

December 8, 2013

**Max Boot** with a look at Nelson Mandela and how he kept South Africa from becoming Zimbabwe.

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*This is not, needless to say, the norm. Much more common are insurgents like Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro, Mugabe, Kim Il Sung, and (fill in the blank) who, while posturing as freedom fighters battling an evil dictatorship, swiftly become dictators in turn as soon as they seize power. The exceptions to that rule are some of the greatest figures of modern history—the likes of George Washington, Michael Collins, David Ben-Gurion, and, most recently, Nelson Mandela.*

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*... Mandela's example is a ringing endorsement of what is derisively known as the "great man school of history"—the notion that influential individuals make a huge difference in how events turn out. He certainly made a difference, and for the better. He will go down as one of the giants of the second half of the twentieth century along with Reagan, Thatcher, Deng Xiaoping, Lech Walesa, and Pope John Paul II.*

**Charles Krauthammer** on the thanklessness of being allied with the U. S.

*Three crises, one president, many bewildered friends.*

*The first crisis, barely noticed here, is Ukraine's sudden turn away from Europe and back to the Russian embrace.*

*After years of negotiations for a major trading agreement with the European Union, Ukraine succumbed to characteristically blunt and brutal economic threats from Russia and abruptly walked away. Ukraine is instead considering joining the Moscow-centered Customs Union with Russia's fellow dictatorships Belarus and Kazakhstan.*

*This is no trivial matter. Ukraine is not just the largest European country, it's the linchpin for Vladimir Putin's dream of a renewed imperial Russia, hegemonic in its neighborhood and rolling back the quarter-century advancement of the "Europe whole and free" bequeathed by America's victory in the Cold War.*

*The U.S. response? Almost imperceptible. As with Iran's ruthlessly crushed Green Revolution of 2009, the hundreds of thousands of protesters who've turned out to reverse this betrayal of Ukrainian independence have found no voice in Washington. Can't this administration even rhetorically support those seeking a democratic future, as we did during Ukraine's Orange Revolution of 2004? ...*

**Telegraph, UK** with another foreign disaster. This time Venezuela.

*Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has insisted that a massive electricity blackout which plunged much of the country into darkness on Monday was the work of Right wing saboteurs hoping to influence the outcome of key municipal elections this weekend.*

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**Power Line** says another demagogue is complaining about wreckers.

*There is a disturbing undercurrent in Obama's campaign-style speech on behalf of Obamacare at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building today. Obama never credits opponents of the law with the substance of their criticism. He does not attribute decent motives or good faith opposition to them. Rather, he treats them as "wreckers" (as they were deemed in the Soviet Union) guilty of destructive thought crime:*

*"Now, we may never satisfy the law's opponents. I think that's fair to say. Some of them are rooting for this law to fail — that's not my opinion, by the way, they say it pretty explicitly. (Laughter.) Some have already convinced themselves that the law has failed, regardless of the evidence. But I would advise them to check with the people who are here today and the people that they represent all across the country whose lives have been changed for the better by the Affordable Care Act."*

*Mr. President, We trump your beneficiaries with the millions of citizens whose lives have already been blighted by Obamacare!*

And **Power Line** says the young are getting restless.

*Just about the only good I could ever see in the election of Barack Obama was the near inevitability that the young voters who helped elect him would become disillusioned. These voters had been trending leftward so vigorously that more than just the slow aging process seemed necessary to reverse the movement. An Obama presidency always seemed likely to supply the "more."*

*And so, finally, it has. From Ron Fournier of the National Journal:*

*Young Americans are turning against Barack Obama and Obamacare, according to a new survey of millennials, people between the ages of 18 and 29 who are vital to the fortunes of the president and his signature health care law.*

*The most startling finding of Harvard University's Institute of Politics: A majority of Americans under age 25—the youngest millennials—would favor throwing Obama out of office.*

*It looks like the young and the restless take their buyer's remorse seriously.*

*But this is not the only striking finding of the Harvard survey: ...*

**Peter Wehner** says obama's nothing but a community organizer after all.

*... the president is betting that three weeks of his speeches, spin, and PR events will undo the damage; that his reassuring words and assault on the GOP will make up for his epic governing incompetence.*

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*The problem Mr. Obama faces isn't a communications failure; it's a facts-on-the-ground failure. He is the author and architect of a perfectly awful law. A few clever lines delivered from an increasingly unpopular and discredited president won't make any difference. The public is both turning on the president and tuning him out.*

*Americans are tired of Mr. Obama; and they are tired of the pain and trauma, the ineptness and dishonesty, of his presidency.*

*Maybe he was just a Chicago community organizer after all.*

**Jonathan Tobin** doesn't think a PR offensive will cure the healthcare bill.

*Today the White House returns to what it does best. Unfortunately, that isn't governing; it's campaigning. So after two months of a disastrous ObamaCare rollout, instead of sitting down and figuring out the implications of a bill that still aren't fully understood and why the healthcare.gov website is still not fully functional, the president is about to hit the road in full campaign mode to sell the country on the bill's benefits and blaming all of its problems on Republicans. The point of this new push is public relations, not policy. The administration has been flummoxed by its inability to control the ObamaCare narrative after the website didn't work and the nation discovered that the president's promises about people keeping their insurance and doctors if they liked them proved to be a lie. So their answer is to go back to their strengths that won the 2012 election: captivating the nation with the magic of Obama's personality and scapegoating the GOP.*

*Will it work? Anyone who underestimates the president's still potent powers of persuasion is making a mistake. It's also probably foolish to think that the mainstream media that has gone off the reservation in recent months won't respond to Obama's planned three-week-long dog-and-pony show as they always did before he was mired in a spate of second-term scandals and*

*disasters. But the problem with the administration's strategy is that recasting the ObamaCare narrative will require more than a good public-relations strategy. So long as the website doesn't work, millions are losing their coverage and being faced with higher costs and with the implications of the new insurance landscape still a question for the majority of Americans who are covered by their employers, a few presidential speeches and events highlighting the minority that will undoubtedly benefit from the bill won't change the narrative. ..*

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## Contentions

### The Character of Nelson Mandela

by Max Boot

While traveling around the country promoting my last book, [\*Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present\*](#), I was often asked which insurgents I admired the most. The answer is those insurgents who have fought relatively humanely and, most important of all, once they have seized power have governed wisely and democratically and shown a willingness to give up power when the time came to do so.

This is not, needless to say, the norm. Much more common are insurgents like Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro, Mugabe, Kim Il Sung, and (fill in the blank) who, while posturing as freedom fighters battling an evil dictatorship, swiftly become dictators in turn as soon as they seize power. The exceptions to that rule are some of the greatest figures of modern history—the likes of George Washington, Michael Collins, David Ben-Gurion, and, most recently, Nelson Mandela.

I can remember growing up in the 1980s when there was widespread suspicion among conservatives in the U.S.—including many in the Reagan administration—that if the African National Congress were to take over, South Africa would be transformed into another dysfunctional dictatorship like the rest of the continent. That this did not come to pass was due to many reasons including F.W. de Klerk's wisdom in giving up power without a fight.

But the largest part of the explanation for why South Africa is light years ahead of most African nations—why, for all its struggles with high unemployment, crime, corruption, and other woes, it is freer and more prosperous than most of its neighbors—is the character of Nelson Mandela. Had he turned out to be another Mugabe, there is every likelihood that South Africa would now be on the same road to ruin as Zimbabwe. But that did not happen because Mandela turned out to be, quite simply, a great man—someone who could spend 27 years in jail and emerge with no evident bitterness to make a deal with his jailers that allowed them to give up power peacefully and to avoid persecution.

Mandela knew that South Africa could not afford to nationalize the economy or to chase out the white and mixed-raced middle class. He knew that the price of revenge for the undoubted evils that apartheid had inflicted upon the majority of South Africans would be too high to pay—that the ultimate cost would be borne by ordinary black Africans. Therefore he governed inclusively and,

most important of all, he voluntarily gave up power after one term when he could easily have proclaimed himself president for life.

The (not unexpected) tragedy for South Africa is that Mandela's successors, Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, have not been men of his caliber: Mbeki, the previous president, was a colorless technocrat who could not inspire his people or face head-on the challenge of AIDS; Zuma, the current president, is a rabble-rouser who has been accused of numerous improprieties from rape to corruption. Their struggles and that of the ANC bureaucracy they preside over only place in starker relief the transcendent genius and sheer goodness of Nelson Mandela.

His example should dispel any illusions, so popular in the historical profession, that history is made by impersonal forces. Mandela's example is a ringing endorsement of what is derisively known as the "great man school of history"—the notion that influential individuals make a huge difference in how events turn out. He certainly made a difference, and for the better. He will go down as one of the giants of the second half of the twentieth century along with Reagan, Thatcher, Deng Xiaoping, Lech Walesa, and Pope John Paul II.

## Washington Post

### Woe to U.S. allies

by Charles Krauthammer

Three crises, one president, many bewildered friends.

The first crisis, barely noticed here, is Ukraine's sudden turn away from Europe and back to the Russian embrace.

After years of negotiations for a major trading agreement with the European Union, [Ukraine succumbed](#) to characteristically blunt and brutal economic threats from Russia and abruptly walked away. Ukraine is instead considering joining the Moscow-centered Customs Union with Russia's fellow dictatorships Belarus and Kazakhstan.

This is no trivial matter. Ukraine is not just the largest European country, it's the linchpin for Vladimir Putin's dream of a [renewed imperial Russia](#), hegemonic in its neighborhood and rolling back the quarter-century advancement of the "Europe whole and free" bequeathed by America's victory in the Cold War.

The U.S. response? Almost imperceptible. As with Iran's ruthlessly crushed [Green Revolution of 2009](#), the hundreds of thousands of protesters who've turned out to reverse this betrayal of Ukrainian independence have found no voice in Washington. Can't this administration even rhetorically support those seeking a democratic future, as we did during Ukraine's Orange Revolution of 2004?

A [Post online headline explains](#): "With Russia in mind, U.S. takes cautious approach on Ukraine unrest." We must not offend Putin. We must not jeopardize Obama's precious "reset," a farce that has yielded nothing but the well-earned distrust of allies such as Poland and the Czech Republic whom we wantonly undercut in a vain effort to appease Russia on missile defense.

Why not outbid Putin? We're talking about a \$10 billion to \$15 billion package from Western economies with more than \$30 trillion in GDP to alter the strategic balance between a free Europe and an aggressively authoritarian Russia — and prevent a barely solvent Russian kleptocracy living off oil, gas and vodka, from blackmailing its way to regional hegemony.

The second crisis is the Middle East — the collapse of confidence of U.S. allies as America romances Iran.

The [Gulf Arabs are stunned](#) at their double abandonment. In the nuclear negotiations with Iran, the U.S. has overthrown [seven years of Security Council resolutions](#) prohibiting uranium enrichment and effectively recognized Iran as a threshold nuclear state. This follows our near-abandonment of the Syrian revolution and de facto recognition of both the Assad regime and Iran's "Shiite Crescent" of client states stretching to the Mediterranean.

Equally dumbfounded are the Israelis, now trapped by an agreement designed less to stop the Iranian nuclear program than to prevent the Israeli Air Force from stopping the Iranian nuclear program.

Neither Arab nor Israeli can quite fathom Obama's naivete in imagining some strategic condominium with a regime that defines its very purpose as overthrowing American power and expelling it from the region.

Better diplomacy than war, say Obama's apologists, an adolescent response implying that all diplomacy is the same, as if a diplomacy of capitulation is no different from a diplomacy of pressure.

What to do? Apply pressure. Congress should immediately pass punishing new sanctions to be implemented exactly six months hence — when the current interim accord is supposed to end — if the Iranians have not lived up to the agreement and refuse to negotiate a final deal that fully liquidates their nuclear weapons program.

The third crisis is unfolding over the East China Sea, where, in open challenge to Obama's "pivot to Asia," China has brazenly declared a [huge expansion of its airspace](#) into waters claimed by Japan and South Korea.

Obama's first response — [sending B-52s through that airspace](#) without acknowledging the Chinese — was quick and firm. [Japan and South Korea followed suit](#). But when Japan then told its civilian carriers not to comply with Chinese demands for identification, the State Department (and FAA) told [U.S. air carriers to submit](#).

Which, of course, left the Japanese hanging. It got worse. During Vice President Biden's visit to China, the [administration buckled](#). Rather than insisting on a withdrawal of China's outrageous claim, we began urging mere nonenforcement.

Again leaving our friends stunned. They need an ally, not an intermediary. Here is the U.S. again going over the heads of allies to accommodate a common adversary. We should be declaring the Chinese claim null and void, ordering our commercial airlines to join Japan in acting accordingly, and supplying them with joint military escorts if necessary.

This would not be an exercise in belligerence but a demonstration that if other countries unilaterally overturn the status quo, they will meet a firm, united, multilateral response from the West.

Led by us. From in front.

No one's asking for a [JFK-like commitment](#) to "bear any burden" to "assure the . . . success of liberty." Or a Reaganesque tearing down of walls. Or even a Clintonian assertion of America as the indispensable nation. America's allies are seeking simply a reconsideration of the policy of retreat that marks this administration's response to red-line challenges all over the world — and leaves them naked.

**Telegraph, UK**

**[Nicolas Maduro says he has proof Venezuela blackout was Right wing sabotage](#)**

***Leftist leader claims 'fascist' opponents cut power line in order to destabilise country ahead of this weekend's municipal elections***

by Hannah Strange



*Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro*

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has insisted that a massive electricity blackout which plunged much of the country into darkness on Monday was the work of Right wing saboteurs hoping to influence the outcome of key municipal elections this weekend.

The leftist leader claimed to have proof that a deliberately severed cable was the cause of the power outage which hit 10 states and brought chaos to Caracas, drawing accusations of government incompetence from the opposition.

In an address on national television, Mr Maduro briefly showed images of what appeared to be a cut conductor cable lying on the grass - though it was unclear where the photos were taken.

"What motive could there be for leaving a whole country without electricity?" he said. "Whoever made this criminal attack wanted to leave our Venezuela without electricity for 24 to 48 hours ... thinking that would convince people not to continue with the revolution."

"We always face these attacks by the Right-wing fascists ... they wanted to make me, as president of the republic, decree a state of emergency and suspend the elections."

Despite sitting on the world's largest oil reserves, Venezuela suffers frequent blackouts, a problem opponents blame on poor maintenance and government mismanagement of infrastructure and the economy during 15 years of socialist "revolution". Mr Maduro and his predecessor, the late Hugo Chavez, have often blamed opposition sabotage for the difficulty keeping the lights on in the deeply polarized country.

Sunday's municipal elections are viewed as a referendum on Mr Maduro's first 10 months in office, and come amid a worsening economic crisis with soaring inflation and severe shortages of basic goods.

In an effort to combat the situation, Mr Maduro has sent soldiers into electrical goods stores to force price cuts, ordered caps on profits as well as new measures to combat the black market in dollars and announced an early handout of public sector Christmas bonuses.

On Monday, as the power cut struck, he was announcing new restrictions on the anachronistically high prices of second hand cars - another attempt to rein in rampant inflation in a country where restrictions on imports and the dollars needed to pay for them have led to used vehicles commanding higher prices than new ones.

But it is unclear whether such moves will be enough to stem the predicted losses for the government on Sunday. Mr Maduro won the race to succeed Mr Chavez following his death from cancer by just two percent in April.

## **Power Line**

### **Wreckers of the world, unite**

by Scott Johnson

There is a disturbing undercurrent in Obama's [campaign-style speech](#) on behalf of Obamacare at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building today. Obama never credits opponents of the law with the substance of their criticism. He does not attribute decent motives or good faith opposition to them. Rather, he treats them as "wreckers" (as they were deemed in the Soviet Union) guilty of destructive thought crime:



Now, we may never satisfy the law's opponents. I think that's fair to say. Some of them are rooting for this law to fail — that's not my opinion, by the way, they say it pretty explicitly. (Laughter.) Some have already convinced themselves that the law has failed, regardless of the evidence. But I would advise them to check with the people who are here today and the people that they represent all across the country whose lives have been changed for the better by the Affordable Care Act.

Mr. President, We trump your beneficiaries with the millions of citizens whose lives have already been blighted by Obamacare!

Obama proceeded to single out Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell:

Just the other day, the Republican Leader in the Senate was asked what benefits people without health care might see from this law. And he refused to answer, even though there are dozens in this room and tens of thousands in his own state who are already on track to benefit from it. He just repeated "repeal" over and over and over again. And obviously we've heard that from a lot of folks on that side of the aisle.

Obama must have a subliminal urge to help McConnell become Senate Majority Leader.

## Power Line

### [The young and the restless](#)

by Paul Mirengoff

Just about the only good I could ever see in the election of Barack Obama was the near inevitability that the young voters who helped elect him would become disillusioned. These voters had been trending leftward so vigorously that more than just the slow aging process seemed necessary to reverse the movement. An Obama presidency always seemed likely to supply the "more."

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The most startling finding of Harvard University's Institute of Politics: A majority of Americans under age 25—the youngest millennials—would favor throwing Obama out of office.

It looks like the young and the restless take their buyer's remorse seriously.

But this is not the only striking finding of the Harvard survey:

Obama's approval rating among young Americans is just 41 percent, down 11 points from a year ago, and now tracking with all adults. While 55 percent said they voted for Obama in 2012, only 46 percent said they would do so again.

Millennials are also less than thrilled with Obamacare:

According to the poll, 57 percent of millennials disapprove of Obamacare, with 40 percent saying it will worsen their quality of care and a majority believing it will drive up costs. Only 18 percent say Obamacare will improve their care. Among 18-to-29-year-olds currently without health insurance, less than one-third say they're likely to enroll in the Obamacare exchanges.

Is this because they don't like being forced to subsidize health care for the old and sick or because Obamacare turned out not to be cool, what with the messed up website and all? The poll doesn't tell us.

It does report that more than two-thirds of millennials said they heard about the ACA through the media. Normally that would be good news for Obamacare, but not with a product this messed up.

Disillusioned millennials aren't flocking to the Republican party, though. Only 24 percent consider themselves Republicans.

So where, politically speaking, will they go? Perhaps many of them will stay home on election day for a few cycles. That wouldn't be so bad given how stupidly they rallied around our snake oil salesman president, Mr. Hope and Change.

Perhaps in a few years they will take a fresh and more mature look at the political landscape, a look informed by adult responsibilities and their unhappy fling with Barack Obama. That wouldn't be so bad either.

## Contentions

### [It Turns Out Obama Was Nothing But a Community Organizer All Along](#)

Peter Wehner

It's fitting that on the same day President Obama's latest health-care offensive began, the *Washington Post* featured a [story](#) on its front page reporting that that healthcare.gov is making frequent enrollment errors affecting up to *one-third* of the people who have signed up for the health plans since October 1. The mistakes include failure to notify insurers about new customers; duplicate enrollments or cancellation notices for the same person; incorrect information about family members; and mistakes involving federal subsidies.

This comes on top of the fact that we've learned that officials at the Department of Health and Human Services warned in September that the security of the site had not been properly tested before it opened, creating "a high risk," and that online security experts are [warning](#) that it could take a year to secure the risk of "high exposures" of personal information on the federal ObamaCare online exchange.

And you can add to all this rising costs for premiums and deductibles and the fact that due to the Affordable Care Act, around five million people have lost their private health insurance, with estimates that as many as 80 million people with employer health plans could find their coverage canceled next year because they are not compliant with the ACA.

Yet the president is betting that three weeks of his speeches, spin, and PR events will undo the damage; that his reassuring words and assault on the GOP will make up for his epic governing incompetence.

This is a delusional hope.

The problem Mr. Obama faces isn't a communications failure; it's a facts-on-the-ground failure. He is the author and architect of a perfectly awful law. A few clever lines delivered from an increasingly unpopular and discredited president won't make any difference. The public is both turning on the president and tuning him out.

Americans are tired of Mr. Obama; and they are tired of the pain and trauma, the ineptness and dishonesty, of his presidency.

Maybe he was just a Chicago community organizer after all.

## Contentions

### The ObamaCare PR Reset Won't Work

by Jonathan S. Tobin

Today the White House returns to what it does best. Unfortunately, that isn't governing; it's campaigning. So after two months of a disastrous ObamaCare rollout, instead of sitting down and figuring out the implications of a bill that still aren't fully understood and why the healthcare.gov website is still not fully functional, [the president is about to hit the road](#) in full campaign mode to sell the country on the bill's benefits and blaming all of its problems on Republicans. The point of this new push is public relations, not policy. The administration has been flummoxed by its inability to control the ObamaCare narrative after the website didn't work and the nation discovered that the president's promises about people keeping their insurance and doctors if they liked them proved to be a lie. So their answer is to go back to their strengths that won the 2012 election: captivating the nation with the magic of Obama's personality and scapegoating the GOP.

Will it work? Anyone who underestimates the president's still potent powers of persuasion is making a mistake. It's also probably foolish to think that the mainstream media that has gone off the reservation in recent months won't respond to Obama's planned three-week-long dog-and-pony show as they always did before he was mired in a spate of second-term scandals and disasters. But the problem with the administration's strategy is that recasting the ObamaCare narrative will require more than a good public-relations strategy. So long as the website doesn't work, millions are losing their coverage and being faced with higher costs and with the implications of the new insurance landscape still a question for the majority of Americans who are covered by their employers, a few presidential speeches and events highlighting the minority that will undoubtedly benefit from the bill won't change the narrative.

Up until the last couple of months, both Democrats and Republicans had assumed that once the benefits to the poor started flowing from ObamaCare the popularity of this new example of government largesse would make the bill untouchable. Thus, the president believes that all he

needs to do to turn back the page to where we were before October is to spend enough time and energy highlighting those who stand to gain from the plan.

That seems to make sense, especially when you assume, as he clearly does, that as long as he is out in front of the camera speaking, the press and public opinion will be in his pocket. Surely, if the White House works hard enough to put on a saleable production starring the 44th president accompanied by those with hard luck stories designed to pluck at the nation's heartstrings, there should be no problem in diverting attention from the website. And if that is combined with a full-court press aimed at blaming ObamaCare's problems on an obstructionist and unpopular Republican Party, White House strategists are sure that their current problems will soon be overcome if not completely forgotten.

But there are serious problems with this plan that the president isn't taking into account.

First is that the assumption about the bill's ultimate popularity is an enormous miscalculation. Unlike Social Security and Medicare, the two great entitlement expansions to which ObamaCare is most often compared and which benefited most Americans and hurt almost none, this bill is creating a large number of losers along with a relatively small population of winners. The presidential lie about people keeping their coverage and doctors wasn't merely a bad choice of language or a mistake. It was an attempt to finesse the fact that ObamaCare is fundamentally a redistributionist measure that would reward some but penalize others. Three weeks of presidential speeches and attempts to highlight the winners won't convince the losers that they are better off.

Just as importantly, going into campaign mode won't change the fact that the president's credibility has been severely, if not fatally, damaged by the lies he told to get the bill passed. That problem can be finessed by the White House and even walked back to some extent. But they are ignoring the fact that once a president's mendacity has been exposed in this manner, his credibility can't be recaptured. At this point, presidential salesmanship should be regarded as a depreciating asset rather than a magic political bullet.

Nor can the president rely on his familiar whipping boys to dig him out of the hole he has dug for himself on health care. It may be that Republicans remain even more unpopular than the Democrats and that the familiar narrative about obstructionism still has some traction. But blaming the GOP for sabotaging ObamaCare is a thesis so patently absurd that even most of the liberal media has trouble swallowing it.

After all, it was not the Republicans who designed the healthcare.gov website. Nor can it be asserted that it is their fault that after two months, it is still not fully functional. They also have been mere bystanders as administration promises that it will work continue to be proved false. This week's proclamation from the White House that the website is now functional was another easily disproved assertion since its back end—the element that allows people to actually purchase the insurance—is still a work in progress. Nor is it likely that most Americans will blame Republicans for being right all along about their claims that the government is incompetent to run health care and that the president's promises have been based on untruths. Indeed, the GOP calls for delaying the implementation of the bill that were decried as extremist back in September during the government shutdown controversy are now seen as prescient and are being adopted, piece by piece, by the administration.

Democrats assume that once the president gets back on his old message, all their problems will disappear. But merely hitting the reset button on the same arguments used when the bill was passed despite the opposition of most Americans won't be enough. The negative impact of ObamaCare on the health-care coverage of many Americans and on the economy in general is just starting to be felt. Three weeks of dog-and-pony shows won't change that or allow Democrats to go into 2014 with the same confidence they had only a few months ago.



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