

February 20, 2014

James Delingpole writes on Mark Steyn's court case.

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Obviously a libel trial is not something any sane person would wish to court; and naturally I'm a massive fan of Steyn's. Nevertheless, after all the work I've dedicated over the years to goading Mann, I found it a bit bloody annoying that Steyn — a relative latecomer to the climate change debate — should have been the one who ended up stealing all my courtroom glory.

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Instead, what do I read? Crap like, 'Steyn's out of order: he shouldn't have been so rude about the judge who mishandled the initial hearing.' (OK, maybe he shouldn't — but what are you supposed to say about judges who mishandle your case? 'Nice job, ma'am?') ..

Jennifer Rubin posts on the disaster the president has crafted with his moves in Syria. *It must be maddening spinning for the White House. The White House says Obamacare is fine, so the media spinners parrot that again and again — until the White House admits all is not well. The White House insist the president never promised you can keep your health care, so the spinners repeat that one — until the White House sort of apologizes. You do wonder if the pundits ever get tired of being hung out to dry.*

Nowhere is the lunacy of the spin more evident than on Syria. You had a flock of liberals declaring the president's about-face on Syria's weapons of mass destruction was a brilliant move and he'd been right to insist we have no interests there. And then, three years after conservatives demanded stronger action against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the president declares himself "frustrated." (Oh, and the WMD deal isn't really disarming Assad, just as conservative hawks predicted.) I suppose it really has been a disaster all along.

The disaster, of course, is the president's. It was his insistence on doing nothing — over the objections at various times of Hillary Clinton, John Kerry, Robert Gates and Leon Panetta — that

has brought us to this sorry state of affairs. As a former Republican official put it, "This rests entirely on his shoulders."

Notwithstanding, we should not absolve aides and advisers of all responsibility here. ABC's Jonathan Karl mused that Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power is "haunted" by the debacle. He reminds us that her whole career was built on making an argument about the responsibility to protect when you have a crisis like this. And now she's saying, it's the biggest crisis in a generation and the United States is effectively doing nothing. Well, she could have quit. That is what people of principle do in order to call attention to a disastrous and immoral policy. But if that's personally untenable because the lure of power is too great, she should be "haunted" by the atrocities unfolding on her watch. ...

Michael Barone issues a challenge over mandatory minimum sentences. If they're so unjust, why doesn't the president issue pardons?

... So I tend to agree with Judge Ponsor when he laments that "defendants sentenced before the [2010 Fair Sentencing Act] was passed still languish today, serving out sentences that virtually all members of Congress now recognize as excessive." This is indeed an anomaly and seems unjust.

But I disagree sharply with his next sentence. "And there is not a darn thing anyone can do about it." But there is someone who can do something about it, even in Congress does not follow the judge's suggestion and pass a law scaling back those sentences.

That person is President Obama. The president can pardon any offender and he can also commute part of a sentence, as George W. Bush did when he commuted Scooter Libby's jail term but declined to extend a full pardon.

Obama's rewriting of the Obamacare law is constitutionally dubious; there is a serious argument that he has not been performing his constitutional duty to faithfully execute the law. But the Constitution is clear in giving the president the "Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offenses against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment" (Article II, Section 2).

Unless my constitutional interpretation is way off, the president could commute the sentences of all or some of those serving time under sentences that could no longer be imposed under the 2010 law, which Judge Ponsor hails and which President Obama signed.

There is a "darn thing" someone could do about the anomaly Judge Ponsor cites. He sits in the Oval Office, where the buck supposedly stops. Perhaps someone should ask him about it.

Oliver Stone normally turns to students seeking affirmation from the immature. This failed recently when he visited a conference of libertarians. **John Fund** with the story. ... Stone began by trying to make what he must have thought was an outreach to the audience by resurrecting and agreeing with the Old Right chestnut that "Roosevelt lied us into World War II." He followed that up with highly personal criticism of Obama — claiming, in effect, that the president has been brainwashed by his national-security advisers into becoming pro-war. "The man stunned us with a lack of spine, he's a weak man," he mourned.

Many of the students agreed with panel's general criticism of America's military commitments. One noted that America still has 54,000 troops in Germany and 39,000 troops in Japan a full 70 years after World War II and a full 25 years after Communism's collapse. But then a spirited group of Latin American students attending the panel decided to directly challenge Stone's left-wing support for Latin dictators from Fidel Castro to Hugo Chávez.

Two months before Chávez's death last year, Stone praised him on CNN, declaring with a straight face: "He represents hope and change, the things that Obama stood for in our country in 2008." This past Thursday, in anticipation of the event, the Latin American students published an "Open Letter to Oliver Stone" that declared: ...

So while hospitals in India are cutting into the work of U. S. brain surgeons, other Indians are after the rocket scientists. The NY Times reports on India's launch and subsequent control of a mission to orbit Mars. Most amazing is the price tag; just about one tenth of our latest Mars probe.

While India's recent launch of a spacecraft to Mars was a remarkable feat in its own right, it is the \$75 million mission's thrifty approach to time, money and materials that is getting attention.

Just days after the launch of India's Mangalyaan satellite, NASA sent off its own Mars mission, five years in the making, named Maven. Its cost: \$671 million. The budget of India's Mars mission, by contrast, was just three-quarters of the \$100 million that Hollywood spent on last year's space-based hit, "Gravity."

"The mission is a triumph of low-cost Indian engineering," said Roddam Narasimha, an aerospace scientist and a professor at Bangalore's Jawaharlal Nehru Center for Advanced Scientific Research.

"By excelling in getting so much out of so little, we are establishing ourselves as the most cost-effective center globewide for a variety of advanced technologies," said Mr. Narasimha.

India's 3,000-pound Mars satellite carries five instruments that will measure methane gas, a marker of life on the planet. ...

Late Night from Andy Malcolm.

Conan: Billy Ray Cyrus has come out with a hip-hop version of 'Achy Breaky Heart.' Experts say it's the first time in music history that fans of hip-hop and country have hated the same thing.

Fallon: Congratulations to my buddy Charlie Sheen. He's marrying for the fourth time. Charlie said, "I just know this is the woman I'm going to be with for the rest of my February."

Conan: Boston Market offered a free dessert to couples. So she may be disappointed you took her to Boston Market on Valentine's Day. But when she left halfway through the meal, you got two free desserts!

The Spectator, UK

The martyrdom of Mark Steyn

I envied him for getting sued by Michael Mann. But now he needs all the support we can give.

by James Delingpole



When I first read, many months ago, that the notorious US climate scientist Michael Mann was suing the notorious right-wing bastard Mark Steyn for defamation, I admit that I felt a little piqued.

Obviously a libel trial is not something any sane person would wish to court; and naturally I'm a massive fan of Steyn's. Nevertheless, after all the work I've dedicated over the years to goading Mann, I found it a bit bloody annoying that Steyn — a relative latecomer to the climate change debate — should have been the one who ended up stealing all my courtroom glory.

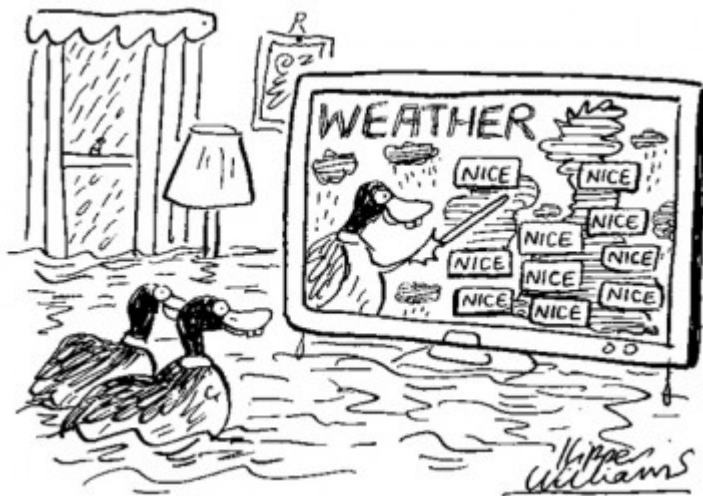
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Instead, what do I read? Crap like, 'Steyn's out of order: he shouldn't have been so rude about the judge who mishandled the initial hearing.' (OK, maybe he shouldn't — but what are you supposed to say about judges who mishandle your case? 'Nice job, ma'am'?) Crap like, 'And he's going to take the *National Review* down with him.' (No he isn't. That's what libel insurance is for.) Crap like, 'Well, he shouldn't have used such-and-such a word or written that polemic in quite so inflammatory and offensive a way.' (Yes that's right. Polemics should be cautious, dry, legalistic, tame. Otherwise people might read them and have their minds changed.)

So let's just cut through that crap and remind ourselves briefly what we know about the plaintiff. Michael Mann was an obscure young physicist-turned-climatologist who rose without trace in 1998 with the publication in *Nature* of his 'hockey stick' chart showing dramatic and apparently unprecedented late-20th-century global warming.



There followed almost instant fame, on which Mann has traded ever since — gaining tenure at Penn State University, drawing millions in public funding for research, often called on by the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* to sum up the state of climate science. Al Gore used a version of Mann's hockey stick in his Oscar-winning *An Inconvenient Truth*. The IPCC used it five times in its Third Assessment Report and promoted Mann to lead author.

But the hockey stick, on which Mann's reputation largely rests, was and is a nonsense. It obliterates the medieval warm period; it is unduly reliant on proxy data — bristlecone pine samples — which are known to be unreliable; it is dependent on a flawed algorithm which, according to every statistical authority who has ever looked at the subject, creates the same hockey-stick data almost regardless of the information you feed into it.

Surely if you're going to sue someone for defamation, this must involve an examination of the reputation said to be worth defending. What would this say about Mann, onlie begetter of arguably the most comprehensively discredited artefact in recent climate science history?

And if Mann's scientific reputation really matters to him so much, maybe he ought first to do a bit of reading on how world-class scientists actually behave. He could do worse than read Paul Johnson's account in *Modern Times* of how Einstein proposed his general theory of relativity. Einstein insisted that before his claims were taken seriously, they must first be verified by empirical observation, in the form of three specific tests. Of the final one — the red shift — Einstein wrote: 'If it were proved that this effect does not exist in nature then the whole theory would have to be abandoned.'

Einstein's rigour and integrity inspired Karl Popper to form his influential theories on falsification: that a scientific theory is only useful if it contains the key to its own destruction. This, critics argue, is the fundamental flaw with anthropogenic global warming theory: it has been couched in such a way as to be unfalsifiable; it is being kept alive not by science and free enquiry, but by the kind of appeals to authority we see exemplified by Mann's response to Steyn's criticisms.

Mann may or may not have a case against Steyn on technical grounds; but in terms of the bigger argument about empiricism, free speech and the scientific method, he doesn't have a leg to stand on. Steyn gets this and — as he did in his case against the Ontario Human Rights Committee — is laying his neck on the line not solely because he's a show-off and an awkward sod but for the greater cause of western civilisation. Now go to his website Steynonline.com and read what you can do to support him.

Right Turn

[Syria will haunt the president and his advisers](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

It must be maddening spinning for the White House. The White House says Obamacare is fine, so the media spinners parrot that again and again — until the White House admits all is not well. The White House insist the president never promised you can keep your health care, so the spinners repeat that one — until the White House sort of apologizes. You do wonder if the pundits ever get tired of being hung out to dry.

Nowhere is the lunacy of the spin more evident than on Syria. You had a flock of liberals declaring the president's about-face on Syria's weapons of mass destruction was a brilliant move and he'd been right to insist we have no interests there. And then, three years after conservatives demanded stronger action against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the president declares himself "frustrated." (Oh, and the WMD deal isn't really disarming Assad, just as conservative hawks predicted.) I suppose it really has been a disaster all along.

The disaster, of course, is the president's. It was his insistence on doing nothing — over the objections at various times of Hillary Clinton, John Kerry, Robert Gates and Leon Panetta — that has brought us to this sorry state of affairs. As a former Republican official put it, "This rests entirely on his shoulders."

Notwithstanding, we should not absolve aides and advisers of *all* responsibility here. ABC's Jonathan Karl mused that Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power is "haunted" by the debacle. He reminds us that her whole career was built on making an argument about the

responsibility to protect when you have a crisis like this. And now she's saying, it's the biggest crisis in a generation and the United States is effectively doing nothing. *Well, she could have quit.* That is what people of principle do in order to call attention to a disastrous and immoral policy. But if that's personally untenable because the lure of power is too great, she *should* be "haunted" by the atrocities unfolding on her watch.

The administration's naiveté — or was it willful blindness? — is quite striking. [Kerry this weekend spoke](#) of the Geneva talks as if it were impossible to predict how badly things could have gone or that Assad would have refused pleas to leave after the United States showed no will to tip the battlefield against him. ("None of us are surprised that the talks have been hard, and that we are at a difficult moment, but we should all agree that the Assad regime's obstruction has made progress even tougher. . . . While it stalled in Geneva, the regime intensified its barbaric assault on its civilian population with barrel bombs and starvation. It has even gone as far as to add some of the opposition delegates at Geneva to a terrorist list and seize their assets.") He called the regime's behavior "reprehensible." Indignation without will to act — that's all he's got.

Assad's continued barbarism and diplomatic stonewalling were perfectly foreseeable, if not inevitable, once President Obama signaled he had no stomach for robust involvement. It is, as Kerry would say, reprehensible that the president pursued a policy so lacking in humanitarian and geopolitical insight for so long — and that so many aides never felt compelled to quit and/or come out publicly to decry the United States' inactivity.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), among the most vigorous opponents of the president on this issue made clear on Sunday, the first step is "to recognize that the policy towards Syria has been an abysmal failure and a disgraceful one, as we have watched these horrendous — what [National Intelligence] Director [James] Clapper said was an apocalyptic situation, particularly in regard to those photos that have now come out. There's 11,000 documented pictures of starvation, beating, torture and murder of men, women and children." He also dismissed the notion that we don't have options: "We have options. The question is whether we will use them or not. After 8,000 people were ethnically cleansed at Srebrenica, Bill Clinton acted. None of us want boots on the ground, but to not revisit other options, which are viable, then I think it is the only thing that we can do. This is shameful. This is shameful what's going on." [He then got into a debate with CNN's Candy Crowley](#), with her presenting the administration's rationalizations for inaction. He batted each one down in succession:

CROWLEY: . . . [W]hat the U.S. fears is that you find a legitimate rebel group, you give them the weaponry, and somehow it ends up really in the hands of those who want to attack the U.S., and it's just a bad idea to put more weaponry in a situation that is already chaotic.

MCCAIN: Isn't it a terrible idea to do nothing? The fact is that we still have a viable opposition. Yes, these foreign fighters, 7,000 of them, foreign fighters are there. 26,000 jihadists. The black flag of al Qaeda is now flying over the city of Fallujah as the Iraq-Syria border becomes a transshipment for and base for al Qaeda. All of these things are far worse than they were three years ago. There are viable options. There is a viable free Syrian army. There are people, who — there's groups that have joined together against these extremists. ISIS, radical al Qaeda extremists that are there. There is still viable opposition that we can help and assist. We can do that, and to do nothing, of course, we'll see a further deterioration and a regionalization of the conflict. . . .

CROWLEY: You know that people are really reluctant to put the U.S. even at the edge of a war in the Middle East. The Middle East has not been a great place for the U.S. to try to help other countries.

MCCAIN: If the president of the United States went on national television and showed those pictures that are on my website that have been released, which are documented, of the horrific things that are being done, the American people at least would be, I think, more willing to help these people. No one is asking for military intervention. There are legitimate groups there. They have succeeded in some areas in fighting back against al Qaeda, by the way, who Bashar Assad is not fighting very hard against. There are viable alternatives inside Syria, but we also have to address the outside influences. . . . The whole region has turned into a regional conflict, and who is behind it? The Russians and the Iranians. While we sit down at the table with them on nuclear weapons, while we talk about the removal of chemical weapons, it has turned into a regional conflict, and the weapons flow in from Russia and the training from Iran and all of it is evolved into the situation that we're in today. Do not believe we are out of options. There are many options if we have the courage to pursue them. . . .

CROWLEY: Do you entertain the possibility that some harm could happen if we increase — more harm could happen if we increased it, helped with military aid?

MCCAIN: More harm could happen? More harm could happen? Candy, with all due respect that's ludicrous. That's ludicrous.

Indeed it is. But it is not just Crowley and the administration who've been saying such ludicrous things. A chunk of the GOP media and House and Senate members have been saying much the same thing. Will they also admit error — and reevaluate the moral and strategic failure of insisting we retrench around the world?

Examiner

[If mandatory minimums are unjust, why doesn't the president commute such sentences?](#)

by Michael Barone

Have you ever read an opinion article with which you're in general agreement but find yourself disagreeing sharply with some of the writer's points? That's how I felt about today's [Wall Street Journal article](#) by Judge Michael Ponsor about sentencing.

Judge Ponsor hails the 2010 Fair Sentencing Act, which reduces the discrepancy between sentences for crack cocaine and powder cocaine, and the 2005 [Supreme Court](#) decision in *U.S. v. Booker*, which overturned the federal sentencing guidelines.

The judge has something of an institutional bias: judges of just about any ideological or political background can cite cases in which sentencing guidelines or mandatory minimum sentences forced them to impose sentences that they believed were, in the circumstances of particular cases, unjust. I suspect that most of us in their places would agree. I'm sympathetic to [Families Against Mandatory Minimums](#) (despite their use of a non-Latin plural), an organization which argues against such sentences.

But that doesn't mean they were a bad idea in the first place. Judge Ponsor, who was appointed a federal magistrate in 1984 and a federal judge in 1994, is apparently of a different view:

In 1984, at the start of my career, 188 people were imprisoned for every 100,000 inhabitants of the United States. Other Western industrialized countries had roughly equal numbers. By 2010 that figure had skyrocketed to 497 people imprisoned in the U.S. for every 100,000 inhabitants. Today, we imprison more of our people than any other country in the world.

How did 'the land of the free and the home of the brave' become the world's biggest prison ward? The U.S. now houses 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of its prisoners. Either our fellow Americans are far more dangerous than the citizens of any other country, or something is seriously out of whack in the criminal-justice system.

In fact, in the 1980s there was good reason to believe that Americans were far more dangerous than citizens of any other country. Violent crime rates roughly tripled between 1965 and 1975 and remained at a high plateau until the mid-1990s, spiking upward during the crack cocaine epidemic in the late 1980s.

One reason U.S. crime rates were so high was that many judges issued light sentences to defendants who, once released, became repeat offenders. It was not obviously unjust, in those circumstances, for legislatures and executives to fetter judges' discretion by imposing mandatory minimums.

Nor was it obviously unjust to impose higher penalties on crack cocaine than powder cocaine at a time when there was plenteous evidence that the crack epidemic was leading to ancillary violence and that mothers addicted to crack were neglecting their children. Powder cocaine did not seem to producing similarly undesirable effects so frequently.

My argument is that the policies Judge Ponsor complains of were, at least arguably, needed and that they served their intended purpose. They kept dangerous people off the street and thus contributed to the sharp drop in crime in the 1990s and 2000s. To the point, I believe, that they are no longer needed today.

Most crimes are committed by young men. Criminals who were 21 when Judge Ponsor ascended to the bench turn 51 this year. Few are likely to offend again. And crime rates among the 21-year-olds of today are far lower than those of their counterparts in 1984.

Better law enforcement methods, like those introduced by New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and NYPD Commissioner William Bratton in 1994, undoubtedly play some role in this. And I suspect that the young males of today have a different mindset than their equivalents in 1984.

Congress legislates not for all time, but according to circumstances as they exist; when circumstances change, it may be time to reconsider and legislate again, in another direction.

So I tend to agree with Judge Ponsor when he laments that "defendants sentenced before the [2010 Fair Sentencing Act] was passed still languish today, serving out sentences that virtually all members of Congress now recognize as excessive." This is indeed an anomaly and seems unjust.

But I disagree sharply with his next sentence. “And there is not a darn thing anyone can do about it.” But there is someone who can do something about it, even in Congress does not follow the judge’s suggestion and pass a law scaling back those sentences.

That person is [President Obama](#). The president can pardon any offender and he can also commute part of a sentence, as [George W. Bush](#) did when he commuted Scooter Libby's jail term but declined to extend a full pardon.

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National Review

[Getting to Know Oliver Stone](#)

At a recent event, he revealed the absurdity of his worldview

by John Fund.

At first, I was appalled that Hollywood filmmaker Oliver Stone (*JFK*, *Nixon*) was appearing on a panel at this year’s conference of Students for Liberty, a nationwide libertarian youth organization. Stone is a conspiracy-monger of the first order whose twisted historical revisionism has deluded millions. He recently told the *Daily Beast* that the United States is an “international terror” that other nations should keep down.

But I was wrong; the event proved quite educational.

Stone appeared on a panel called “The National Security State,” along with Jeremy Scahill (the national-security correspondent for *The Nation* magazine) and Peter Kuznick (a history professor who co-wrote Stone’s loopy 2012 Showtime series *Untold History of the United States*).

The major surprise was just how bitter some left-wingers are with the Obama administration’s national-security record. Scahill tried to feed into the libertarian ethos of the 1,000 students in the audience by declaring that “when it comes to national-security policy, we only have one party: the war party.” But all the panelists reserved their tartest taunts for Democrats.

Scahill zinged Fox News for trying to paint President Obama as a “Muslim Manchurian candidate,” but also dismissed MSNBC as “like a DNC meet-up.” He blamed that network and other liberal outlets for defending Obama policies: “Obama has convinced liberals he is fighting a clean war,” he said, or, alternatively, “Democrats have checked their conscience at the door of the Obama presidency.”

Stone began by trying to make what he must have thought was an outreach to the audience by resurrecting and agreeing with the Old Right chestnut that “Roosevelt lied us into World War II.” He followed that up with highly personal criticism of Obama — claiming, in effect, that the president has been brainwashed by his national-security advisers into becoming pro-war. “The man stunned us with a lack of spine, he’s a weak man,” he mourned.

Many of the students agreed with panel’s general criticism of America’s military commitments. One noted that America still has 54,000 troops in Germany and 39,000 troops in Japan a full 70 years after World War II and a full 25 years after Communism’s collapse. But then a spirited group of Latin American students attending the panel decided to directly challenge Stone’s left-wing support for Latin dictators from Fidel Castro to Hugo Chávez.

Two months before Chávez’s death last year, Stone praised him on CNN, declaring with a straight face: “He represents hope and change, the things that Obama stood for in our country in 2008.” This past Thursday, in anticipation of the event, the Latin American students published an “Open Letter to Oliver Stone” that declared:

It is easy to crusade for socialism when you do not suffer the struggles many Latin Americans go through every day in search for food, the long lines in supermarkets to secure the most basic consumer products — not to mention skyrocketing inflation and other perils that socialism imposes on individuals. . . . Defending characters like Fidel Castro or Hugo Chávez, as you clearly do in your body of work and public statements, is safe when you know that your private property and the fruits of your labor will not be exploited by the politicians in charge. . . . We would like to share our experiences with you, to illustrate the violence that our governments promote and in the case of Venezuela, openly practice.

Perhaps then you will understand that situations “south of the border” are very different from those portrayed in your documentaries and other propaganda. We would like to publicly convey our utter disagreement with your support towards governments that restrict liberties in our side of the continent. Fortunately, and paradoxically, you will be able to express your opinions freely, even as you support governments that silence everyone who thinks differently.

During the question-and-answer session, Luis Eduardo Barrueto of Guatemala read some of the group’s open letter to the panel and asked for a response. What followed was revealing. Stone, who is producing a biopic on the life of Hugo Chávez, said the American media don’t give Venezuela a fair shake and implied that student protests against the regime there weren’t legitimate. “Venezuela is a democratically elected government. These people who keep protesting are sore losers,” he told the skeptical audience. He said revolutionary changes were needed in the county because rich people still owned so much of it.

I spoke with several of the Latin American students afterward, and they were appalled. When it came to Venezuela, they noted that Human Rights Watch recently concluded that “the concentration of power and erosion of human rights protections had given the government free rein to intimidate, censor, and prosecute Venezuelans who criticized the president or thwarted his political agenda.”

“Just a few days ago, three students were shot dead in Caracas and one of our Students for Liberty colleagues, Jesus Armas, was jailed,” Gabriel Salas of Venezuela told me in disgust. “The

populists always justify repression in the name of the poor, but they are impoverishing everyone,” Antonella Marty of Argentina added.

After the panel, Stone and another panelist privately admitted how impressed they were by the large number of libertarian student attendees, acknowledging the left would have had difficulty assembling such numbers. On his way out, Stone wandered by the libertarian Cato Institute’s table and picked up a copy of its pocket U.S. Constitution to take with him.

“Would that Stone acted to bring constitutional freedoms to the Latin Americans he claims to speak for,” said Humberto Rotondo of Peru, shaking his head. “I think he exposed the absurdity of his position to everyone here.”

NY Times

[From India, Proof That a Trip to Mars Doesn’t Have to Break the Bank](#)

by Saritha Rai



The Mangalyaan Mars Orbiter Spacecraft mounted atop a rocket at the Satish Dhawan Space Center in India

BANGALORE, India — While India’s recent launch of a spacecraft to Mars was a remarkable feat in its own right, it is the \$75 million mission’s thrifty approach to time, money and materials that is getting attention.

Just days after the launch of India’s Mangalyaan satellite, NASA sent off its own Mars mission, five years in the making, named Maven. Its cost: \$671 million. The budget of India’s Mars mission, by contrast, was just three-quarters of the \$100 million that Hollywood spent on last year’s space-based hit, “Gravity.”

“The mission is a triumph of low-cost Indian engineering,” said Roddam Narasimha, an aerospace scientist and a professor at Bangalore’s Jawaharlal Nehru Center for Advanced Scientific Research.

“By excelling in getting so much out of so little, we are establishing ourselves as the most cost-effective center globewide for a variety of advanced technologies,” said Mr. Narasimha.

India’s 3,000-pound Mars satellite carries five instruments that will measure methane gas, a marker of life on the planet. Maven (for [Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution](#)), weighs nearly twice as much but carries eight heavy-duty instruments that will investigate what went wrong in the Martian climate, which could have once supported life.



The tracking center in Bangalore, which will track the Mars mission

“Ours is a contrasting, inexpensive and innovative approach to the very complex mission,” said K. Radhakrishnan, the chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization, or ISRO, in an interview at the space agency’s heavily guarded Bangalore headquarters. “Yet it is a technically well-conceived and designed mission,” he said. Wealthier countries may have little incentive to pursue technological advances on the cheap, but not a populous, resource-starved country. So jugaad, or building things creatively and inexpensively, has become a national strength. India built the world’s cheapest car (\$2,500), the world’s cheapest tablet (\$49), and even quirkier creations like flour mills powered by scooters.

“If necessity is the mother of invention, constraint is the mother of frugal innovation,” said Terri Bresenham, the chief executive of GE Healthcare, South Asia, who is based in Bangalore. GE Healthcare has the largest research and development operations in India and has produced low-cost innovations in infant health, cancer detection and heart disease treatment.

In India, even a priority sector like space research gets a meager 0.34 percent of the country’s total annual outlay. Its \$1 billion space budget is only 5.5 percent of NASA’s budget.

ISRO has learned to make cost-effectiveness a daily mantra. Its inexpensive but reliable launch capabilities have become popular for the launches of small French, German and British satellites. Although the space agency had to build ground systems from scratch, its Chandrayaan moon mission in 2008 cost one-tenth what other nations’ moon shots cost, said Myswamy Annadurai, mission director.

The most obvious way ISRO does it is low-cost engineering talent, the same reason so many software firms use Indian engineers. India’s abundant supply of young technical talent helped rein in personnel costs to less than 15 percent of the budget. “Rocket scientists in India cost very little,” said Ajey Lele, a researcher at a New Delhi think tank, the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, and author of “Mission Mars: India’s Quest for the Red Planet.”

The average age of India’s 2,500-person Mars team is 27. “At 50, I am the oldest member of my team; the next oldest is 32,” said Subbiah Arunan, the project’s director. Entry-level Indian space engineers make about \$1,000 a month, less than a third of what their Western counterparts make.

The Indians also had a short development schedule that contributed heavily to the mission’s low cost, said Andrew Coates, planetary scientist at University College London and a leader of the European ExoMars expedition planned for 2018. The engineers had to compress their efforts into 18 months (other countries’ space vehicles have taken six years or more to build). It was either launch by November 2013 or wait another 26 months when the geometry of the sun, Mars and Earth would again be perfect for a launch.

“Since the time was so short, for the first time in the history of such a project, we scheduled tasks by the hour — not days, not weeks,” said Mr. Arunan. Mr. Radhakrishnan added: “Could we pull it off in less than two years’ time? Frankly, I doubted it.”

The modest budget did not allow for multiple iterations. So, instead of building many models (a qualification model, a flight model and a flight spare), as is the norm for American and European agencies, scientists built the final flight model right from the start. Expensive ground tests were also limited. “India’s ‘late beginner’ advantage was that it could learn from earlier mission failures,” said Mr. Lele.

“It is a question of philosophy, and each country has its own,” explained Mr. Radhakrishnan. “The Russians, for example, believe in putting large amounts of time and resources into testing so that the systems are robust.”

His agency curbed costs by another technique familiar to businesses in India: transforming old technology into new. The launch vehicle was first developed in the late 1970s and was augmented several times to become the solid propulsion system currently used in its latest Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle launcher.

The G.S.L.V.'s engine also dates back to the early 1970s, when ISRO engineers used technology transferred from France's Ariane program. The same approach, which the Indian scientists call modularity, extended to building spacecraft and communication systems. “We sometimes have to trade off an ideal configuration for cost-effectiveness, but the heritage is being improved constantly,” said Mr. Radhakrishnan.

Cost savings also came from using similar systems across a dozen concurrent projects. Many related technologies could be used in the Mars project; Astrosat, an astronomy mission to be launched in late 2014; the second moon mission, which is two years away; and even Aditya, a solar mission four years out.

Systems like the attitude control, which maintains the orientation of the spacecraft; the gyro, a sensor that measures the satellite's deviation from its set path; or the star tracker, a sensor that orients the satellite to distant objects in the celestial sphere, are the same across several ISRO missions.

“The building blocks are kept the same so we don't have to tailor-make for each mission,” said Mr. Annadurai of the moon mission. “Also, we have a ready backup if a system fails.”

Teams also did the kind of thing engineers working on missions do around the world. They worked through weekends with no overtime pay, putting in more hours to the dollar. Mr. Arunan slept on the couch in his office through the 18 months, rereading his favorite P. G. Wodehouse novels to relieve stress. “This is the Indian way of working,” said Mr. Annadurai.

Despite its cost-effectiveness, many have argued that India's extraterrestrial excursions are profligate in a country starved of even basic necessities like clean drinking water and toilets. Millions sleep hungry at night, critics have emphasized. They condemn the Mars mission as nothing more than showing off.

But scientists have argued that early Indian satellites paved the way for today's advanced disaster management systems and modern telecom infrastructure. In the 1970s, cyclones killed tens of thousands of people. Last year, when Cyclone Phailin struck India's east coast, the casualties were in the single digits. In the 1980s, television broadcasts were available in only four Indian cities, but today they are found countrywide.

The Mars mission is also having a multiplier effect on Indian industry. Companies like Larsen & Toubro and Godrej & Boyce, which built vital parts for the satellite, will use this high-tech expertise to compete for global aerospace, military and nuclear contracts worth billions of dollars. Godrej, for example, has begun making engine parts for Boeing.

Scientists have also said that space exploration and the alleviation of poverty need not be mutually exclusive. "If the Mars mission's \$75 million was distributed equally to every Indian, they would be able to buy a cup of roadside chai once every three years," said Mr. Narasimha, the aerospace scientist, referring to the tea that many Indians drink.

"My guess is that even the poorest Indians will happily forgo their chai to be able to see their country send a rocket all the way to Mars."

IBD

Late Night Humor

by Andrew Malcolm

Fallon: The U.S. men's hockey team beat Russia Saturday in a dramatic finish. The Americans say they're thrilled with the win. The Russian team is missing.

Conan: Rumors abound that Russia put cameras in Sochi hotel bathrooms. When asked, Russia said, "Don't worry, our cameras don't work either."

Conan: After winning a bronze medal in speed skating, Russia's Olga Graf unzipped her suit, forgetting that she had nothing on underneath it. Officials immediately took away her bronze medal and gave her the gold.

Conan: A photo from the Olympics in Sochi shows an elevator with nothing but "up" buttons. However, that is perfectly normal, says Sochi Olympics organizer Willie Wonka.

Conan: A Los Angeles newscaster has apologized to Samuel L. Jackson after mistaking him for Laurence Fishburne. He said, "I'm sorry, but everybody makes mistakes, even our great President Morgan Freeman."

Conan: Ryan Seacrest says he is launching his own clothing line. It's called, "There's No Escaping Me."

Conan: At a McDonald's in Michigan a woman shot at the drive-thru window after a worker forgot the bacon on her order. In the woman's defense, the worker did forget the bacon.

Conan: Billy Ray Cyrus has come out with a hip-hop version of 'Achy Breaky Heart.' Experts say it's the first time in music history that fans of hip-hop and country have hated the same thing.

Conan: Matt Lauer jokingly blamed Bob Costas' eye infections on Russian President Vladimir Putin. Now police are wondering, "Where in the world is Matt Lauer?"

Fallon: Congratulations to my buddy Charlie Sheen. He's marrying for the fourth time. Charlie said, "I just know this is the woman I'm going to be with for the rest of my February."

Conan: Boston Market offered a free dessert to couples. So she may be disappointed you took her to Boston Market on Valentine's Day. But when she left halfway through the meal, you got two free desserts!

Conan: The FDA wants more tests on female Viagra before approving it for sale. FDA scientists say, "If it takes years more research with horny women, so be it."

Conan: A New York judge has ruled that lap dances are taxable because they are not art. Or maybe he just hasn't had the right lap dance.

Conan: Some McDonald's restaurants took reservations for Valentine's Day. They got a lot of "tables for 1."

Conan: Scientists are working on a new contraceptive for women that lasts 90 days straight. Scientists refer to this new contraceptive as, "sweatpants."

Conan: A Russian critic of the Sochi games got a three-year prison term. He said, "It's still better than the Sochi hotels."

Fallon: A Mississippi woman was expecting triplets, but had quadruplets. That explains the babies' names: Jody, Brody, Cody and Fourth.

Conan: In South Carolina, a woman spent a night in jail for failing to return a VHS copy of the Jennifer Lopez movie "Monster-in-Law." Yet, the people who made that movie are still allowed to walk around free.

Fallon: Clowns of America International says the United States faces a serious clown shortage. Then, they opened the door to a VW and said, "Never mind. Here they are!"

Fallon: The Russian Olympic Committee has announced that the giant Olympic ring that failed to light in the Olympics' opening ceremonies is now fixed. So, it looks like Russia will be ready for the Olympics' start by the Olympics' end.



~~“A government of laws and not of men.”~~
OBAMA -John Adams





"WHADPAYA' MEAN YOU'RE NOT TAKING ME WITH YOU?!"



