

March 27, 2014

**Paul Greenberg** takes up events in Russia with "The Axe vs. the Icon."

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*Our president does take pains to cloak his impotence in fine words, but they fool fewer and fewer Americans or anybody else. And certainly not this new crop of aggressors, who always spring up like noxious weeds if the fields are neglected long enough.*

**Charles Krauthammer** says the administration has found a role for the US.

*Early in the Ukraine crisis, when the Europeans were working on bringing Ukraine into the EU system and Vladimir Putin was countering with threats and bribes, one British analyst lamented that "we went to a knife fight with a baguette."*

*That was three months ago. Life overtakes parody. During the Ukrainian prime minister's visit to Washington last week, his government urgently requested military assistance. The Pentagon refused. It offered instead military ration kits.*

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*Why did we deny Ukraine weapons? Because in the Barack Obama-John Kerry worldview, arming the victim might be taken as a provocation. This kind of mind-bending illogic has marked the administration's response to the whole Crimea affair. ...*

**Jennifer Rubin** wonders if the obama/kerry/hagel axis can leave their fantasy world.

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*preservation of their nuclear program, support for terror groups and collapse of the Sunni monarchs. They don't want to be included in the "international community" if the ground rules deny them these objectives. They cannot be lured out of their ambitions by relaxed sanctions. In short, the effort to paint the negotiations with Iran as simply an effort to dispel mistrust and find common ground is rooted in the same naiveté that afflicted the Democrats' outlook toward Russia.*

*The Obama administration has not been practicing "realism"; the president and his advisers have been living in a fantasy world in which our foes are eagerly awaiting our hand in friendship and in which if we work hard enough we can align their interests and ours. Once we realize the flawed assumptions on which such a worldview rests, nearly every policy choice (e.g. not forcing out Bashar al-Assad, reducing our military, relaxing sanctions on Iran, prematurely exiting Afghanistan) can be seen as wrongheaded. Realism now requires we reject the president's worldview and get about the business of defending American interests against real and formidable foes. It should also suggest the unrepentant architects of the mistaken worldview shouldn't be entrusted with responsibility for our national security.*

And, if they can't change their world view, Jennifer wants to know if there is any chance the president can stop talking.

*Just when you think our commander in chief cannot sound more clueless, he does it again.*

Tuesday's utterance was this: "Russia is a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors — not out of strength but out of weakness. They don't pose the number one national security threat to the United States. I continue to be much more concerned when it comes to our security with the prospect of a nuclear weapon going off in Manhattan." Where to begin?

*President Obama tries vainly to insult Russia as a mere regional power, yet that regional power has defied him, the Western alliance and international norms. Does that make Russian President Vladimir Putin the leader of a lesser state or Obama the head of an enfeebled world power? The notion that Putin is the weak one and we're the strong one sounds like third-rate spin from the blogosphere (now we know where the spinners' material comes from), not the response of a mature world leader who needs to enact punishment so as to change Putin's perceptions, not his own. When Obama talks this way, it sounds as if he is attempting to console himself, not project U.S. power or reassure allies. ...*

Townhall columnist Kurt Schlichter writes on the hard truths liberals won't face.

*... Now we are in the almost unimaginable position of looking back at Jimmy Carter as an example of comparatively sure, savvy leadership. The Russians invaded Afghanistan and Carter armed the rebels. The Russians invaded Crimea and Barack Obama went on Ellen to hear the hostess gush about how much America loves Obamacare.*

*It's no surprise that both Carter and Obama were stunned to find that their counterparts out there on the Eurasian steppes were evil, violent thugs determined to maximize their own power by whatever means necessary. After all, in the liberal universe there are no bad people, except for*

*conservatives and male college students who fail to obtain a notarized statement from their drunken dates authorizing them to advance to second base.*

*After all, human nature is just a construct. At heart, everyone is just a metrosexual college student sitting in a gender studies class, eager to work together with a diverse group of other like-minded individuals to forge a better tomorrow.*

*That a guy like Putin might act like a guy like Putin never occurred to them. But it occurred to conservatives. We understand that human nature is not a mere construct, that evil is real, and that the uniquely American understanding of the natural rights of man is the one true hope for humanity.*

*Liberals don't want to face the truth that sometimes you can't talk it out, or make a deal. They don't want to face the fact that they must sometimes put away childish things – like the ridiculous climate change scam they push to enhance their own power – and deal with the world not as they wish it to be but as it is. ...*

**Peter Wehner** suggests he is unhinged.

*... I'm here to report that Mr. Obama's dissociative disorder has become more, not less, acute. As evidence I would point to an exchange the president had yesterday with ABC's Jonathan Karl, in which Mr. Obama made this claim: □*

*Russia is a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors, not out of strength but out of weakness... The fact that Russia felt compelled to go in militarily and laid bare these violations of international law indicates less influence, not more.*

*This is—and I want to be properly respectful here—crazy. Does the president really and truly believe that Russia has less influence now that it has seized Crimea without a single Russian casualty? Does he believe that in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Poland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Latvia they consider Russia less influential and weaker since the conquest of Crimea? ...*

*... I'm starting to be convinced this isn't simply a talking point by a president on the defensive. I think he actually believes what he's saying. Which means he is losing touch with reality. Which may be the most worrisome thing of all.*

On a lighter note, we learn from **Kevin Williamson** that there are some Western leaders who are still firmly grounded.

*Barack Obama showed up at his meeting with Dutch PM Mark Rutte with his usual caravan of armored limousines and the like. Here's how Mr. Rutte got there: **(On a bicycle)***

*Dutch leaders not only are better at republican manners than ours are — no caesaropapist trappings for Mr. Rutte — but also offer a standing rebuke to American cultural practices by reminding us that it is possible to ride a bicycle without special shoes, a helmet, or spandex.*

The cartoonists are a hoot.

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## **Jewish World Review**

### **The axe vs. the icon**

by Paul Greenberg

"I care not who writes a nation's laws," a sage once remarked, "but who writes its songs."

On one of the last nights their country was still whole, well aware that it would soon be cleaved, and the conqueror would begin to pick up the pieces, a great crowd gathered at the Kiev Opera House for a concert in honor of the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko. It was a bittersweet occasion, mixing hope and fear, past pride and the humiliation now sure to come. It was a victory of the spirit even in the face of defeat in the field. For all knew they stood alone as their country's "friends" offered only empty words of support.

The hall was packed as the music said more than speeches could about Ukraine's plight. When the formal concert ended, the whole house rose as one to sing a familiar patriotic hymn that might as well have been the national anthem that night. Eyes clouded with familiar tears, but the faces were defiant.

No one could look at those visages, and hear those voices, without being assailed by a host of memories of crises past, of freedoms lost and aggressions triumphant. Scenes flashed by like outtakes from old newsreels. There were the Nazi troops goose-stepping through old Vienna in 1938, when the few Austrians who were not cowed could only sing of freedom -- softly, fearfully, as it disappeared.

When the Germans marched down the Champs Elysees and under the Arc de Triomphe in June of 1940, teary-eyed Parisians might sing the Marseillaise in protest, but if they were prudent would do it only quietly, under their breath. Yet the spirit of resistance was not crushed, and the New World would yet rise to the rescue of the old. The spirit of freedom is a hard thing to extinguish in the hearts of men. Like songs of hope.

Lest we forget, not just Ukrainians now mourn -- and resist. Among the resisters in Kiev was Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a fierce critic of Russian tyranny just released after a decade behind bars, and, still unterrified, rallying to freedom's cause. "I want you to know," he told a rally in Kiev's Independence Square, "there is a completely different Russia."

We in the West forget that, too. There is still a Russia of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, of Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov, of the zeks in the Gulag and the protesters in the streets of Moscow. There is still a

Russian soul, and the Russia that produced the music of Shostakovich and Rostropovich, Slava himself, master of the cello and freedom songs. And that Russia and those Russians will yet be heard from again.

The simple-minded depiction of Ukraine as a Russian province torn by another of the world's pointless language wars (remember the fuss over Quebec's wanting to secede from Canada?) is too simple.

To quote Julia Ioffe in The New Republic: "A map produced by the New York Times, for instance, represents Ukrainian in orange and Russian in blue, and announces that it depicts a simple split between the speakers of these languages. And yet, the fault line is hard to see: There are heavily orange dapples in the west, and intense blue spots in Crimea and Donetsk, but most of the rest is a brackish mingling of the two. It would take a very talented surgeon to carve the two languages apart -- or a charlatan to claim it can be done."

Any such map, contrary to the schematic drawing in the Times, would look more like a Jackson Pollock than a line drawing. And the Times would also have to explain why some of those fiery speeches in Kiev against this latest invasion of their country were delivered in Russian.

If there is a clear line today in Ukraine, it is not between Ukrainian and Russian speakers -- the languages are closely related anyway -- but between those who love freedom and those who don't. It is a line between a younger generation that has grown up Ukrainian, whatever language is spoken in the house, and that wants to stay Ukrainian, and an older generation who put on their Soviet uniforms and medals and parade around any statues of Lenin still extant. But the arc of history, to borrow a phrase from Martin Luther King Jr., still bends in the direction of hope. And freedom -- if men will it.

This struggle for a Ukraine free and whole again isn't about one national language or identity versus another, but about the sanctity of international borders, and whether they can be changed unilaterally, by force, and whether those caught in the middle can still be saved -- like Crimea's Tatars, exiled once before by Stalin, and whose property even now is being expropriated by the new Stalinists led by Comrade/President Putin.

The line between good and evil, as Solzhenitsyn once wrote, doesn't run between ideologies or nationalities but down the middle of the human heart. And, to quote a lover of both liberty and order named Edmund Burke, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Our current president is proving himself adept at doing just that -- pretty much nothing -- as he appeases one tyrant after another, whether in Moscow or Teheran or Damascus or ... wherever the next threat looms.

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**Washington Post**

## **Obama's pathetic response to Putin's invasion of Crimea**

by Charles Krauthammer

Early in the Ukraine crisis, when the Europeans were working on bringing Ukraine into the EU system and Vladimir Putin was countering with threats and bribes, [one British analyst lamented](#) that “we went to a knife fight with a baguette.”

That was three months ago. Life overtakes parody. During the Ukrainian prime minister's [visit to Washington](#) last week, his government urgently requested military assistance. The Pentagon refused. It offered instead [military ration kits](#).

Putin [mobilizes thousands of troops](#), artillery and attack helicopters on Ukraine's borders and Washington counters with baguettes, American-style. One thing we can say for sure in these uncertain times: The invasion of Ukraine will be catered by the United States.

Why did we deny Ukraine weapons? Because in the Barack Obama-John Kerry worldview, arming the victim might be taken as a provocation. This kind of mind-bending illogic has marked the administration's response to the whole Crimea affair.

Why, after all, did Obama delay responding to Putin's infiltration, military occupation and seizure of Crimea in the first place? In order to provide Putin with a [path to de-escalation](#), “an offramp,” the preferred White House phrase.

An offramp? Did they really think that Putin was losing, that his invasion of Crimea was a disaster from which he needed some face-saving way out? And that the principal object of American diplomacy was to craft for Putin an exit strategy?

It's delusional enough to think that Putin — in seizing Crimea, threatening eastern Ukraine, destabilizing Kiev, shaking NATO, terrifying America's East European allies and making the West look utterly helpless — was actually losing. But to imagine that Putin saw it that way as well and was waiting for American diplomacy to save him from a monumental blunder is totally divorced from reality.

After Obama's Russian “reset,” missile-defense retreat and Syria comedown, Putin had already developed an undisguised disdain for his U.S. counterpart. Yet even he must have been amazed by this newest American flight of fantasy. Putin reclaims a 200-year-old Russian patrimony with hardly a shot and to wild applause at home — Putin's [72 percent domestic popularity](#) is 30 points higher than Obama's — and America's leaders think he needs rescue?

Putin made it clear that he preferred Sevastopol to good reviews from the “international community.” Yet Obama and Kerry held off doing anything until the Crimean referendum — after which, they ominously threatened, there would be “consequences.”

[Obama unveiled them Monday](#) in a four-minute statement as flat-toned as a legal notice in the classifieds. The consequences? Visa denial and frozen assets for 11 people, [seven of them Russian](#).

Seven! Out of 140 million. No Putin. No Dmitry Medvedev. No oligarchs. Nor any of Putin's inner circle of ex-KGBers. No targeting of the energy sector or banks, Russia's industrial and financial lifeblood.

This elicited unreserved [mockery from the targeted Russians](#) themselves. One wondered whether the president's statement had been written by a prankster. The Duma voted that *it* should be sanctioned -- all 353 members who'd voted for annexation. And the financial markets, which abhor disruptions and crave nothing but continuity, responded with relief: Russia's spiked 3.7 percent; the Dow Jones rose 1.1 percent (180 points).

Putin responded with appropriate contempt. Within hours he recognized Crimea's secession. The next day, he [signed a treaty of annexation](#). (Two days later, Obama [expanded the list](#) of sanctioned Russians and added one bank. It will make no difference.)

[Europe's response was weaker still](#), sanctioning a list of even lesser Russian functionaries. The irony is that for two decades we've encouraged Russia's integration into the world economic system — including Obama's strong support for Russian accession to the World Trade Organization — thinking those ties, and the threat of losing them, would restrain Russian behavior.

On the contrary. It restrained European behavior. Europe has refused to adopt any measure that might significantly affect its commerce and natural gas imports from Russia.

What's our excuse? We import no Russian gas and have minimal trade with Russia. Yet our president appears strangely disengaged. The post-Cold War order of Europe has been brazenly violated — and Obama is nowhere to be seen.

[As I've argued here before](#), there are things we can do: Send the secretary of defense to Kiev tomorrow to negotiate military assistance. Renew the missile-defense agreement with Poland and the Czech Republic. Announce a new policy of major U.S. exports of liquefied natural gas. Lead Europe from the front — to impose sanctions cutting off Russian enterprises from the Western banking system.

As we speak, Putin is deciding whether to go beyond Crimea and take eastern Ukraine. Show him some seriousness, Mr. President.

**Right Turn**  
**[Hey, Putin's a bully!](#)**  
by Jennifer Rubin

Democrats, viewing President Obama's failure to halt Russian President Vladimir Putin's ambitions, have been forced to acknowledge that Putin doesn't share our worldview, or even our century. Former secretary of state Madeline Albright admitted on Sunday on CNN, "He personally thinks he can restore the greatness of Russia, and he also — what I'm troubled by about him is he thinks he needs an enemy, and so it is not a way to kind of move the process forward. The Russian people themselves, I do understand, they used to be a superpower and is not anymore,

but Putin is glorifying, I think in the sense, thinking that he is old Russia and restoring it. He is living in the past, and ultimately he's going the wrong direction."

Likewise, Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) conceded on Sunday: "Here is Vladimir Putin with a failing Soviet franchise. And when he can't win the hearts and minds of his neighboring nations, he uses energy extortion, masked gunmen and barbed wire. Now, he is a bully, and we've got to call him for what he is . . . . Vladimir Putin is conscious and aware of his standing in the world economy, he has to understand that this aggression in Crimea is not helping the reputation of Russia as a modern nation where you can do business. He's back to the old Soviet ways. . . ."

This raises several related issues that go to the heart of the foreign policy debate.

First, Democrats derided Mitt Romney for correctly analyzing Putin and, more important, cheered reset, welcomed Russia's participation in the Syria WMD deal and argued that Russia was a responsible partner in arms-reduction deals. They were, apparently, just as naïve as was Hillary Clinton and just as foolhardy in supporting moves like withdrawal of anti-missile sites from Eastern Europe. This was a major failure of vision and judgment, to which not only they but also the president should own up. They like to point back to the invasion of Georgia as evidence of President George W. Bush's failure to restrain Putin, but it was the Democrats who pushed for reset even **after** Putin invaded his neighbor.

Second, in recognizing that Putin defies international norms, has interests other than ours and is a determined foe pretty much discredits the entire non-interventionism advocated by libertarians such as Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) Their thinking is that the United States can withdraw from the world militarily, manage relations through trade, avoid aiding vulnerable countries and let the rest of the world in essence work things out. (Unlike the left, they don't even trust multilateral institutions to referee disputes.) This is, of course, nonsense if you look at the behavior and motivations of countries such as Russia, China, Syria, North Korea, Venezuela and Cuba. Rogue states don't want trade; they want territory, power and "respect." It is only through using the full array of U.S. powers – including the willingness to support allies with economic and military aid — that we can restrain them.

And finally, if we can all now agree Russia marches to its own drummer, can we also agree that Iran is not motivated by rational calculations either? For the mullahs, the 19th-century outlook would be a vast improvement. Instead, their motivations should — just as we have learned from Putin — be taken at face value. They tell us clearly in words and deeds what they want: Israel's eradication, preservation of their nuclear program, support for terror groups and collapse of the Sunni monarchs. They don't want to be included in the "international community" if the ground rules deny them these objectives. They cannot be lured out of their ambitions by relaxed sanctions. In short, the effort to paint the negotiations with Iran as simply an effort to dispel mistrust and find common ground is rooted in the same naiveté that afflicted the Democrats' outlook toward Russia.

The Obama administration has not been practicing "realism"; the president and his advisers have been living in a fantasy world in which our foes are eagerly awaiting our hand in friendship and in which if we work hard enough we can align their interests and ours. Once we realize the flawed assumptions on which such a worldview rests, nearly every policy choice (e.g. not forcing out Bashar al-Assad, reducing our military, relaxing sanctions on Iran, prematurely exiting Afghanistan) can be seen as wrongheaded. Realism now requires we reject the president's worldview and get about the business of defending American interests against real and formidable



foes. It should also suggest the unrepentant architects of the mistaken worldview shouldn't be entrusted with responsibility for our national security.

## Right Turn

### Please, Mr. President, stop talking

by Jennifer Rubin

Just when you think our commander in chief cannot sound more clueless, he does it again.

Tuesday's utterance was this: "Russia is a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors — not out of strength but out of weakness. They don't pose the number one national security threat to the United States. I continue to be much more concerned when it comes to our security with the prospect of a nuclear weapon going off in Manhattan." *Where to begin?*

President Obama tries vainly to insult Russia as a mere regional power, yet that regional power has defied him, the Western alliance and international norms. Does that make Russian President Vladimir Putin the leader of a lesser state or Obama the head of an enfeebled world power? The notion that Putin is the weak one and we're the strong one sounds like third-rate spin from the blogosphere (now we know where the spinners' material comes from), not the response of a mature world leader who needs to enact punishment so as to change *Putin's* perceptions, not his own. When Obama talks this way, it sounds as if he is attempting to console himself, not project U.S. power or reassure allies.

Russia might not be the No. 1 threat (Mitt Romney didn't say it was, if the president would put down the straw man briefly) but it is up there — challenging us in Europe, propping up Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and making deals to help revive the Iranian economy. Moreover, you don't have to be the No. 1 threat (Who *is* that then?) to be taken seriously. This isn't a comic in which only "Public Enemy No. 1" need command our attention. Obama's flippancy mirrors his comments about Iran — nothing to worry about, keep walking along.

And as for the bomb going off in Manhattan, maybe we should keep our NSA surveillance in place if such plots are still of paramount concern. (Al-Qaeda is no longer on its heels, we can at least agree.) And once again, simply because the president can dream up other horrible scenarios is no excuse for failing to address the immediate ones.

His comments are akin to calling Edward Snowden (who not coincidentally resides in the regional power of Russia) a "29-year-old hacker," so as to excuse both the gravity of the breach and his own laxity in trying to get him back. It's hard to imagine the president is truly so cavalier about his latest foreign policy debacle. But one suspects (hopes, even!) that he understands at some level how badly he misjudged Putin, how little he is respected and how nervous are our allies. But rather than take serious measures (e.g. export LNG, stop slashing our military) he'd rather engage in rhetorical flights of fancy. His obsession with words and his excessive self-regard are what got us into this and other situations in which seemingly two-bit powers run rings around him. That's not a reflection of their relative strength, but of the president's ineptitude in defending U.S. interests.

Now — are you sitting down? — Obama made an even more troubling comment on Tuesday, calling North Korea's nuclear program "unacceptable." Umm. . . . **Yikes!** That is precisely what he

has been calling an Iranian nuclear weapon program. But North Korea, it is widely believed, **has** a nuclear weapon. So we now know all too well that “unacceptable” means a two-bit regional threat defies every international norm, threatens the United States and our allies and incurs the rhetorical barbs of the president of the United States — but suffers no real consequences for its actions. Good grief.

## Townhall

### [Ukraine Illustrates Hard Truths Liberals Won't Face](#)

by Kurt Schlichter

It's a safe bet that the next smug liberal dork you hear repeating the cheesy cliché about how “Reality has a liberal bias” doesn't live in Ukraine.

The key to understanding liberals is realizing that they are immune to argument. The concept underlying the idea of a debate is that facts and reasoning can lead one to change his previous conclusions. But liberals begin with their conclusions; facts and reasoning that may undermine the preexisting conclusion must be at least ignored, if not actively attacked. This is why you see liberals shouting about jailing global warming deniers as blizzards rage outside.

The problem liberals always face is that the world refuses to honor their preconceived notions. Sometimes we get lucky and the liberal wises up, at least a little. For instance, Jimmy Carter woke up to the fact that the Soviet Union was composed of genuine bastards when they invaded Afghanistan, and in fits and starts he took action. This shocking burst of foreign policy competence is almost single-handedly responsible for raising Carter's ranking on the list of America's greatest presidents all the way up to 39th. Zombie Millard Fillmore was totally bummed.

Now we are in the almost unimaginable position of looking back at Jimmy Carter as an example of comparatively sure, savvy leadership. The Russians invaded Afghanistan and Carter armed the rebels. The Russians invaded Crimea and Barack Obama went on Ellen to hear the hostess gush about how much America loves Obamacare.

It's no surprise that both Carter and Obama were stunned to find that their counterparts out there on the Eurasian steppes were evil, violent thugs determined to maximize their own power by whatever means necessary. After all, in the liberal universe there are no bad people, except for conservatives and male college students who fail to obtain a notarized statement from their drunken dates authorizing them to advance to second base.

After all, human nature is just a construct. At heart, everyone is just a metrosexual college student sitting in a gender studies class, eager to work together with a diverse group of other like-minded individuals to forge a better tomorrow.

That a guy like Putin might act like a guy like Putin never occurred to them. But it occurred to conservatives. We understand that human nature is not a mere construct, that evil is real, and that the uniquely American understanding of the natural rights of man is the one true hope for humanity.

Liberals don't want to face the truth that sometimes you can't talk it out, or make a deal. They don't want to face the fact that they must sometimes put away childish things – like the ridiculous climate change scam they push to enhance their own power – and deal with the world not as they wish it to be but as it is.

They are desperate to change the subject from the invasion of Ukraine back to their own agenda. The people of Ukraine? Collateral damage in the cause of pushing the progressive program.

You would think that the invasion of a major European state might alarm or upset the Western Europeans. And it does. They are angry that they are expected to rise out of their welfare state stupor and act. They won't. The Ukrainian people's cries for help get treated like Kitty Genovese's (at least in the New York Times's false telling). The West just doesn't want to get involved.

Years ago, the Europeans made a conscious decision to inhabit an imaginary world where everyone is just as emasculated and effete as they, where everyone wants to anesthetize themselves from the pain of responsibility with social spending and moral posturing. But most of the world didn't get the memo that weak is the new strong.

While Europe slashed its military budgets to pump up subsidies for vast populations of unemployed, childless university grads and middle-aged pensioners, the rest of the world stuck with the tried and true methodology of might making right. China is increasing its military budget by double digits. Iran is cooking up a hot rock. And Assad's gleeful slaughter of his own people continues, with thousands figuratively strung up with surplus red line.

America, sadly, is following the Europeans' path to helplessness. The richest country in the world is gutting its military just as its enemies – unlike liberals, conservatives understand that we have enemies – are building their strength and flexing their muscles. It's not that we are short of the money we need to fund an adequate military. It's that we instead choose to spend the money on deadbeats, crony capitalists and farcical liberal fads du jour.

It's shameful. Our warriors shouldn't get the scraps left over after the pigs finish feeding at the trough. How about we make the supreme sacrifice of ending such imperatives as cowboy poetry slams in order to make sure we have a United States Marine Corps that won't fit comfortably inside a banquet room at the Rancho Cucamonga Holiday Inn?

If our leaders could accept facts, they would have responded to Putin by reversing the decimation of the greatest military – and greatest force for human freedom – in all of history. But they didn't.

If our leaders could accept facts, they would forget their climate change foolishness. Europe outsourced its natural gas supply to Russia, letting those Slavs far away do all that dirty drilling and refining. Our leaders should have eviscerated Putin's economy by cutting the regulations that prevent the United States from ramping up its natural gas exports and replacing Russia as Europe's gas station. But they didn't.

They heard the trumpet sound, and they turned up their Mumford & Sons MP3 to drown it out.

This isn't just about Putin. This is about every neo-fascist left-wing dictatorship out there smelling weakness, and what weakness smells like is blood. This isn't going to just stop. This is only going to get worse until we stop it.

Liberals won't face that truth, but we conservatives understand that reality has a conservative bias. And the most important reality right now is that if you won't stand up with a rifle and a fixed bayonet and hold your ground, sooner or later you will be someone's slave.

## Contentions

### Obama Loses Complete Touch with Reality

by Peter Wehner

Last week I wrote that President Obama, having been bested by Vladimir Putin at virtually every turn, has retreated into a world of his own making. "He's created a fantasy world where disengagement translates into influence and we're strong and Putin is weak," I [said](#).

I'm here to report that Mr. Obama's dissociative disorder has become more, not less, acute. As evidence I would point to [an exchange the president had yesterday with ABC's Jonathan Karl](#), in which Mr. Obama made this claim: □

Russia is a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors, not out of strength but out of weakness... The fact that Russia felt compelled to go in militarily and laid bare these violations of international law indicates less influence, not more.

This is—and I want to be properly respectful here—crazy. Does the president really and truly believe that Russia has less influence now that it has seized Crimea without a single Russian casualty? Does he believe that in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Poland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Latvia they consider Russia less influential and weaker since the conquest of Crimea?

According to [a story from the Washington Post](#), titled "NATO general warns of further Russian aggression,"

Ukrainian officials have been warning for weeks that Russia is trying to provoke a conflict in eastern Ukraine, a charge that Russia denies. But Breedlove [U.S. Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, the commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Europe] said Russian ambitions do not stop there.

"There is absolutely sufficient force postured on the eastern border of Ukraine to run to Transnistria if the decision was made to do that, and that is very worrisome," Breedlove said.

That's not all.

Russia has increased its influence in Syria, Egypt, and Iran. Indeed, Russia's position in the Middle East hasn't been this strong since Anwar Sadat expelled the Soviet Union from Egypt in the 1970s. Yet the president continues to make his preposterous claims. In public. Repeatedly.

I'm starting to be convinced this isn't simply a talking point by a president on the defensive. I think he actually believes what he's saying. Which means he is losing touch with reality. Which may be the most worrisome thing of all.

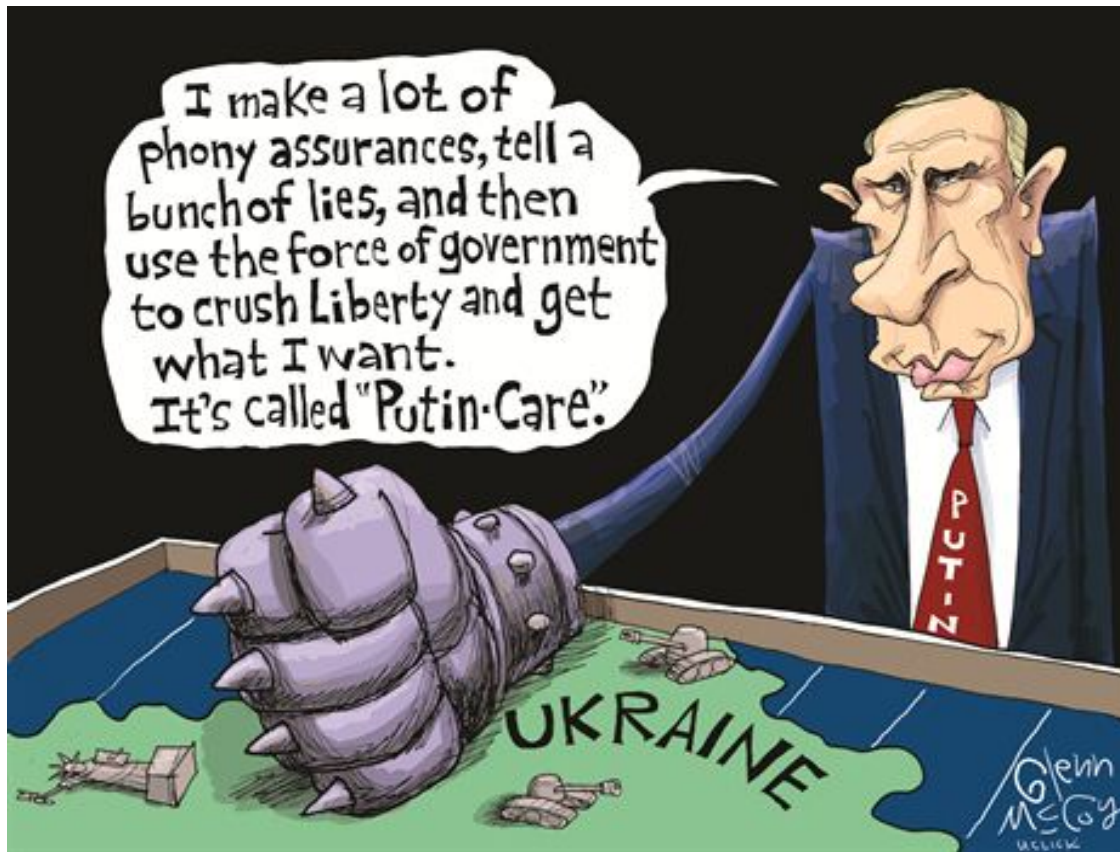
**The Corner**  
**The Republican Style**  
by Kevin D. Williamson

Barack Obama showed up at his meeting with Dutch PM Mark Rutte with his usual caravan of armored limousines and the like. Here's how Mr. Rutte got there:



Dutch leaders not only are better at republican manners than ours are — no caesaropapist trappings for Mr. Rutte — but also offer a standing rebuke to American cultural practices by reminding us that it is possible to ride a bicycle without special shoes, a helmet, or spandex.











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