

March 3, 2014

Even though Putin's pace is such that things are unfolding very quickly, there is still time for Krauthammer's column on Ukraine from last Thursday.

*Henry Kissinger once pointed out that since Peter the Great, Russia had been expanding at the rate of one Belgium per year. All undone, of course, by the collapse of the Soviet Union, which Russian President Vladimir Putin called "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the [20th] century."*

*Putin's mission is restoration. First, restore traditional Russian despotism by dismantling its nascent democracy. And then, having created iron-fisted "stability," march.*

*Use the 2008 war with Georgia to detach two of its provinces, returning them to the bosom of Mother Russia (by way of Potemkin independence). Then late last year, pressure Ukraine to reject a long-negotiated deal for association with the European Union, to draw Ukraine into Putin's planned "Eurasian Union" as the core of a new Russian mini-empire.*

*Turns out, however, Ukraine had other ideas. It overthrew Moscow's man in Kiev, Viktor Yanukovich, and turned to the West. But the West — the E.U. and America — had no idea what to do.*

*Russia does. ...*

*... Secretary of State John Kerry says Russian intervention would be a mistake. Alas, any such declaration from this administration carries the weight of a feather. But better than nothing. Better still would be backing these words with a naval flotilla in the Black Sea.*

*Whether anything Obama says or does would stop anyone remains questionable. ..*

Talk about two incomprehensible world views! Paul Mirengoff posts on the 90 minute chat between the president and Russia's Putintate.

*As John noted below, President Obama spent an hour and a half on the telephone with Vladimir Putin discussing the Russian invasion of Ukraine. What was the conversation like?*

*We can probably get a good sense of it by considering the account of President Bush's conversations with Putin set forth by Peter Baker in his excellent book about the Bush presidency, Days of Fire.*

*It's well known that Bush and Putin got on well at first. But when the relationship soured, Bush became exasperated by his talks with the Russian bully.*

*Putin seemed to delight in debating Bush. But according to Baker, Bush hated debating Putin. "He's not well informed," Bush complained. "It's like arguing with an eighth grader with his facts wrong." Bush described another encounter as "like junior high debating."*

*One of Putin's tactics was to present absurd analogies between his abuses of power and events in the U.S., a tactic also favored by Nikita Khrushchev in Soviet times: ...*

More on the dithering president from [Jonathan Tobin](#).

*... Weakness and irresolution are fungible commodities in international diplomacy. The Obama administration gave up the formidable military, political and economic leverage they had over Iran last fall by signing an interim agreement with Iran that gave Tehran what it wanted in terms of recognizing their right to enrich uranium as well as loosening sanctions in exchange for almost nothing. If the Iranians had good reason to think they had nothing to fear from the Obama administration before this latest humiliation of the president at the hands of Putin, their conviction that they can be as tough as they like with him without worrying about a strong American response can only be greater today.*

*It is too late to save Ukraine from the theft of its territory. But it is not too late to reverse the U.S. retreat from the world stage that has been going on in the last years. President Obama can begin to regain some of his credibility by taking a strong stand on sanctions against Russia and sticking to it. But if he doesn't no one should be under the illusion that it won't affect Obama's ability to prevail in the Iran talks. The cost of Obama-style weakness and isolationism will not be cheap, either for U.S. allies or for an American people who must now understand what it is like to live in a world where no one respects or fears their government.*

Unchecked aggression abroad is matched and complimented by the increasing nastiness of the left in our country. [Holman Jenkins](#) writes on climate-change freaks and their growing attacks on the un-persuaded.

*Surely, some kind of ending is upon us. Last week climate protesters demanded the silencing of Charles Krauthammer for a Washington Post column that notices uncertainties in the global warming hypothesis. In coming weeks a libel trial gets under way brought by Penn State's Michael Mann, author of the famed hockey stick, against National Review, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, writer Rand Simberg and roving commentator Mark Steyn for making wisecracks about his climate work. The New York Times runs a cartoon of a climate "denier" being stabbed with an icicle.*

*These are indications of a political movement turned to defending its self-image as its cause goes down the drain. That's how thoroughly defunct, dead, expired is the idea that humanity might take charge of earth's atmosphere through some supreme triumph of the global regulatory state over democracy, sovereignty, nationalism and political self-interest, the very facts of political human nature.*

*Let's restate more accurately a plan recently announced by Thomas Steyer, a California hedge-fund billionaire whose idea is to make the coming midterms about climate change: He would spend \$100 million to flog an issue voters don't care about, to defeat Republicans whose defeat would have no impact on climate change, in order to replace them with Democrats whose election would have no impact on climate change.*

*Mr. Steyer's thinking is puzzling unless his goal is to make \$100 million disappear. If his purpose were to elect Democrats, wouldn't his money go further attacking Republicans on matters of interest to voters? If he wants to move the ball on climate change, wouldn't a better place to start*

*be undoing the damage his fellow climate lobbyists have done to the cause with their hysterical exaggerations, false statements and moral bullying? ...*

**Peggy Noonan** calls them the "aggressive left."

*... We are suffering in great part from the politicization of everything and the spread of government not in a useful way but a destructive one. Everyone wants to help the poor, the old and the sick; the safety net exists because we want it. But voters and taxpayers feel bullied, burdened and jerked around, which again is not new but feels more intense every day. Common sense and native wit tell them America is losing the most vital part of itself in the continuing shift of power from private to public. Rules, regulations, many of them stupid, from all the agencies—local, state, federal—on the building of a house, or the starting of a business. You can only employ so many before the new insurance rules kick in so don't employ too many, don't take a chance! Which means: Don't grow. It takes the utmost commitment to start a school or improve an existing one because you'll come up against the unions, which own the politicians.*

*It's all part of the malaise, the sclerosis. So is the eroding end of the idea that religious scruples and beliefs have a high place that must culturally and politically be respected. The political-media complex is bravely coming down on florists with unfashionable views. On Twitter Thursday the freedom-fighter who tweets as @FriedrichHayek asked: "Can the government compel a Jewish baker to deliver a wedding cake on a Saturday? If not why not." Why not indeed. Because the truly tolerant give each other a little space? On an optimistic note, the Little Sisters of the Poor haven't been put out of business and patiently await their day in court. ...*

**George Will** says the left will always take care of themselves.

*The many jaundiced assessments of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act on the fifth anniversary of its enactment were understandable, given that the sluggish recovery, now drowsing through the second half of its fifth year, is historically anemic. Still, bleak judgments about the stimulus spending miss the main point of it, which was to funnel a substantial share of its money to unionized, dues-paying, Democratic-voting government employees. Hence the stimulus succeeded. So there.*

*This illustrates why it is so sublime to be a liberal nowadays. Viewed through the proper prism, most liberal policies succeed because they can hardly fail. Each achieves one or both of two objectives — making liberals feel good about themselves and being good to liberal candidates.*

*Consider Barack Obama's renewed anxiety about global warming, increasingly called "climate change" during the approximately 15 years warming has become annoyingly difficult to detect. Secretary of State John Kerry, our knight of the mournful countenance, was especially apocalyptic recently when warning that climate change is a "weapon of mass destruction." Like Iraq's?*

*Blogger Steven Hayward noted that Kerry, he of the multiple mansions and luxury yacht, issued this warning in Indonesia, where the average annual income (\$3,420) suggests little latitude for people to reduce their carbon footprints. ...*

---

**Washington Post**  
**Putin's Ukraine gambit**  
by Charles Krauthammer

Henry Kissinger once pointed out that since Peter the Great, Russia had been expanding at the rate of one Belgium per year. All undone, of course, by the collapse of the Soviet Union, which [Russian President Vladimir Putin called](#) “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the [20th] century.”

Putin's mission is restoration. First, restore traditional Russian despotism by dismantling its nascent democracy. And then, having created iron-fisted “stability,” march.

Use the [2008 war with Georgia to detach two of its provinces](#), returning them to the bosom of Mother Russia (by way of Potemkin independence). Then late last year, [pressure Ukraine to reject a long-negotiated deal](#) for association with the European Union, to draw Ukraine into Putin's planned “Eurasian Union” as the core of a new Russian mini-empire.

Turns out, however, Ukraine had other ideas. [It overthrew Moscow's man in Kiev](#), Viktor Yanukovich, and turned to the West. But the West — the E.U. and America — had no idea what to do.

Russia does. [Moscow denounces the overthrow](#) as the illegal work of fascist bandits, [refuses to recognize the new government](#) created by parliament, withholds all economic assistance and, in a highly provocative escalation, [mobilizes its military forces on the Ukrainian border](#).

The response? The E.U. dithers and Barack Obama slumbers. After near- total silence during the first three months of Ukraine's struggle for freedom, Obama said on camera last week that in his view [Ukraine is no “Cold War chessboard.”](#)

Unfortunately, this is exactly what it is for Putin. He wants Ukraine back.

[Obama wants stability](#), the New York Times reports, quoting internal sources. He sees Ukraine as merely a crisis to be managed rather than an opportunity to alter the increasingly autocratic trajectory of the region, allow Ukrainians to join their destiny to the West and block Russian neo-imperialism.

Sure, Obama is sympathetic to democracy. But it must arise organically, from internal developments. “These democratic movements will be more sustainable if they are seen as .□.□. coming from within these societies,” says deputy national security adviser Benjamin Rhodes. Democracy must not be imposed by outside intervention but develop on its own.

But Ukraine is never on its own. Not with a bear next door. American neutrality doesn't allow an authentic Ukrainian polity to emerge. It leaves Ukraine naked to Russian pressure.

What Obama doesn't seem to understand is that American inaction creates a vacuum. His evacuation from Iraq consigned that country to Iranian hegemony, just as Obama's writing off Syria invited in Russia, Iran and Hezbollah to reverse the tide of battle.

Putin fully occupies vacuums. In Ukraine, he keeps flaunting his leverage. He's [withdrawn the multibillion-dollar aid package](#) with which he had pulled the now-deposed Ukrainian president away from the E.U. He has suddenly mobilized Russian forces bordering Ukraine. His health officials are even questioning the [safety of Ukrainian food exports](#).

This is no dietary hygiene campaign. This is a message to Kiev: We can shut down your agricultural exports today, your natural gas supplies tomorrow. We can make you broke and we can make you freeze.

[Kissinger once also said](#), "In the end, peace can be achieved only by hegemony or by balance of power." Either Ukraine will fall to Russian hegemony or finally determine its own future — if America balances Russia's power.

How? Start with a declaration of full-throated American support for Ukraine's revolution. Follow that with a serious loan/aid package — say, replacing Moscow's \$15 billion — to get Ukraine through its immediate financial crisis (the announcement of a [\\$1 billion pledge of U.S. loan guarantees](#) is a good first step). Then join with the E.U. to extend a longer substitute package, preferably through the International Monetary Fund.

[Secretary of State John Kerry says](#) Russian intervention would be a mistake. Alas, any such declaration from this administration carries the weight of a feather. But better than nothing. Better still would be backing these words with a naval flotilla in the Black Sea.

Whether anything Obama says or does would stop anyone remains questionable. But surely the West has more financial clout than Russia's kleptocratic extraction economy that exports little but oil, gas and vodka.

The point is for the United States, leading Europe, to counter Russian pressure and make up for its blandishments/punishments until Ukraine is on firm financial footing.

Yes, \$15 billion is a lot of money. But it's less than one-half of one-tenth of 1 percent of the combined E.U. and U.S. GDP. And expending treasure is infinitely preferable to expending blood. Especially given the strategic stakes: Without Ukraine, there's no Russian empire.

Putin knows that. Which is why he keeps ratcheting up the pressure. The question is, can this administration muster the counterpressure to give Ukraine a chance to breathe?

## Power Line

### [What was that Obama-Putin conversation like?](#)

by Paul Mirengoff

As [John noted below](#), President Obama spent an hour and a half on the telephone with Vladimir Putin discussing the Russian invasion of Ukraine. What was the conversation like?

We can probably get a good sense of it by considering the [account](#) of President Bush's conversations with Putin set forth by Peter Baker in his excellent book about the Bush presidency, [Days of Fire](#).

It's well known that Bush and Putin got on well at first. But when the relationship soured, Bush became exasperated by his talks with the Russian bully.

Putin seemed to delight in debating Bush. But according to Baker, Bush hated debating Putin. "He's not well informed," Bush complained. "It's like arguing with an eighth grader with his facts wrong." Bush described another encounter as "like junior high debating."

One of Putin's tactics was to present absurd analogies between his abuses of power and events in the U.S., a tactic also favored by Nikita Khrushchev in Soviet times:

"You talk about Khodorkovsky [the head of Yukos whose assets and freedom were taken from him after he became a critic of Putin], and I talk about Enron," Putin told Bush. "You appoint the Electoral College and I appoint governors. What's the difference?"

At another point, Putin defended his control over media in Russia. "Don't lecture me about the free press," he said, "not after you fired that reporter."

"Vladimir, are you talking about Dan Rather?" Bush asked. Yes, replied Putin.

Bush explained to Putin that he had nothing to do with Rather losing his job. "I strongly suggest you not say that in public," he added. "The American people will think you don't understand our system."

Putin's ridiculous arguments were even harder to stomach because they were presented stridently and sarcastically by Putin's interpreter. After one session, Bush told Tony Blair:

I sat there for an hour and forty-five minutes or an hour and forty minutes, and it went on and on. At one point, the interpreter made me so mad that I nearly reached over the table and slapped the hell out of the guy. He had a mocking tone, making accusations about America. He was just sarcastic.

This may have represented displacement of the anger Bush felt towards Putin.

In all likelihood, Putin gave Obama the same kind of treatment when they discussed Ukraine. Even "Mr. Words" Obama, who fancies himself an ace debater and has been known to use a "junior high" trick or two, must have tired of it pretty quickly.

No patriotic American should wish an hour and a half talk with Vladimir Putin on any American president. Let's hope at least that Putin used a different interpreter.

JOHN adds: I am not sure any patriotic American would want an hour and a half talk with Barack Obama, either, but I will let it go. In this context, for better or worse, Barack is our guy. Sadly.

## Contentions

### Obama, Ukraine and the Price of Weakness

by Jonathan S. Tobin

There may be no way for the United States to reverse the [Russia's seizure of Crimea from Ukraine](#). The Obama administration still has the opportunity to send a strong message to Russian President Vladimir Putin to punish Moscow for this aggression in response to the ouster of one of their stooge in Kiev by a popular uprising. Indeed, he would do well to listen to [the advice of Senator Marco Rubio](#) who outlined eight steps the U.S. should take in response to the crisis. But whether or not the president acts appropriately now, it's probably too late to preserve the territorial integrity of Ukraine from a predatory Russia. As he did in Georgia in 2008, Putin counted on both America and Europe being too weak and irresolute to stop him from aggression carried on in his own backyard even if meant violating international law by carrying out a unilateral partition of Ukraine to either annex part of that country to Russia or, as is more likely, set up another puppet state in the strategic Crimea. At this moment, there's little reason to believe that calculation was incorrect.

But even if we take for granted that it's too late to save Ukraine, the spectacle of Russian aggression should provoke a re-examination of the direction of U.S. foreign policy under President Obama. It should also cause us to think again about the assumption that the American people are, as Senator Rand Paul and a growing chorus of isolationists on both the right and the left have advocated, perfectly happy to retreat from the world stage and let aggressors such as Putin's Russia or Iran have their way. The lessons of the tragedy unfolding in the Crimea are many, but surely the first of them must be that when dictators don't fear the warnings of the leader of the free world and when America demonstrates that it is war weary and won't, on almost any account, take firm action, to defend its interests and to restrain aggression, mayhem is almost certainly always going to follow.

No doubt there will be many, whether they call themselves realists or isolationists, who will in the coming days argue that what happens in the Ukraine is none of our business. Americans who are sick of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan say they want no part of foreign wars or even a strong foreign policy that carries with it the chance of engaging in conflict. They may not cheer when Barack Obama speaks of "leading from behind" but they are entirely comfortable with the general drift toward retreat that has taken place in the last five years under his leadership. But, as we have seen in Syria and now in the Ukraine, there is a price to pay for such weakness and it is not one that will be paid by Bashar Assad or Putin. Nor will others who seek to test the mettle of American resolve, such as the leaders of Iran, fail to observe that the free world is led by a paper tiger. U.S. allies will draw the same conclusion.

A world in which dictators do as they like despite clear American warnings — as President Obama did first in Syria and then again this week about attacks on Ukraine — is not only a far more dangerous place. It also creates a dynamic in which every such American warning or diplomatic initiative is discounted as mere rhetoric, even if those daring to defy the United States are not so well situated as Putin is with his bold stroke in the Crimea. That is especially true with regards to the negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program.

The circumstances of the U.S. diplomatic effort to restrain Iran's nuclear ambitions are starkly different from those in the territories of the former Soviet Union. But the basic formula of a bold rogue regime that has no reason to fear the threats or the blandishments of either the U.S. or

Europe is present in the P5+1 talks. Lack of credibility in foreign policy cannot be compartmentalized in one region or particular issue. Weakness and irresolution are fungible commodities in international diplomacy. The Obama administration gave up the formidable military, political and economic leverage they had over Iran last fall by signing an interim agreement with Iran that gave Tehran what it wanted in terms of recognizing their right to enrich uranium as well as loosening sanctions in exchange for almost nothing. If the Iranians had good reason to think they had nothing to fear from the Obama administration before this latest humiliation of the president at the hands of Putin, their conviction that they can be as tough as they like with him without worrying about a strong American response can only be greater today.

It is too late to save Ukraine from the theft of its territory. But it is not too late to reverse the U.S. retreat from the world stage that has been going on in the last years. President Obama can begin to regain some of his credibility by taking a strong stand on sanctions against Russia and sticking to it. But if he doesn't no one should be under the illusion that it won't affect Obama's ability to prevail in the Iran talks. The cost of Obama-style weakness and isolationism will not be cheap, either for U.S. allies or for an American people who must now understand what it is like to live in a world where no one respects or fears their government.

**WSJ**

### **Personal Score-Settling Is the New Climate Agenda**

***The cause of global carbon regulation may be lost, but enemies still can be punished.***

by Holman Jenkins

Surely, some kind of ending is upon us. Last week climate protesters demanded the silencing of Charles Krauthammer for a Washington Post column that notices uncertainties in the global warming hypothesis. In coming weeks a libel trial gets under way brought by Penn State's Michael Mann, author of the famed hockey stick, against National Review, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, writer Rand Simberg and roving commentator Mark Steyn for making wisecracks about his climate work. The New York Times runs a cartoon of a climate "denier" being stabbed with an icicle.

These are indications of a political movement turned to defending its self-image as its cause goes down the drain. That's how thoroughly defunct, dead, expired is the idea that humanity might take charge of earth's atmosphere through some supreme triumph of the global regulatory state over democracy, sovereignty, nationalism and political self-interest, the very facts of political human nature.

Let's restate more accurately a plan recently announced by Thomas Steyer, a California hedge-fund billionaire whose idea is to make the coming midterms about climate change: He would spend \$100 million to flog an issue voters don't care about, to defeat Republicans whose defeat would have no impact on climate change, in order to replace them with Democrats whose election would have no impact on climate change.

Mr. Steyer's thinking is puzzling unless his goal is to make \$100 million disappear. If his purpose were to elect Democrats, wouldn't his money go further attacking Republicans on matters of interest to voters? If he wants to move the ball on climate change, wouldn't a better place to start



be undoing the damage his fellow climate lobbyists have done to the cause with their hysterical exaggerations, false statements and moral bullying?

He could begin by running ads leveling with Americans about climate science. We know with comfortable certainty that human industry is adding to carbon dioxide, a so-called greenhouse gas, in the atmosphere. An insoluble noise-to-signal problem, though, is how much the human component may have influenced climate change already. And forecasts of future warming depend on theoretical models that are highly speculative and necessarily suspect.

Then there's the political problem: Nothing America could do by itself would make a significant difference. Anything agreed with other countries, given diplomatic incentives, would be an empty gesture designed mainly to benefit incumbent politicians.



*Thomas Steyer*

Indeed, a rational case for action on cost-benefit grounds is challenging to make at all. Even if it weren't, the nature of human power games, which advocates are powerless to change, means the effort could easily degenerate into a corrupt scramble for climate pork (see America's ethanol and Germany's solar subsidies).

If this sounds like a counsel of despair, think again. The counsel of despair was to rest mankind's hopes on a colossal pipedream. A world-wide social engineering project was never going to happen—luckily, since its results would have been less charming than activists imagine.

After 35 years, it's time to accept that adaptation is the way ahead. The problems of climate change, whatever its causes, are the same old human problems of poverty, disease and natural hazards like floods, storms and droughts. The best hope on offer is the continued accumulation of human wealth and knowledge.

Those who wish to slit their wrists at this point, feel free. But think about this: When human knowhow produces new energy technologies to replace current energy technologies, as it eventually will, we know the new technologies will be lower carbon. Why? Because extracting and distributing fossil fuels is fantastically expensive and becoming more so.

[Chevron](#)'s massive Gorgon gas project in the coastal waters of Australia is expected to cost \$54 billion. Shell and several others are spending \$116 billion to get oil from under the Caspian Sea in a remote part of Kazakhstan. Not to be flip, but a battery 10 times more efficient than today's would largely undermine the economics of these projects and make its inventor extraordinarily rich.

But engineering and venture capital (Mr. Steyer's job until he retired a year ago) are hard work and require personal resilience, while the pleasure of climate warriorhood is sitting at your little blog and picturing yourself a moral hero whose opponents deserve to be silenced if not exterminated. In our time, climate activism has devolved into self-medication for the moderately mentally ill (and who's to say this is not a useful service). Anyone genuinely concerned about the climate future might do better to get an engineering or finance degree.

**WSJ**

### **America and the Aggressive Left**

***Half the country feels—and is—beset by government. That's not progress.***

by Peggy Noonan

The constant mischief of the progressive left is hurting the nation's morale. There are few areas of national life left in which they are not busy, and few in which they're not making it worse. There are always more regulations, fees and fiats, always more cultural pressure and insistence.

The president brags he has a pen and a phone. He uses the former to sign executive orders. It is not clear why he mentioned the latter since he rarely attempts to bring legislators over to his side. Who exactly is he calling? The most hopeful thing he's done is signal this week what he'll be up to after he leaves. He will work with young minority men. Good. He is a figure of inspiration to them, and they need and deserve encouragement. This also leaves us understanding for the first time the true purpose of his so far unsuccessful presidency: to launch a meaningful postpresidency. I'm glad that's clear.

But to American morale. Here one refers to recent polling data. Gallup in December had 72% of those polled saying big government is a bigger threat to the future than big business and big labor—a record high. This may be connected to [ObamaCare](#), an analyst ventured. Rasmussen this week had only 32% of those polled saying the country is headed in the right direction, with 61% saying we're on the wrong track. Both numbers fluctuate, but the right track is down two points since this time last year and the wrong track up three. Gallup also had only 39% of respondents saying they saw America in a positive position, with less than half thinking it will be better in five years.

None of these numbers are new, exactly, as they reflect long-term trends. But they never lose their power to startle. The persistent blues, the lack of faith, the bet that things won't get better—it just doesn't sound like America.



We are suffering in great part from the politicization of everything and the spread of government not in a useful way but a destructive one. Everyone wants to help the poor, the old and the sick; the safety net exists because we want it. But voters and taxpayers feel bullied, burdened and jerked around, which again is not new but feels more intense every day. Common sense and native wit tell them America is losing the most vital part of itself in the continuing shift of power from private to public. Rules, regulations, many of them stupid, from all the agencies—local, state, federal—on the building of a house, or the starting of a business. You can only employ so many before the new insurance rules kick in *so don't employ too many, don't take a chance!* Which means: Don't grow. It takes the utmost commitment to start a school or improve an existing one because you'll come up against the unions, which own the politicians.

It's all part of the malaise, the sclerosis. So is the eroding end of the idea that religious scruples and beliefs have a high place that must culturally and politically be respected. The political-media complex is bravely coming down on florists with unfashionable views. On [Twitter](#) Thursday the freedom-fighter who tweets as @FriedrichHayek asked: "Can the government compel a Jewish baker to deliver a wedding cake on a Saturday? If not why not." Why not indeed. Because the truly tolerant give each other a little space? On an optimistic note, the Little Sisters of the Poor haven't been put out of business and patiently await their day in court.

I think a lot of people right now, certainly Republicans and conservatives, feel like a guy in a batting cage taking ball after ball from an automatic pitching machine. He's hitting the ball and keeping up and suddenly the machine starts going berserk. It's firing five balls a second, then 10. At first he tries to hit a few. Then he's just trying to duck, trying not to get hurt.

That's how people feel about the demands and dictates. The balls keep coming at them politically, locally, culturally. Republicans and conservatives comprise at least half the country. That's a lot of people.

In the dark screwball comedy that is [ObamaCare](#), the Congressional Budget Office revealed last month the law will provide disincentives to work. Don't worry, said [Nancy Pelosi](#), people can take that time and go become poets and painters. At first you think: Huh, I can do that, I've got a beret. Then you think: No, I have to earn a living. Then you think, poor hardworking rube that you are: Wait a second, I'm subsidizing all this. I've been cast in the role of Catherine de Medici, patroness of the arts. She at least had a castle, I just get a bill!

The IRS is coming up with new rules making it harder for independent groups to organize and resist the constant messages and claims of government. Meanwhile it warns taxpayers they must be able to prove they have insurance coverage when they file their 2014 taxes or they'll face a fine (or tax, or fee), which the government has decided to call a "shared responsibility payment." It is \$95 per adult and \$47.50 per child to a maximum of \$285, or 1% of your household income, whichever is higher. People already enraged by canceled coverage, higher premiums, huge deductibles, lost doctors and limited networks, fume. And the highest-ranking Democrat on Capitol Hill, Majority Leader [Harry Reid](#), goes to the floor of the Senate to say of the ObamaCare horror stories that "all of them are untrue." They're "stories made up out of whole cloth" spread by "the multibillionaire Koch brothers."

Imagine that—you have real problems caused by a bad law, and Mr. Reid tells you that what you are experiencing in your own life is a lie made up by propagandists. He sounded like Lenin. There is no cholera in the new Russia.

The NSA is a real and present threat to your privacy, HHS actually never has to come up with a true number on ObamaCare enrollments or costs, and at the EPA no one talks anymore about why Al Armendariz, a top regional administrator, felt free to brag in a 2010 speech that his "philosophy of enforcement" could be compared with the practice by ancient Roman soldiers of crucifying random victims. When it surfaced, he left the agency. Did his mind-set?

People feel beset because they are. All these things are pieces of a larger, bullying ineptitude. And people know, they are aware.

Conservatives sometimes feel exhausted from trying to fight back on a million fronts. A leftist might say: "Yes, that's the plan."

But the left too is damaged. They look hollowed out and incoherent. Their victories, removed of meaning, are only the triumphs of small aggressions. They win the day but not the era. The result is not progress but more national division, more of a grinding sense of dislike. At first it will be aimed at the progressive left, but in time it will likely be aimed at America itself, or rather America as It Is Now. When the progressive left wins, they will win, year by year, less of a country.

## **Washington Post**

### **[The liberal agenda: Being good to liberals](#)**

by George F. Will

The many jaundiced assessments of the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#) on the fifth anniversary of its enactment were understandable, given that the sluggish recovery, now drowning through the second half of its fifth year, is historically anemic. Still, bleak judgments about the



stimulus spending miss the main point of it, which was to funnel a substantial share of its money to unionized, dues-paying, Democratic-voting government employees. Hence the stimulus succeeded. So there.

This illustrates why it is so sublime to be a liberal nowadays. Viewed through the proper prism, most liberal policies succeed because they can hardly fail. Each achieves one or both of two objectives — making liberals feel good about themselves and being good to liberal candidates.

Consider Barack Obama's renewed anxiety about global warming, increasingly called "[climate change](#)" during the approximately 15 years warming has become annoyingly difficult to detect. [Secretary of State John Kerry](#), our knight of the mournful countenance, was especially apocalyptic recently when warning that climate change is a "weapon of mass destruction." Like Iraq's?

[Blogger Steven Hayward](#) noted that Kerry, he of the multiple mansions and luxury yacht, issued this warning in [Indonesia, where the average annual income \(\\$3,420\)](#) suggests little latitude for people to reduce their carbon footprints. Never mind. Obama says "the debate is settled. [Climate change is a fact.](#)"

When a politician says, concerning an issue involving science, that the debate is over, you may be sure the debate is rolling on and not going swimmingly for his side. Obama is, however, quite right that climate change is a fact. The climate is *always* changing: It is not what it was during the [Medieval Warm Period](#) (ninth to 13th centuries) or the [Little Ice Age](#) (about 1500-1850).

In Indonesia, Kerry embraced Obama's "Shut up, he explained" approach to climate discussion: "[The science of climate change](#) is leaping out at us like a scene from a 3-D movie." Leaping scenes? The "absolutely certain" science is "something that we understand with absolute assurance of the veracity of that science." And "kids at the earliest age can understand." No wonder "97 percent" — who did the poll? — of climate scientists agree. When a [Nazi publishing company produced](#) "100 Authors Against Einstein," the target of this argument-by-cumulation replied: "Were I wrong, one professor would have been quite enough."

Climate alarmism validates the progressive impulse to micromanage others' lives — their light bulbs, shower heads, toilets, appliances, automobiles, etc. Although this is a nuisance, it distracts liberals from more serious mischief. And conservatives incensed about Obama's proposed \$1 billion "[climate resilience fund](#)" — enough for nearly two Solyndra-scale crony-capitalism debacles — should welcome an Obama brainstorm that costs only a single billion.

Besides, the "resilience" fund will succeed. It will enhance liberals' self-esteem — planet-saving heroism is not chopped liver — and will energize the climate-alarmist portion of the Democratic base for November's elections.

Concerning that portion, there will now be a somewhat awkward pause in the chorus of liberal lamentations about there being "too much money" in politics because of wealthy conservatives. During this intermission, the chorus will segue into hosannas of praise for liberal billionaire [Tom Steyer](#). The New York Times says he plans to solicit \$50 million from similarly situated liberals, and to match this with \$50 million of his own, and to spend the pile to "pressure federal and state officials to enact climate change measures through a hard-edge campaign of attack ads against governors and lawmakers." The Times says Steyer's organization, NextGen Climate Action, is

“among the largest outside groups in the country, similar in scale to the conservative political network overseen by Charles and David Koch.”

Conservatives should be serene about people exercising their constitutional right to spend their own money to disseminate political speech, including the speech of people who associate in corporate forms for political advocacy. The Supreme Court’s excellent 2010 *Citizens United* [ruling](#), the mention of which sends liberals to their fainting couches, affirmed this right.

Still, there is a semantic puzzle: What are such “outside groups” outside of? Not the political process — unless the process is the private preserve of the political parties. Liberal campaign finance scolds seem to think so. Applying their mantra that “money is not speech,” they have written laws restricting contributions to parties, with the predicted effect of driving money into “outside groups.” This is redundant evidence of why the Law of Unintended Consequences might better be called the Law of Unending Liberal Regrets.





