a renewed dedication to popular self-government, “that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion.” Like the jeremiad, it would point toward a renewal, a new birth, not of freedom from sin, but political freedom.

The genius of the address thus lay not in its language or in its brevity (virtues though these were), but in the new birth it gave to those who had become discouraged and wearied by democracy's follies, and in the reminder that democracy's survival rested ultimately in the hands of citizens who saw something in democracy worth dying for. We could use that reminder again today.

Allen C. Guelzo, professor of the Civil War era at Gettysburg College, is the author, most recently, of “Gettysburg: The Last Invasion.”

The Onion

[Terrified Obama Trapped Inside Healthcare.gov Website](#)



White House sources say the president is currently enmeshed in the digital fabric of the healthcare.gov site itself.

WASHINGTON—According to an urgent report issued today by the White House, a terrified and frantic President Obama is currently trapped inside the healthcare.gov website.

Early reports indicate the president inadvertently became physically enmeshed in the inner workings of the online health insurance exchange at approximately 11:48 a.m. this morning, and is at this very moment attempting to find any possible means of escape from the highly unstable and dangerous healthcare.gov internal network.

“Please, if anyone can hear me, I need help!” said Obama, his voice reportedly echoing endlessly in the distance as he carefully stepped along a green grid of individual and family enrollment information. “Is anyone there? Can anyone hear me? I’m Barack Obama, President of the United States of America! I need to get out of here!”

“Oh, dear God, there has to be a way out,” continued Obama, ducking as several lines of text guaranteeing coverage for preexisting conditions flew just inches above his head. “There *has* to be.”

According to reports, Obama has spent the last few hours stranded in a dark, seemingly infinite three-dimensional insurance matrix made entirely of programming code, scrolling ones and zeroes, and indecipherable information about government subsidies, and has as yet been unable to locate a safe exit from the digital infrastructure of healthcare.gov itself.

White House sources have confirmed that Obama is both alone and intensely frightened, and that the president may at this moment be endangered by the complicated, twisting data fields of healthcare.gov, as well as the terabytes of random eligibility notifications and policy cost estimations shooting in all directions.

Further reports have warned that any hope of extracting the president from the online marketplace may already be lost.

“This isn’t right,” said Obama, staring as enrollment information for millions of Americans was sucked into a growing cone-shaped vacuum in the middle of the healthcare.gov dimensional plane. “Why is it doing this?”

“The mainframe,” the president quickly added as hundreds of policy cancellations erupted from the swirling vortex. “I need to get to the health care exchange mainframe.”

Reports confirmed that after finally forcing his way past the dense clusters of programming language tangled in the healthcare.gov help page, Obama finally reached a complicated system of virtual pipelines sending information about spouses and dependents directly into a pulsating golden orb. Upon reaching his hand into the orb, the president was said to be transported directly into the heart of healthcare.gov’s online marketplace.

Obama was then reportedly horrified to find himself inside a crumbling software framework, surrounded by a chaotic array of randomly scattered premiums, out-of-pocket charges, and collapsed open enrollment architecture.

“Goddammit, I don’t know what to do!” Obama said, banging his hands in frustration against a wall of binary as the entire healthcare.gov mainframe suddenly froze, forcing all previously flowing lines of code to come to a complete standstill. “I can’t fix this! Get me out of this place!”

“Please! Just get me out of here!” Obama added as the data grid below his feet shattered into millions of infinitesimal pixels and he plummeted into an infinite void of lost health care coverage.

At press time, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius had assured reporters that engineers are working around the clock to free the president from the healthcare.gov site by the beginning of December. 🟩

IBD

Late Night Humor

by Andrew Malcolm

Fallon: Cornell scientists create a robot that can hold a knife. Or as robots will tell their grandkids, "That is when the revolution began."

Conan: Climate change talks in Poland focus on China, world’s biggest polluter. May get awkward tomorrow, when China buys Poland.

Leno: A new world record today in the 100 meters. Set by Congressional Democrats running away from ObamaCare.

Fallon: Venezuela's Gabriela Isler was crowned the new Miss Universe. So, Earth did it again! We DOMINATED this Miss Universe thing.

Fallon: Here’s the great thing about the new Duck Dynasty wines. After you drink five bottles, you begin to understand what they’re saying on the show.

Fallon: On an Amtrak ride recently, Joe Biden runs into Whoopi Goldberg, asks here, “What’s it like making millions of Americans laugh every day?” Whoopi says, “I was gonna ask you the same thing.”

Fallon: The New York Giants with their fourth straight win last weekend. Shows, if you work hard and really believe in yourself, eventually you'll play a team that's even worse than you.

Leno: Blockbuster has announced it’s closing the last 300 stores. The day after the store called to say my VHS copy of "Titanic" was in.

Leno: The Obama White House is reportedly considering a civilian to head the NSA. If you’re interested in applying, no need for a resume. The agency has all your info already.

Leno: It was 59 years ago that Ellis Island closed after processing more than 20 million immigrants. Long boat rides, Endless lines. Before anyone realized it was so much easier to get in through Mexico.

Letterman: Evil Russian President Putin will visit Pope Francis. The Pontiff better be careful, the Russian will steal his ring.

Letterman: So Russian President Putin will visit Pope Francis. Right about now, Putin is picking out a shirt he won't wear to the meeting.

Conan: Wal-Mart announced that this Thanksgiving it's opening earlier than ever before. Because what better way to celebrate the Pilgrims' arrival in America than buying crap made in China.

Conan: Many scam artists are trying to take advantage of the problems with the ObamaCare website. Here's how you can tell it's a scam site: If you enter your information, and it quickly and efficiently signs you up for health care.

Fallon: ObamaCare is desperately emailing thousands to try new website again, adding "But one at a time, please. So it doesn't crash."

Fallon: 'Dancing With the Stars' viewership is down this year. When they asked the judges for their scores this week, even they said, "Didn't see it." "Wasn't watching." "Missed it."

Fallon: 'Dancing With the Stars' is trying anything to boost ratings. In fact, I heard they might even try adding celebrities to the show..

Fallon: The FDA is warning men to be careful with fake male enhancement medicines. Besides not working, they can be very dangerous. That warning raises a lot of questions, starting with "Like, how dangerous?"

Fallon: Facebook is trying to keep people interested. Trying a new tool to ease celebrity chats with fans. I think they got a name for this. It's called "Twitter."

Fallon: Kim Kardashian was ticketed while speeding due to paparazzi. She wasn't trying to AVOID the paparazzi. She was chasing them. "Over here, guys!"

Leno: Obama met with American Indian tribal leaders. Promised them, "If you like your medicine man, you can keep your medicine man."

Leno: ObamaCare's failures now reach members of Congress. Harry Reid just got a letter from his mortician canceling his embalming fluid coverage.

Leno: More than one million Californians are losing their health insurance under ObamaCare. Many are so angry they've already gone back to Mexico.

Letterman: 'Murder, She Wrote' the popular old show is returning. On NBC. Takes place in Cabot Cove, Maine, murder capital of the world. No one dies naturally there.

Fallon: Homeland Security reports dozens of hacking tries on the ObamaCare website. But they didn't get in. Obama says, "When you do get in, please let us know how you did it."

Fallon: Now, 46% of CIA employees are women. Explains its new torture tactic: The Silent Treatment.





