

March 20, 2014

Bret Stephens says we got Putin just where we want him and we're about to throw him into the briar patch.

Barack Obama thinks Vladimir Putin isn't such a smart guy. "There's a suggestion somehow that the Russian actions have been clever, strategically," Mr. Obama said last week about Moscow's bloodless coup de main in Crimea. "I actually think that this is not been a sign of strength."

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Let's get to Mr. Obama's main point about Mr. Putin's alleged dumbness: "Countries near Russia have deep concerns and suspicions about this kind of meddling and, if anything, it will push many countries further away from Russia."

Terrific. Maybe Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania can slip their Baltic moorings and row themselves west once Mr. Putin starts agitating on behalf of ethnic Russians in those once-Soviet, now NATO-member states. Kazakhstan, where ethnic Russians are in a majority in several districts bordering Russia herself, is also ripe for a Crimean-type caper. Has Mr. Obama worked out a plan for the Kazakhs to get away from Russia, other than by launching themselves en masse from the Baikonur Cosmodrome?

It's funny, almost, to watch Mr. Obama and his friends in the media talk themselves into the conceit that they've gained the upper hand against Mr. Putin. "Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake," writes one of those friends, citing Napoleon. Really? Perhaps Mr. Putin will oblige us by seizing eastern Ukraine, too. Given this logic, by the time the armies of Vlad the Bad reach the Vistula, our victory will be all but complete. ...

Jennifer Rubin has more.

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The Wall Street editorial board pointed out that the seven sanctioned Russians did not include important names. "Defense Minister Sergei Shoygu, Mr. Putin's chief of staff Sergei Ivanov and Alexander Bortnikov, who runs the FSB (formerly the KGB), belong to the circle of hard-liners on the Russian national security council, where the decisions on Ukraine are taken. Mr. Shoygu's department has deployed some 20,000 men to Crimea. Mr. Bortnikov's charges are running special operations in eastern Ukraine to whip up separatist demonstrators." Obama gives new meaning to the phrase "too little, too late."

Obama repeats the same empty phrases whether the adversary is Iran, Syria or Russia. "Country X will find itself isolated." "Country X's actions show its weakness." "Country X will come to rue the day it defied the international community." It never dawns on him that Country X doesn't consider itself isolated (or doesn't care), thinks it has shown up the United States and doesn't give a fig about the international community. ...

It was Lenin who coined the phrase "useful idiot" to describe westerners who, blinded by their hopes and their ignorance, could be counted on to inadvertently help the Soviet Union. The latest useful idiots are the three stooges; hagel, kerry and obama. Michael Barone shows how their lack of understanding creates what he calls cognitive dissonance. Putin is truly a lucky man. There is lots of low hanging fruit for him to harvest.

*Cognitive dissonance is a phrase that describes what happens when the world turns out to operate differently from what you expected. It's also a phrase that could be used to describe the state of mind of some of President Obama's current and past foreign policy advisers, at least according to this David Sanger story in the New York Times. Excerpts:*

*The White House was taken by surprise by Vladimir V. Putin's decisions to invade Crimea, but also by China's increasingly assertive declaration of exclusive rights to airspace and barren islands. Neither the economic pressure nor the cyberattacks that forced Iran to reconsider its approach have prevented North Korea's stealthy revitalization of its nuclear and missile programs. ...*

*"We're seeing the 'light footprint' run out of gas," said one of Mr. Obama's former senior national security aides, who would not speak on the record about his ex-boss. ...*

*Still, some senior officials who left the White House after the first term concede -- when assured of anonymity -- that Mr. Obama erred in failing to have a plan to back up his declaration that [Syrian] President Bashar al-Assad had to leave office.*

*Obama's central mistake, as I tried to argue in this recent Washington Examiner column, is solipsism, to "assume others see the world as you do and will behave as you would." It would be nice if Putin, Assad and the Chinese leaders saw the world as Obama does and behaved as he would, but unfortunately they don't.*

**Roger Kimball** says Aristotle saw this coming.

*In a melancholy passage of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle observes that we can follow certain courses of action which will put us in situations where there is no right response. Whatever we do, it will be wrong, or at least unhappy.*

*Confronted with the West's habitual acquiescence in the face of Russian (and not only Russian) swagger and belligerence, Aristotle would no doubt have said, "See what I mean," or words to that effect.*

*Skillful diplomacy might have headed off the crisis in Crimea. But we did not field skillful diplomats. We sent John Kerry, backed up by Barack Obama, Susan Rice, and Joe Biden. As in 1854, "someone had blundered." Tennyson recorded the result. Today, the "reset button" turns out to have been disconnected at the source. Obama really did push it. Comrade Putin paid it no heed. He had taken the measure of the man long ago. And if there was any doubt, in 2012, in a candid-camera moment, Obama pleaded with Putin's protege Dmitry Medvedev to give him more "space"*

about missile defense. "This is my last election," Obama confided quietly to Medvedev, "After my election, I have more flexibility." Noted.

The microphones weren't supposed to pick that up. In any normal world, the remark would have gone a long way towards sealing Obama's defeat in 2012. But this isn't any normal world. It is the world according folks like Wolf Blitzer, who mocked Romney for describing Russia as, "without question, our number one geopolitical foe." ...

Jennifer Rubin again.

The New York Times describes Vladimir Putin's annexation of Crimea dramatically: "If there had been any doubt before Tuesday, Mr. Putin made clear that within what he considers his sphere of interest he would not be cowed by international pressure. And the speed of his moves in Crimea, redrawing an international border that has been recognized as part of an independent Ukraine since 1991, has been breathtaking." This is a humiliation for the West and a collapse of 22 years of American foreign policy in which the former states of the Soviet Union were allowed to reclaim their place in a whole and free Europe.

White House spinners (past and present) and their media handmaidens have already begun making excuses and attacking critics, who for years have criticized the president's handling of Russia.

"You can't criticize the president without offering an alternative!" Who made that rule? The president, after five years of serial errors (pulling anti-missile defenses from Eastern Europe, ignoring Russian arms violations, off-loading the Syria stand-off to Moscow, turning Russia's internal repression, failing to check Russian support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and slashing defense spending), can hardly put the onus on critics to figure a way out of the mess. In any event, these same critics have been suggesting much stronger sanctions and actions (ranging from expulsion from international bodies to flooding Europe with liquefied natural gas to sink Putin's gas monopoly). It's pathetic, when you think about it, that the president's answer to an international debacle is to claim that critics have no answers. It's almost as if someone else is president. ...

Michael Rubin sums up with a post titled The Reverberations of American Weakness. The result of five years of president dither is the world has become a very dangerous place. If, in our lifetimes we see an nuclear weapon used, we can lay that at the feet of president bystander who preened for the Nobel committee, but never could make a courageous decision.

... What happens in Crimea doesn't stay in Crimea. In 1994, Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine signed the Budapest Memorandum. In short, Russia recognized Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea, Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons, and the United States and Great Britain offered Ukraine security guarantees. In hindsight, only the Ukrainians kept their promise; everyone else broke their pledge.

*The problem is not simply potential Russian aggressiveness against former Soviet states like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Moldova, but rather the notion that U.S. and European security guarantees are meaningless: Russia invaded a sovereign state and Obama reacted by putting Russian President Vladimir Putin on the diplomatic equivalent of double-secret probation. ...*

*... Putin acted in Ukraine against the backdrop of stagnation in the Russian economy. Whipping up nationalist sentiment seems to have successfully distracted Russians from Putin's own domestic incompetence. If sparking a crisis can distract from economic woes without fear of reprisal, why shouldn't the Argentine government make its move against the Falkland Islands? After all, the age of Reagan and Thatcher is over. Israel, too, must recognize that American security guarantees aren't worth the paper upon which they are written, ...*

The cartoonists get it too.

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**WSJ**

### **Misunderestimating Vladimir**

***For President Putin, a Ukrainian piece prize beats a Nobel.***

by Bret Stephens

[Barack Obama](#) thinks [Vladimir Putin](#) isn't such a smart guy. "There's a suggestion somehow that the Russian actions have been clever, strategically," Mr. Obama said last week about Moscow's bloodless *coup de main* in Crimea. "I actually think that this is not been a sign of strength."

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Terrific. Maybe Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania can slip their Baltic moorings and row themselves west once Mr. Putin starts agitating on behalf of ethnic Russians in those once-Soviet, now NATO-member states. Kazakhstan, where ethnic Russians are in a majority in several districts bordering Russia herself, is also ripe for a Crimean-type caper. Has Mr. Obama worked out a plan for the Kazakhs to get away from Russia, other than by launching themselves en masse from the Baikonur Cosmodrome?

It's funny, almost, to watch Mr. Obama and his friends in the media talk themselves into the conceit that they've gained the upper hand against Mr. Putin. "Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake," writes one of those friends, citing Napoleon. Really? Perhaps Mr. Putin will

oblige us by seizing eastern Ukraine, too. Given this logic, by the time the armies of Vlad the Bad reach the Vistula, our victory will be all but complete.

As Mr. Obama and friends see it, by seizing Crimea Mr. Putin has lost the battle for global public opinion. "I think everyone recognizes that although Russia has legitimate interests in what happens in a neighboring state, that does not give it the right to use force as a means of exerting influence inside that state," scolded Mr. Obama.

This is of a piece with the notion that geography no longer matters; that borders, resources, the high ground, the warm-water ports and everything else that nations have fought over since time immemorial are superfluous in our 21st-century world.

What a wonderful thought. But not all countries are blessed with oceans for borders. Not all leaders get to live in magic kingdoms where Nobel Peace Prizes are bestowed before they are earned. And not all leaders want to live in those magic kingdoms, either.

So Secretary of State [John Kerry](#) accuses Mr. Putin of engaging in 19th-century behavior. Is that supposed to be a bad thing? In 1814, Czar Alexander I led the Russian army into Paris and accepted the keys to the city from Talleyrand. Mr. Putin surely won't make it that far, but achievement is almost always measured as a fraction of ambition. The easy seizure of Crimea is almost certainly enlarging Mr. Putin's ambition.

Another theme of recent days is that whatever else the Crimean incursion signifies, it's not a new Cold War. Russia does not have the power of the Soviet Union. Its economy is inextricably linked with the West's. Its aims are national, not ideological. And so on.

I've been thinking about this line of argument and there's something to it. Perhaps the right historical analogy isn't to the four decades that followed World War II. It's to the two decades that preceded it.

Then, as now, liberal democracies were both burned and burned out by war. Then, as now, economic problems and the thirst for "normalcy" made them turn inward. Then, as now, American presidents believed in the necessity of disarmament, the sanctity of international law and the importance of leading by moral example. Then, as now, the liberal democracies were consumed by a sense of guilt over their own past supposed misdeeds. Back then it was the "Carthaginian Peace" of Versailles. Today, it is the witless argument that we have no standing to criticize Mr. Putin's seizure of Crimea after our own invasion of Iraq. (On this point: Who exactly is Crimea's Saddam ?)

Then, as now, too, the rogue regimes of the day soon figured out that the liberal democracies weren't interested in policing the world order. In 1931 Japan invaded Manchuria. A year later, a fact-finding mission sent by the League of Nations reported that Tokyo probably hadn't been acting in self-defense when it took northeast China. Japan walked out of the League, and it was on to Nanking. Meantime, Italy developed a taste for Abyssinia.

Here is the connection between the U.S. capitulation in Syria and the invasion of Crimea, which Mr. Obama and his defenders are so eager to deride. The connection isn't necessarily causal. It's environmental. America is in retreat; in his speech last September on Syria, Mr. Obama explicitly endorsed the view that "we should not be the world's policeman." So now we're living in the

broken-windows world of international disorder. The rogues look around. When they sense an opportunity they seize it, calculating that they will pay no price.

They have paid no price.

Mr. Obama might think that in the 21st century, moral opprobrium (from him) is punishment enough. But Vladimir Putin isn't playing by Mr. Obama's idea of 21st-century rules. The right response to a Russian power play is a power play of our own. Ballistic missile defenses on NATO's eastern flank would be a good place to start.

## Right Turn

### [Russian 'sanctions' from the failed commander in chief](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

As presidential candidates, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Mitt Romney both had their shortcomings. They didn't connect with Americans on an emotional level and failed to articulate an agenda that working- and middle-class voters believed could help them. But their sins were not unseriousness or flightiness on foreign policy; both identified our foes, counseled determination and advocated sufficient funding for our armed forces. Unfortunately, the same can't be said of the man who beat them and now occupies the Oval Office. What's worse, with each new crisis his response to provocation gets weaker.

In putting forth Russian sanctions [so slight](#) that "pin prick" overstates their impact, President Obama merely cemented his image as a man who delivers empty threats but lacks the nerve or skill to exact a price for our foes' aggression. Former ambassador to the United Nations [John Bolton](#) aptly assessed the president's action as "so weak that it's embarrassing." Unsurprisingly, Vladimir Putin swiftly moved to annex Crimea.

[The Wall Street editorial board](#) pointed out that the seven sanctioned Russians did not include important names. "Defense Minister Sergei Shoygu, Mr. Putin's chief of staff Sergei Ivanov and Alexander Bortnikov, who runs the FSB (formerly the KGB), belong to the circle of hard-liners on the Russian national security council, where the decisions on Ukraine are taken. Mr. Shoygu's department has deployed some 20,000 men to Crimea. Mr. Bortnikov's charges are running special operations in eastern Ukraine to whip up separatist demonstrators." Obama gives new meaning to the phrase "too little, too late."

Obama repeats the same empty phrases whether the adversary is Iran, Syria or Russia. "*Country X will find itself isolated.*" "*Country X's actions show its weakness.*" "*Country X will come to rue the day it defied the international community.*" It never dawns on him that Country X doesn't consider itself isolated (or doesn't care), thinks it has shown up the United States and doesn't give a fig about the international community. For a man who billed himself as an internationally aware sophisticate, Obama knows precious little about how other countries operate and what motivates our enemies. He makes the most basic error of foreign policy novices: He imagines adversaries share our values and make the same assessments we do. Again and again they surprise him by showing they don't.

Likewise, the president never ceases to complain, “*There are no good options.*” He demands to know, “*Do you want boots on the ground?*” And he insists those calling for more robust action are warmongers or rubes. It has been his own delinquency, obviously, that now leaves us with no good options, gives us the Hobson’s choice of war or defeat and causes members of both parties to pull their hair out over our foreign policy blunders.

You can forgive [Mitt Romney](#) for a bit of “I told you so,” given he was mocked unmercifully for calling Russia our greatest strategic challenge. But he also gets to the root of the matter in this Wall Street Journal op-ed: “It is hard to name even a single country that has more respect and admiration for America today than when President Obama took office, and now Russia is in Ukraine. Part of their failure, I submit, is due to their failure to act when action was possible, and needed.” When the president and his advisers peevishly demand critics say what *they* would do, the answer must begin with an election of a different president, retention of missile defenses in Eastern Europe, resolve in Iraq and Afghanistan, support for the Green Revolution, etc. This disaster has been in the making for five years, the result of serial weakness. (As a practical pointer, however, one idea would be for Obama to stop talking to Putin; with each hour on the phone Putin becomes more convinced the president is spineless.)

In his determination to retrench and his self-serving delusion that a decade of war was ending, Obama refused to take measured steps until aggressors were emboldened, economic sanctions became useless and no one took him seriously. He was so intent on kicking the can down the road that he left the United States and its allies vulnerable to dangerous foes. His foreign policy of wishful thinking and willful neglect now has come back to bite him.

In this both Hillary Clinton and left- and right-wing anti-interventionists share the blame. In varying degrees, they endorsed Obama’s world view or turned the other way – when he withdrew entirely from Iraq, did a 180 on his red line in Syria, exacted no consequences for the deaths of four Americans in Libya, slashed the defense budget and foolishly lifted sanctions against Iran.

National security is fast becoming our most acute problem. Budgets can be fixed and Obamacare repealed and replaced, but the damage to our international standing and the proliferation of nuclear weapons Obama may allow will plague presidents for decades to come. The dead, displaced and maimed in Syria will remain a permanent legacy of this president.

If we would not elect someone who, for example cheered Obamacare, why would the country turn to leaders whose judgment on foreign policy was just as flawed? To invest responsibility to those such as Hillary Clinton — or Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), for that matter – who suffer the same infirmities as Obama would be sheer folly. The American people have been badly served by one commander in chief; they need a much better one to clean up the mess he’ll leave behind.

## Examiner

### [Obama's solipsism produces cognitive dissonance](#)

by Michael Barone

Cognitive dissonance is a phrase that describes what happens when the world turns out to operate differently from what you expected. It's also a phrase that could be used to describe the state of mind of some of [President Obama's](#) current and past foreign policy advisers, at least according to this David Sanger story in the [New York Times](#). Excerpts:

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## **Pajamas Media** **[Aristotle on Crimea](#)** by Roger Kimball

In a melancholy passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle observes that we can follow certain courses of action which will put us in situations where there is no right response. Whatever we do, it will be wrong, or at least unhappy.

Confronted with the West's habitual acquiescence in the face of Russian (and not only Russian) swagger and belligerence, Aristotle would no doubt have said, "See what I mean," or words to that effect.

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Oh, how Obama jumped all over that during the debates. Remember? The mockery was non-stop. ["The 1980s Are Now Calling to Ask for Their Foreign Policy Back."](#) <sup>[3]</sup> Harkh, harkh, harkh! Good line, Barack. But it looks like Mitt was right, doesn't it? And having temporized, preened, tergiversated about American foreign policy for five years, what are you going to do now?



Exit polls show that yesterday's vote in Crimea to be "annexed" by Russia won by [93 percent](#).<sup>[4]</sup> That's a showing that would have satisfied Stalin. The vote is "illegitimate," you say. There will be ["consequences"](#)<sup>[5]</sup>, "you threaten. The West will enact "sanctions," you thunder.

Meanwhile Putin is enacting what one commentator accurately described as his "slow-motion Anschluss" of Crimea, possibly with the rest of Ukraine, or at least a large part of it, to follow.

What exactly are you going to do about that, Mr. President? For five years, you've been jetting around the world at vast expense to apologize for America. You apologized to the Muslims. You apologized to Hugo Chavez. You bowed deeply to the Saudi despot. You [cancelled the promised missile defense programs](#)<sup>[6]</sup> for Poland and the Czech Republic, thereby both selling out important allies and waving the flag of weakness to the country that, come to think of it, might just be America's "number one geopolitical foe," as someone once said.

It's all starting to unravel, isn't it? The preposterous and hideously expensive socialized medicine program you shoved down the throats of the American people with no Republican support and against the will of a majority of the people: Nancy Pelosi said we had to pass it to find out what's in it. Well, you bribed, cajoled, and threatened to get it passed, and now the American people are indeed finding out what's in it. "If you like your health care plan, you can keep your health care plan, period." You said that over and over and over. You knew it wasn't true. But you decided to lie to the American people in order to set about "fundamentally transforming the United States of America." That's what you promised to do in 2008. And boy have you made good on that promise. For the first time in history, America's credit rating was downgraded. You didn't like that, and your secretary of the Treasury, Timothy Geithner, [threatened Standard & Poor's](#)<sup>[7]</sup> over the downgrade. Why didn't the press howl over that abuse of government power? Because they're slavishly devoted to you. But even that support is beginning to fray. Your deployment of the Internal Revenue Service to harass your political opponents: how long do suppose you can get away with that? Even the supine media is beginning to bristle. And now that the rest of the world is waking up to your weakness, and your incompetence, what will happen? You campaigned on a promise to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. But you have gone out of your way to assure that it will. What then? China just unilaterally extended its air rights in the South China Sea. What are you going to do about that? And yesterday, Putin engineered a vote in which Russia takes back a large piece of Ukraine.

H. L. Mencken is said to have observed that no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the American people. That's a pretty good witticism. But it isn't quite true. If only he had substituted "the American political class" or "the American media," then it would have been true as well as witty.

Meanwhile, those very American people you, like Mencken, hold in such contempt: they are waking up. They do not like what you are doing to this country. Which is why your approval rating is in the 30s. That's Bush territory. And all signs are that the impending direction is south. It may seem extreme now, in March 2014. But just wait. I reckon it won't be long before you're faced with one of those unhappy dilemmas I mentioned at the outset. Abdication or resignation may be one option. The other begins with "i." But that's something that no establishment Republican wants to broach. Not yet, anyway. Not yet.

## Right Turn

### Obama never wrong, never responsible

by Jennifer Rubin

The [New York Times](#) describes Vladimir Putin's annexation of Crimea dramatically: "If there had been any doubt before Tuesday, Mr. Putin made clear that within what he considers his sphere of interest he would not be cowed by international pressure. And the speed of his moves in Crimea, redrawing an international border that has been recognized as part of an independent Ukraine since 1991, has been breathtaking." This is a humiliation for the West and a collapse of 22 years of American foreign policy in which the former states of the Soviet Union were allowed to reclaim their place in a whole and free Europe.

White House spinners (past and present) and their media handmaidens have already begun making excuses and attacking critics, who for years have criticized the president's handling of Russia.

*"You can't criticize the president without offering an alternative!"* Who made that rule? The president, after five years of serial errors (pulling anti-missile defenses from Eastern Europe, ignoring Russian arms violations, off-loading the Syria stand-off to Moscow, turning Russia's internal repression, failing to check Russian support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and slashing defense spending), can hardly put the onus on critics to figure a way out of the mess. In any event, these same critics have been suggesting much stronger sanctions and actions (ranging from expulsion from international bodies to flooding Europe with liquefied natural gas to sink Putin's gas monopoly). It's pathetic, when you think about it, that the president's answer to an international debacle is to claim that critics have no answers. It's almost as if someone else is president.

*"You should blame Putin!"* Of course we should. But just as President George W. Bush was held responsible for how he reacted to foreign threats and Jimmy Carter was judged by his pre- and post-Afghanistan invasion policies, this president, too, must be held accountable for how he handles our enemies. It does not bode well for, say Iran policy, that his response to a horrible outcome (Iran going nuclear) is to blame Iran. *Of course* our enemies are to blame for aggression; and Obama is to blame for five years of incoherent and weak foreign policy in which he announced to the world a decade of war was ending.

Indeed, there has been virtually no accounting of the results of President Obama's policies. Consider Syria. The scene is [gruesome](#):

Day after day, the Syrian civil war has ground down a cultural and political center of the Middle East, turning it into a stage for disaster and cruelty on a nearly incomprehensible scale. Families are brutalized by their government and by jihadists claiming to be their saviors as nearly half of Syrians — many of them children — have been driven from their homes. . . . The government bombards neighborhoods with explosive barrels, missiles, heavy artillery and, the United States says, chemical weapons, then it sends in its allies in Hezbollah and other militias to wage street warfare. It jails and tortures peaceful activists, and uses starvation as a weapon, blockading opposition areas where trapped children shrivel and die.

Yet in his [State of the Union just a few months ago](#), Obama took credit for Syrian policy, a great success in his telling. ("American diplomacy, backed by the threat of force, is why Syria's chemical

weapons are being eliminated, and we will continue to work with the international community to usher in the future the Syrian people deserve – a future free of dictatorship, terror and fear.”) The president has ignored years of criticism that counseled more robust action before Syria descended into hell; he ignored the critics, including some in his administration. *Is his answer now actually that there is nothing he could have done in the past four years to head off this tragedy?*

Neither the president nor Hillary Clinton (a central figure in the “Russian reset policy” and in Iran engagement) cops to bad judgment, passivity or indifference. They’ve not admitted that any policy was flawed or that any assumption was incorrect. Instead they whine (this is hard!), attack or ridicule critics or claim it’s someone else’s fault. *When exactly do they accept responsibility for their role in the dismemberment of Ukraine, in a prolonged civil war that has killed 150,000 or so and an emboldened Iran on the precipice of a nuclear capability?*

## Contentions

### The Reverberations of American Weakness

by Michael Rubin

Myopia is epidemic in Washington, and always has been. So too is compartmentalization. When a crisis occurs in Syria, anyone who’s anyone within government stumbles over themselves to get into the crisis meetings, and everything else falls off the radar screen. Two months ago, if someone in government called a meeting about Crimea, perhaps two or three people would show up, and one of them would be an intern hoping to avoid Xerox duty; today, any Crimea meeting would be packed. Those in the meetings will look at the immediate next steps for U.S. policy with regard to the immediate belligerents, but discussion does not go broader.

The real world is the polar opposite. What happens in Crimea doesn’t stay in Crimea. In 1994, Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine signed the [Budapest Memorandum](#). In short, Russia recognized Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea, Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons, and the United States and Great Britain offered Ukraine security guarantees. In hindsight, only the Ukrainians kept their promise; everyone else broke their pledge.

The problem is not simply potential Russian aggressiveness against former Soviet states like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Moldova, but rather the notion that U.S. and European security guarantees are meaningless: Russia invaded a sovereign state and Obama reacted by putting Russian President Vladimir Putin on the diplomatic equivalent of [double-secret probation](#). Rogue states and America’s adversaries do not ignore the world around them. In [Dancing With the Devil](#), I document how Iranian negotiators treat North Korea as an example to replicate, not a rogue to condemn. So, where might the next crisis be?

The Korean War initially broke out when Kim Il-sung interpreted Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s [“Defensive Perimeter” speech](#) as a sign that the United States would no longer defend its ally on the Korean Peninsula. Is there any reason why President Obama believes Kim Jong-un, the dear leader’s grandson and new dear leader, will interpret Obama’s weakness any differently?

Likewise, Putin acted in Ukraine against the backdrop of stagnation in the Russian economy. Whipping up nationalist sentiment seems to have successfully distracted Russians from Putin’s own domestic incompetence. If sparking a crisis can distract from economic woes without fear of

reprisal, why shouldn't the Argentine government make its move against the Falkland Islands? After all, the age of Reagan and Thatcher is over. Israel, too, must recognize that American security guarantees aren't worth the paper upon which they are written, even if Kerry returns from Geneva waving a paper and boasting that he has Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's signature upon it.

The greatest difference between left and right in America today when it comes to national security is that the left always demonizes power, while the right recognizes that power can be used for good or bad. What Obama and his supporters do not recognize, however, is the reverberations of American weakness. Altruistic powers will not fill the vacuum; dictatorships will. When a Niccolò Machiavelli challenges a Neville Chamberlain, not only will the Chamberlains not win, but death and destruction will follow.

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GOREBELLA.COM  
CORRELL

**NO IRANIAN NUKES!!...  
ASSAD OUT OF SYRIA!!...  
CRIMEA STAYS WITH  
UKRAINE!!!**



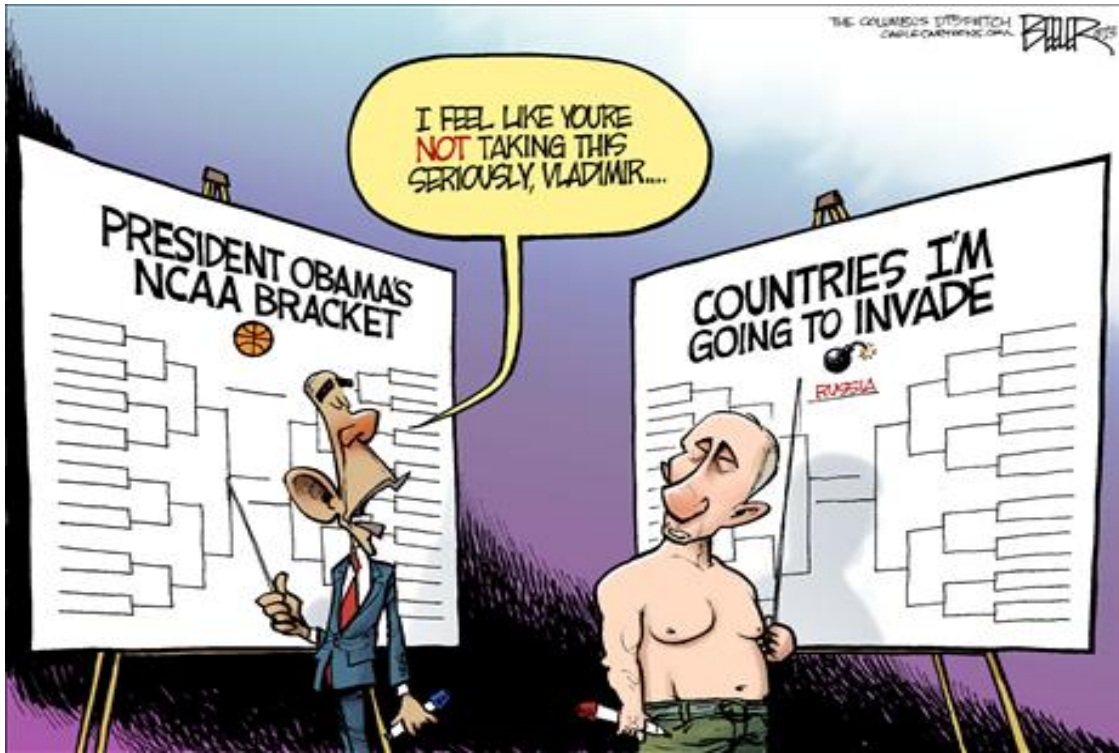
THE MOUSE THAT ROARED



# PUTIN vs OBAMA

*WE'RE IN TROUBLE...*





# Barack Obama



How conservatives saw him in 2008



How America's enemies see him



How the mainstream media sees him



How liberals see him



How he sees himself



How he really is



www.IBDeditorials.com/cartoons

A photograph of Barack Obama speaking at a podium, with an American flag in the background. A speech bubble coming from him says, "Hey, cut me some slack... This IS my first real job." Below the photo are several statistics in various colors and fonts.

jim leach 2012

Hey, cut me some slack...  
This IS my first real job.

**2,000,000 FEWER JOBS**

**3/4 OPPOSE ObamaCare**

**\$387 billion "stimulus" down the toilet**  
(without ONE private-sector job to show for it)

**71% Believe America is on the 'Wrong Track'**



