

March 31, 2014

What do liberals think? Pickings' favorites have often written on the administration's foreign policy of "less". That would be less as in clueless, hapless, and feckless. Here's Ron Fournier of National Journal.

On a playground or in a bar, the most important thing to know about a bully is his motivation. What ticks him off? Who's his next victim? If it's you, how do you avoid a butt-kicking?

On the world stage, Vladimir Putin is a bully—and President Obama not only seems clueless about the Russian leader's inner drive, he embraces his ambivalence. "I'm less interested in motivation," Obama said Monday in The Hague, "and more interested in the facts and the principles that not only the United States but the entire international community are looking to uphold."

Taken at face value, it's a disturbing response from a world leader who should lie awake at night concerned about the motivation of U.S. adversaries, whose first meeting of every day involves an intelligence briefing on the motivations of global actors.

It could be that Obama is playing mind games with Putin, looking into the soul that transfixed President Bush 13 years ago and seeing a man whose greatest weakness is parochial hubris. Want to hurt Putin? Say you don't care about him. In a verbal equivalent of a groin punch, Obama might dismiss Russia as a "regional power" that antagonizes its neighbors "out of weakness."

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Major Garrett from the same publication.

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Noting Russia's long-standing influence in all of Ukraine, Obama said Russian President Vladimir Putin's illegal annexation of Crimea "indicates less influence, not more."

I guess that's why Ukraine's defense minister resigned and Ukrainian troops bugged out of Crimea, leaving it to Russian forces. This is the only "off ramp" that matters in Crimea. Ukraine and its rhetorically florid Western allies took it. Not Putin.

Even as the White House insists Crimea is not "lost" (Putin can find it without satellite imagery, after all), the grudging language of concession seeps from every corridor of Ukrainian talks here.

"It's not a done deal in the sense that the international community by and large isn't recognizing the annexation of Crimea," Obama said, before acknowledging the "facts on the ground" favored Russia. "It would be dishonest to say there is a simple solution to resolving what has already taken place in Crimea."

Obama and European leaders are rattled and resentful, thunderstruck that the wispy bonds of international "norms" could be so easily shredded. Fearful of the precedent they appear incapable of reversing, and desperate to limit Putin's ambitions to Crimea, the G-7 nations have effectively

conceded Crimea. They threatened “sectoral sanctions” if Putin further bulldozed international law by gobbling up more of Ukraine or plowing into Moldova. Weak or strong, Putin enforces the new Crimean status quo. All he’s lost is Russia’s G-8 membership pin and decoder ring. ...

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At first glance, these two events have little in common. But modern politics is all about narratives and storylines. And both of these events confirm a growing concern from the public about President Obama: That he's just not up to governing his administration and, by extension, the country, effectively.

A new CNN/ORC national poll reveals the problem. Asked whether Obama can "manage the government effectively," nearly six in 10 (57 percent) say that statement didn't apply to the president. Compare that to where Obama stood just before he was inaugurated, when 76 percent of respondents in a December 2008 CNN/ORC poll said he was an effective manager, and you see just how far he has fallen. Not only that but in the most recent CNN/ORC poll, Obama's standing on the "effective manager" question was the lowest he scored on any of the 11 characteristic questions asked in the survey. ...

And a repeat of a Washington Post editorial saying the president's foreign policy is based on fantasy.

FOR FIVE YEARS, President Obama has led a foreign policy based more on how he thinks the world should operate than on reality. It was a world in which “the tide of war is receding” and the United States could, without much risk, radically reduce the size of its armed forces. Other leaders, in this vision, would behave rationally and in the interest of their people and the world. Invasions, brute force, great-power games and shifting alliances — these were things of the past. Secretary of State John F. Kerry displayed this mindset on ABC’s “This Week” Sunday when he said, of Russia’s invasion of neighboring Ukraine, “It’s a 19th century act in the 21st century.”

That’s a nice thought, and we all know what he means. A country’s standing is no longer measured in throw-weight or battalions. The world is too interconnected to break into blocs. A small country that plugs into cyberspace can deliver more prosperity to its people (think Singapore or Estonia) than a giant with natural resources and standing armies.

Unfortunately, Russian President Vladimir Putin has not received the memo on 21st-century behavior. Neither has China’s president, Xi Jinping, who is engaging in gunboat diplomacy against Japan and the weaker nations of Southeast Asia. Syrian president Bashar al-Assad is waging a very 20th-century war against his own people, sending helicopters to drop exploding barrels full of

screws, nails and other shrapnel onto apartment buildings where families cower in basements. These men will not be deterred by the disapproval of their peers, the weight of world opinion or even disinvestment by Silicon Valley companies. They are concerned primarily with maintaining their holds on power. ...

Last, and also least, here's a [NY Times OpEd](#).

THE United States has once again twisted itself into a rhetorical pretzel. As when it threatened military action against Syria if a “red line” was crossed, the Obama administration’s rhetoric about Russia and Ukraine goes far beyond what it will be willing and able to enforce.

Earlier this month, President Obama warned that America would “isolate Russia” if it grabbed more land, and yesterday, he suggested that more sanctions were possible. Likewise, Secretary of State John Kerry said the Group of 7 nations were “prepared to go to the hilt” in order to isolate Russia.

But Washington’s rhetoric is dangerously excessive, for three main reasons: Ukraine is far more important to Vladimir V. Putin than it is to America; it will be hard for the United States and Europe to make good on their threats of crippling sanctions; and other countries could ultimately defang them.

First, the United States needs to see the Ukraine crisis from Russia’s viewpoint. Threats from America and Europe will never be the determining factor in Mr. Putin’s decision making. Ukraine is Russia’s single biggest national security issue beyond its borders, and Mr. Putin’s policy, including whether to seize more of Ukraine, will be informed overwhelmingly by national security interests, not near-term economics. ...

[Ann Coulter](#) for a change of pace. She's tired of the young and she's tired of the NY Times.

... First of all, young people are idiots. I love them, I was one once myself — but they’re idiots. We’ll be interested in their opinions on the basic rules of civilization as soon as they have one of three things: a household to run, a mortgage, or school-aged children. Being in college is like living in Disneyland.

Second, I’ve been reading that same column in The New York Times every few months for the last 20 years. Whether it’s abortion, gays, God, or drugs, Times reporters are like bloodhounds in sniffing out Republicans — often kids — who are “pro-free market on fiscal issues and libertarian on social ones.” If something has been trending for decades without ever really catching on, it’s probably not about to sweep the nation.

In 1988, the Times claimed Congress had “lost its taste for the social agenda” and quoted Sen. Warren Rudman of New Hampshire — one of the GOP’s last liberals and, consequently, the Times’ lodestar for all things Republican — saying that people like himself “felt deeply” that the social issues should be dumped. ...

... In 1996 — nearly 20 years ago! — guess what the Times said young voters cared about? Young people were: “Conservative on economic issues and liberal-leaning on social issues like health

care and abortion." It's almost as if today's generation of whippersnappers is exactly like their middle-aged counterparts 20 years ago!

In 1999, the Times reported that Republicans were "repositioning" themselves on the abortion issue, based on their recognition that "a more tolerant position" would help the GOP win the White House. The following year, pro-life Republican George W. Bush won the presidency. ...

National Journal

How Putin Bullies Obama

The U.S. president declares a lack of interest in the Russian's motives—and it shows.

by Ron Fournier

On a playground or in a bar, the most important thing to know about a bully is his motivation. What ticks him off? Who's his next victim? If it's you, how do you avoid a butt-kicking?

On the world stage, Vladimir Putin is a bully—and President Obama not only seems clueless about the Russian leader's inner drive, he embraces his ambivalence. "I'm less interested in motivation," Obama [said](#) Monday in The Hague, "and more interested in the facts and the principles that not only the United States but the entire international community are looking to uphold."

Taken at face value, it's a disturbing response from a world leader who should lie awake at night concerned about the motivation of U.S. adversaries, whose first meeting of every day involves an intelligence briefing on *the motivations* of global actors.

It could be that Obama is playing mind games with Putin, looking into the soul that transfixed President Bush 13 years ago and seeing a man whose greatest weakness is parochial hubris. Want to hurt Putin? Say you don't care about him. In a verbal equivalent of a groin punch, Obama might dismiss Russia as a "regional power" that antagonizes its neighbors "out of weakness."

But it's hard to credit Obama with such savvy calculation. I take him at his word: He doesn't care.

First, his handling of leaders in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, China and most recently Russia exposes a lack of empathy and sophistication. As Julie Pace of the Associated Press put it in her question to Obama at The Hague, "You've been criticized during this dispute with Russia as not understanding President Putin's motivations. As recently as last month, you and others in your administration said you thought Putin was reflecting or pausing his incursion into Crimea. Did you misread Putin's intentions? And what do you think his motivations are now?"

After confessing that he's less interested in Putin's motivations than the principles that Putin is flouting, Obama said the Russian wants to control events in Ukraine. "That's not new," he said,

spelling out a policy that effectively cedes Crimea to Putin with no further consequences and threatens actions if he moves deeper into Ukraine or into NATO nations.

"So I think that will be a bad choice for President Putin to make," Obama said, "but, ultimately, he is the president of Russia, and he's the one who's going to be making that decision. He just has to understand there's a choice to be made here."

In other words, the bully has stolen your lunch money without a fight and now you're telling him, "It would be a bad choice to take one more penny from anybody in this lunchroom, Buster!"

Second, caring little about the motivation of his rivals seems to be a trait of Obama's leadership that has hurt him in Congress, where the opposition party is stubbornly opposed to his agenda. Rather than understanding why the GOP is moving rightward, helping its leadership tame party extremists (as he must do with the Left), and finding issues that help both sides claim victories, Obama surrendered to polarization and gridlock. Actually, he is a champion of it.

From fights with Congress over the federal budget and his nominations, to gun control, immigration reform, health care, and Syria, the president has been (to borrow the language he used on Putin) *more interested in the facts and the principles* than in GOP motivations. He often seems more concerned about being right than being effective.

In the case of Putin, knowing and caring about the Russian's point of view might not have prevented the Ukraine crisis, but it would have kept Obama a step ahead of it. Instead, like Bush during Russian advances on Georgia in 2008, Obama got blindsided and then stumbled blindly. Putin knows his enemies. Obama dismisses his.

And the world notices. So when Obama tells the world that "Russia is acting out of weakness," he risks sounding like the guy who gets beat up in a bar then brags about the bully's bloody knuckles.

National Journal

Obama Tries to Put Putin in His Place—Again

But the president's words fall short when viewed against recent history.

by Major Garrett

THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS—Moments after deflecting a question about his diminished influence on the world stage, President Obama described Russia as a “regional power” operating in Crimea out of weakness, not strength.

Noting Russia’s long-standing influence in all of Ukraine, Obama said Russian President Vladimir Putin’s illegal annexation of Crimea “indicates less influence, not more.”

I guess that’s why Ukraine’s defense minister resigned and Ukrainian troops [bugged out](#) of Crimea, leaving it to Russian forces. This is the only “[off ramp](#)” that matters in Crimea. Ukraine and its [rhetorically florid](#) Western allies took it. Not Putin.

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Obama and European leaders are rattled and resentful, thunderstruck that the wispy bonds of international “norms” could be so easily shredded. Fearful of the precedent they appear incapable of reversing, and desperate to limit Putin’s ambitions to Crimea, the G-7 nations have effectively conceded Crimea. They threatened “sectoral sanctions” if Putin further bulldozed international law by gobbling up more of Ukraine or plowing into Moldova. Weak or strong, Putin enforces the new Crimean status quo. All he’s lost is Russia’s [G-8 membership](#) pin and decoder ring.

The relentless focus on Putin’s land grab and the West’s gradualist economic response misses some relevant history. Some analysts contend the seeds were first planted when Russia attacked Georgia in 2008 and the West—led by a war-depleted, lame-duck George W. Bush—didn’t even impose low-level sanctions and visa bans in play now. That signaled acquiescence to aggression and probably whetted Putin’s appetite.

But I would argue Putin drew more conclusions about the West’s take on his undisguised territorial ambitions in 2010. That’s when France agreed “in principle” to sell Russia four Mistral class amphibious landing ships. The \$1.7 billion arms deal, the first between Europe and Russia since 1945, promised Russia four vessels that would revive its aging Black Sea fleet and transform its ability to project power there and the Baltics. The [vessels](#) are like small aircraft carriers, able to move 16 helicopters, four landing barges, 70 vehicles (including armored tanks), and a battalion of soldiers. It’s worth noting that when this sale was first hatched, Russia’s new military doctrine identified NATO as Russia’s top strategic threat.

The deal was formalized in 2011. Comments from the interested parties are, well, illuminating.

First, then-French President Nicolas Sarkozy: “The Cold War is finished. We have to consider Russia a friend and have to work with her to build a vast area of security and prosperity together.”

Then Putin: “I can assure you that if we purchase this armament we will use it wherever deemed necessary.”

The Obama administration, through then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates, lodged a formulaic protest. But NATO didn’t make a fuss, and a new world order of European arms sales to Russia—even in light of Putin’s militarism in Georgia—was born. More [Europe-Russian arms deals](#) followed. James Corum, a well-traveled American military historian, compared the arms deal to European attempts to appease Adolf Hitler from 1937 to 1939, ignoring menace at the continent’s peril.

Corum [wrote](#): “Yet, as appallingly incompetent as the Western leaders such as [Britain’s Neville] Chamberlain and [France’s Edouard] Daladier were when confronted with a threat to democratic nations—at least they were not so stupid as to sell Nazi Germany their latest weapons in order to guarantee German success.”

Even after Putin moved into Crimea, France's first inclination was to uphold the Mistral deal, calling any move to kill it an "[extreme measure](#)" best avoided. Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian implausibly described the warships as little more than freighters. "We will deliver civilian hulls. The client can then arm the two ships. We will deliver, under the signed contract, a package which is unarmed."

How comforting this must have been to Ukraine's transitional government and nervous leaders in the Baltics and Moldova. By the way, the first French-made vessel, the *Vladivostok*, is already undergoing sea trials. The second ship, appropriately named the *Sevastopol*, is due for delivery at the end of 2015. The Mistral deal could be revoked if—and only if—Russia flexes more military muscle in the region. So, if Russia only violates international law in Crimea it can keep its contract for four amphibious vessels, thereby shifting naval power [through the region](#) in its favor for decades. Talk about playing [the long game](#).

Obama's curdled disdain for Putin notwithstanding, this doesn't sound like a position of weakness or diminished influence. But it does sound like the West is now suddenly uncomfortable with the cold realities spawned by the arms deals it wrought.

The author is National Journal correspondent-at-large and chief White House correspondent for CBS News. He is also a distinguished fellow at the George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs.

The Fix - Washington Post Blogs

[President Obama got elected on competence. Now people are starting to wonder.](#)

by Chris Cillizza

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Here's why that number -- especially in light of the Secret Service and Obamacare stories over the last 24 hours -- should scare President Obama and the Democratic Party. It goes directly to the heart of why he was elected -- as an anti-George W. Bush, a person who, above all else, was competent at handling the basic affairs of government. Here's how we put it way back in December 2008 in a post entitled: "[Barack Obama and the cult of competency](#)":

Barack Obama won the White House last month in large part by running against George W. Bush and tapping into the public perception that his administration has been ineffectual in handling important policy questions. So it's not surprise that in the first month of his transition to the presidency, the president-elect is putting a premium on competence above all else.

From his decisions to bring in former rivals (is everyone sick of the "Team of Rivals" references yet?) to his repeated emphasis on the qualifications of each of his nominees for the Cabinet, Obama's first month as the president-elect seems designed to serve as a point by point refutation of the way Bush handled the White House over the past eight years.

Where John McCain was marginalized/punished following his 2000 primary challenge to Bush, Obama put his main primary rival -- Hillary Rodham Clinton -- into one of the most important spots in his Cabinet. Where Bush was seen as installing his Texas team into the White House, Obama has purposely avoided putting his closest Chicago confidantes (with the exception of Valerie Jarrett) into high-ranking positions.

The worst thing that can happen to a president is to lose the confidence of the American people. It's why Hurricane Katrina and the Michael Brown debacle were so incredibly damaging for George W. Bush's presidency. Once the public decided he was not able to competently carry out the basic duties of the office, nothing he tried to do from that point forward gained any traction since he was seen as a deeply flawed messenger. His approval ratings plummeted, and he watched as his party lost control of both the House and Senate in 2006.

Obama isn't in that position -- or even close -- yet. But the next six months -- the time leading up to the November midterms -- are a critical time for him and his party. Can Obama turn around doubts about his ability to manage the country and, in so doing, improve his overall job-approval numbers? If not, he could find himself without a Democratic-controlled House or Senate in January 2015, making any attempt to build a second-term legacy that much more difficult.

Washington Post - Editorial

[President Obama's foreign policy is based on fantasy](#)

FOR FIVE YEARS, President Obama has led a foreign policy based more on how he thinks the world should operate than on reality. It was [a world in which "the tide of war is receding"](#) and the United States could, without much risk, radically reduce the size of its armed forces. Other leaders, in this vision, would behave rationally and in the interest of their people and the world. Invasions, brute force, great-power games and shifting alliances — these were things of the past. Secretary of State John F. Kerry displayed this mindset on ABC's "This Week" Sunday when he said, of Russia's invasion of neighboring Ukraine, "[It's a 19th century act in the 21st century.](#)"

That's a nice thought, and we all know what he means. A country's standing is no longer measured in throw-weight or battalions. The world is too interconnected to break into blocs. A small country that plugs into cyberspace can deliver more prosperity to its people (think Singapore or Estonia) than a giant with natural resources and standing armies.

Unfortunately, Russian President Vladimir Putin has not received the memo on 21st-century behavior. Neither has China's president, [Xi Jinping](#), who is engaging in gunboat diplomacy against Japan and the weaker nations of Southeast Asia. Syrian president [Bashar al-Assad](#) is waging a very 20th-century war against his own people, sending helicopters to drop exploding barrels full of screws, nails and other shrapnel onto apartment buildings where families cower in basements. These men will not be deterred by the disapproval of their peers, the weight of world opinion or even disinvestment by Silicon Valley companies. They are concerned primarily with maintaining their holds on power.

Mr. Obama is not responsible for their misbehavior. But he does, or could, play a leading role in structuring the costs and benefits they must consider before acting. The model for Mr. Putin's occupation of Crimea was his incursion into Georgia in 2008, when George W. Bush was president. Mr. Putin paid no price for that action; in fact, with parts of Georgia still under Russia's control, he was permitted to host a Winter Olympics just around the corner. China has bullied the Philippines and unilaterally staked claims to wide swaths of international air space and sea lanes as it continues a rapid and technologically impressive military buildup. Arguably, it has paid a price in the nervousness of its neighbors, who are desperate for the United States to play a balancing role in the region. But none of those neighbors feel confident that the United States can be counted on. Since the Syrian dictator crossed Mr. Obama's red line with [a chemical weapons attack](#) that killed 1,400 civilians, the dictator's military and diplomatic position has steadily strengthened.

The urge to pull back — to concentrate on what Mr. Obama calls "[nation-building at home](#)" — is nothing new, as former ambassador [Stephen Sestanovich](#) recounts in his illuminating history of U.S. foreign policy, "[Maximalist](#)." There were similar retrenchments after the Korea and Vietnam wars and when the Soviet Union crumbled. But the United States discovered each time that the world became a more dangerous place without its leadership and that disorder in the world could threaten U.S. prosperity. Each period of retrenchment was followed by more active (though not always wiser) policy. Today Mr. Obama has plenty of company in his impulse, within both parties and as reflected by public opinion. But he's also in part responsible for the national mood: If a president doesn't make the case for global engagement, no one else effectively can.

The White House often responds by accusing critics of being warmongers who want American "boots on the ground" all over the world and have yet to learn the lessons of Iraq. So let's stipulate: We don't want U.S. troops in Syria, and we don't want U.S. troops in Crimea. A great power can become overextended, and if its economy falters, so will its ability to lead. None of this is simple.

But it's also true that, as long as some leaders play by what Mr. Kerry dismisses as 19th-century rules, the United States can't pretend that the only game is in another arena altogether. Military strength, trustworthiness as an ally, staying power in difficult corners of the world such as Afghanistan — these still matter, much as we might wish they did not. While the United States has been retrenching, the tide of democracy in the world, which once seemed inexorable, has been receding. In the long run, that's harmful to U.S. national security, too.

As Mr. Putin ponders whether to advance further — into eastern Ukraine, say — he will measure the seriousness of U.S. and allied actions, not their statements. China, pondering its next steps in the [East China Sea](#), will do the same. Sadly, that's the nature of the century we're living in.

NY Times

[A Tortured Policy Toward Russia](#)

by Ian Bremmer

THE United States has once again twisted itself into a rhetorical pretzel. As when it threatened military action against Syria if a “red line” was crossed, the Obama administration's rhetoric about Russia and Ukraine goes far beyond what it will be willing and able to enforce.

Earlier this month, President Obama warned that America would “isolate Russia” if it grabbed more land, and yesterday, he suggested that more sanctions were possible. Likewise, Secretary of State John Kerry said the Group of 7 nations were “prepared to go to the hilt” in order to isolate Russia.

But Washington's rhetoric is dangerously excessive, for three main reasons: Ukraine is far more important to Vladimir V. Putin than it is to America; it will be hard for the United States and Europe to make good on their threats of crippling sanctions; and other countries could ultimately defang them.

First, the United States needs to see the Ukraine crisis from Russia's viewpoint. Threats from America and Europe will never be the determining factor in Mr. Putin's decision making. Ukraine is Russia's single biggest national security issue beyond its borders, and Mr. Putin's policy, including whether to seize more of Ukraine, will be informed overwhelmingly by national security interests, not near-term economics.

Furthermore, Russia has provided Ukraine with some \$200-\$300 billion in natural gas subsidies since 1991. With an anti-Russian government in Ukraine, Moscow is likely to stop these subsidies, lifting a major economic burden just as the West tries to squeeze it financially.

Second, if Russia pushes farther into Ukraine, America's attempt at tougher Iran-style sanctions, coordinated with allies, will ultimately fail. Indeed, if Mr. Putin pursues a broader military campaign, a similarly robust response from both America and Europe is unlikely.

Russia's energy exports, its commercial power and its sheer size make the costs of ignoring it prohibitively high for Europe. Despite the Group of 7's recent exclusion of Russia, the Europeans don't want to go to extremes. The Ukrainian ambassador to the European Union called the current sanctions a “[mosquito bite](#)”; and even these modest actions have left many European powers feeling skittish. Britain and France have been very cautious, the Austrians and Cypriots even more so. (Austria buys more than half of its gas from Russia; Cyprus has huge Russian banking exposure.)

And finally, even if America seeks stringent sanctions against Russia, other nations will ignore them and offset any damage they cause. India absolutely refuses to treat Russia like a rogue state. More important, China will not observe such sanctions.

The fundamental problem is that the Obama administration doesn't want to bear the costs associated with an active foreign policy. That's understandable. A December Pew poll revealed the lowest level of public support for an active American foreign policy since 1964.

This domestic pressure was on display in Syria. Mr. Obama's error was not that he backed away from military action and accepted Russia's proposal to rid Syria of chemical weapons. The mistake was that he drew a red line that would have been more costly to back up than the United States was willing to tolerate. America lost credibility internationally for failing to make good on its threat.

Unfortunately, the Obama administration is repeating this mistake in Ukraine.

When Russia proceeded with the annexation of Crimea, the United States and Europe responded with punitive measures that had some economic impact. But they did not by any means "go to the hilt." Instead, the Americans and Europeans drew an even deeper line in the sand, issuing empty threats of sweeping sanctions if Russia tried to grab more territory in Ukraine.

Such sharp rhetoric from the West could push Mr. Putin to be even more aggressive. That's because he does not believe that the West would ever treat Russia like Iran and implement robust sanctions that would cut off vast areas of Russia's economy from the West. As Mr. Putin recently explained, in a globalized world "it's possible to damage each other — but this would be mutual damage."

"Isolating Russia" as if it were Iran or North Korea isn't a threat America can feasibly make good on. Just because Mr. Putin is acting like the leader of a rogue state, his country cannot be considered as such. Russia boasts the world's eighth-largest economy. Given the exposure of American corporations to Russia, there would be serious pushback from the private sector if Mr. Obama tried to relegate Russia to rogue-state status. The Obama administration needs to preach what it will ultimately practice. Otherwise Washington's credibility will erode further as it walks back its words.

A more hard-line response is not the answer. Mr. Obama was right to rule out the military option; diplomacy is America's only viable path forward.

But Washington needs to anticipate a Russian response from a Russian perspective. In a major speech on Wednesday, Mr. Obama hinted that further sanctions would be implemented if Russia maintained its present course. That is a mistake. Russia will not back down, and such talk will only ratchet up tensions.

The Obama administration should focus on supporting Kiev rather than punishing Moscow. That means using its leverage with Europe to ensure that this support sticks, and that Ukraine's new government does nothing to provoke an extreme response. This will require an acknowledgment of Russia's core interests and America's limitations — and an end to empty threats.

Ian Bremmer is president of Eurasia Group and a global research professor at New York University.

Human Events

Young people don't change — neither does the NY Times

by Ann Coulter

I think that the only issue in the 2014 election should be Obamacare. In fact, that should be the only issue in every election until it's repealed.

I also think all Republican candidates should be trained with shock collars and cattle prods to automatically respond, upon hearing some combination of the words “abortion,” “rape” and “incest”: “Yes, of course there should be exceptions in the case of rape or incest, and I also support giving rapists the death penalty, unlike my Democratic opponent, who wants to give rapists the right to vote. Now, back to what I was saying about Obamacare

“Yet and still, I'm not sure it's news that The *New York Times* ran into some kids at CPAC who are “pro-free market on fiscal issues and libertarian on social ones.” (“Young Republicans Find Fault With Elders on List of Social Issues,” March 10.)

First of all, young people are idiots. I love them, I was one once myself — but they're idiots. We'll be interested in their opinions on the basic rules of civilization as soon as they have one of three things: a household to run, a mortgage, or school-aged children. Being in college is like living in Disneyland.

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In 1988, the *Times* claimed Congress had “lost its taste for the social agenda” and quoted Sen. Warren Rudman of New Hampshire — one of the GOP's last liberals and, consequently, the *Times*' lodestar for all things Republican — saying that people like himself “felt deeply” that the social issues should be dumped.

In 1989, the *Times* was all atwitter about three typical Republicans who opposed the GOP's pro-life position. These “stalwart Republicans” were: Barbara Gimbel of Manhattan (Gimbels department store heiress), Barbara Mosbacher of Manhattan (banking heiress), and Pauline Harrison of Manhattan (DuPont heiress). All vowed not to support any pro-life candidates — except Harrison, “because she had recently been appointed to the Republican State Committee representing the 66th Assembly District on Manhattan's East Side.” There's a reason you never hear the expression, “As goes Manhattan's Upper East Side, so goes the nation.”

In 1990, the *Times* heralded the formation of a pro-choice Republican group, consisting primarily of Ann Stone and her husband, Roger.

In 1992, the *Times* missed the masses of socially conservative delegates at the Republican National Convention, but somehow bumped into several people who wanted to drop the family and God references.

In 1996 — nearly 20 years ago! — guess what the *Times* said young voters cared about? Young people were: “Conservative on economic issues and liberal-leaning on social issues like health care and abortion.” It’s almost as if today’s generation of whippersnappers is exactly like their middle-aged counterparts 20 years ago!

In 1999, the *Times* reported that Republicans were “repositioning” themselves on the abortion issue, based on their recognition that “a more tolerant position” would help the GOP win the White House. The following year, pro-life Republican George W. Bush won the presidency.

In 2003, the *Times* again noticed that the Republican Party was considering “moving to the center on social issues in order to become even more competitive in state and national races.” Former representative Joe Scarborough told the *Times*, “I think the country right now continues to get more conservative on economic issues and more progressive on social issues.”

The year on the calendar changes, but the cliches stay the same.

In 2006, the *Times* triumphantly reported that former representative Dick Armey had denounced James Dobson and Focus on the Family as a “gang of thugs,” and “real nasty bullies.” Armey complained that while Republicans were talking about “gay marriage and so forth,” Democrats were “talking about the things people care about, like how do I pay my bills?” (Of course, as soon as Democrats get elected, then all they talk about is transgender rights for kindergartners.)

In 2008, the *Times* found some “families that have been Republican for generations” carping about the “newcomers’ agenda of opposition to abortion, gay rights, and liberalized immigration policies.”

In 2009, the *Times* reported that Republicans were “rethinking” their position on gay marriage because — guess who didn’t care about it? That’s right: Young people! In another article that year, the *Times* said: “Many Republicans have been arguing that the party’s focus on social issues is a mistake.”

In 2012, the *Times* produced this gripping headline: “Young in GOP Erase the Lines on Social Issues.” Yes, apparently, people with no responsibilities, no families to provide for, no children to worry about, and who had recently experienced their first hangovers, didn’t care about the social issues.

As with every generation, the kids always think they’re saying something fresh and new. “Social issues are far down the priorities list,” Matt Hoagland told the *Times*, “and I think that’s the trend.” (How far down the list compared to “global warming”?)

So I guess, in addition to sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll, we can add to the list of “Things Young People Didn’t Invent” the bright new idea of being “pro-free market on fiscal issues and libertarian on social ones.”

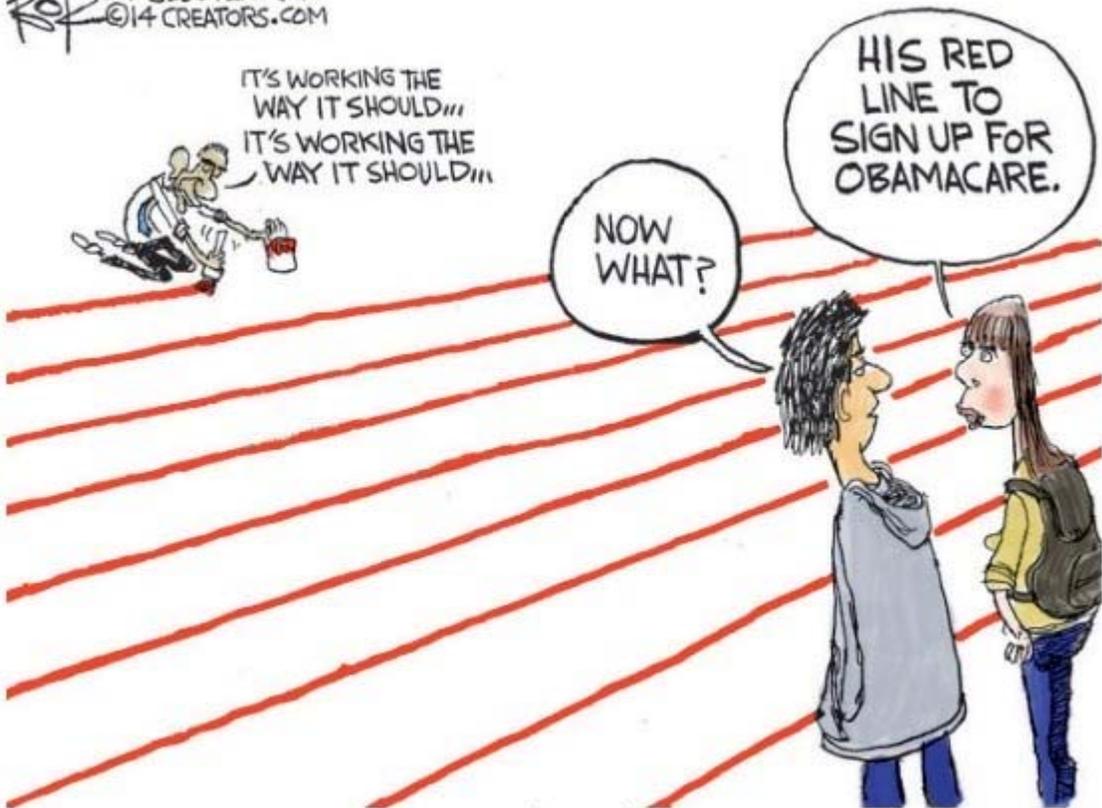
Interestingly, when the *Times* reports on actual election results, rather than the opinions of 20-year-olds, the paper admits that the social issues are a huge boon to Republicans.

In 2004, for example, when traditional marriage initiatives were on ballots in dozens of states, the *Times* admitted that the measures “acted like magnets for thousands of socially conservative voters in rural and suburban communities who might not otherwise have voted” and even “tipped the balance” in close races. (“Same-Sex Marriage Issue Key to Some GOP Races,” Nov. 4, 2004.)

Luckily, like every generation before them, someday, young people will eventually grow up and discover that you can’t have conservative economic policies without also having conservative social policies. Imagine their embarrassment when they realize that a free society is impossible without lots of stable, married, two-parent families raising their children in safe, drug-free neighborhoods.

How about not letting them vote until they’re at least old enough not to be on their parents’ health insurance?





I USED TO JOG,
BUT THE ICE KEPT
FALLING OUT OF MY
GLASS ...

