

April 2, 2014

First time we've had a post from [Nate Silver's blog FiveThirtyEight](#). That's the number of votes in the electoral college. Silver posts on the gaffe in the Iowa senate race. *We recently published a forecast that described the GOP as more likely than not to win the U.S. Senate in November. But our analysis was less bullish on Republicans' prospects of flipping the seat in Iowa currently held by Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin, who is retiring. There, Democrats appeared to have a strong candidate in Rep. Bruce Braley, who has cleared his primary field. Republicans, meanwhile, face a contentious primary with a number of candidates who have never won races for statewide or federal office.*

After we published our forecast, the Republican PAC America Rising released a video of Braley, who represents the 1st Congressional District, referring to Iowa's other senator, Chuck Grassley, as a "farmer from Iowa who never went to law school." The comment might seem ill-considered in a state that generates the fourth-highest income per capita from crop production. It has sparked plenty of attention in the local news media; the Des Moines Register, Iowa's newspaper of record, has published at least 14 pieces on Braley's comment.

Is Braley's remark another thing for Democrats to worry about — or is it the latest example of a purported "game changer" that will prove to have little effect?

Gaffes often resonate more with the news media than with voters. A reasonably large body of political science research has found their impact is usually overstated by those who cover campaigns. Take the examples of two other incidents that Braley's comment has been compared to. ...

... One problem for the GOP is that the Republican field in Iowa remains divided, with at least four plausible nominees. Joni Ernst, a state senator who has recently been endorsed by Romney and Sarah Palin, has so far done the most to play up her farming heritage and pivot off of Braley's remark. But she was polling at just 13 percent before Braley's comment. (There have been no polls of the primary since then.)

Furthermore, the decisions about which races deserve party resources involve trade-offs. Had Democrats lost Virginia by 9,000 votes in 2006, rather than winning it by that margin, their attention to the state might have seemed imprudent in retrospect.

But Iowa is a more plausible option for Republicans than it was a week ago. Braley has made their path to a Senate majority a little more robust.

Peter Beinart says David Brock is wrong and that the media should be rough on Hillary.

The media loves conversion stories. So when David Brock, who once rummaged through Little Rock in pursuit of Bill Clinton's dirty laundry, returned to the city yesterday to speak at the Clinton School of Public Service at the University of Arkansas, both The New York Times and Politico took notice. Brock, Politico reported, came to Little Rock to "explain his transformation" from Clinton-hater to Clinton-defender. But his speech inadvertently did something else. It showed that in his approach to politics, David Brock hasn't changed much at all.

Brock's core argument was that as we approach 2016, mainstream journalists must stay far away from the anti-Clinton attack journalism peddled by the partisan right. In explaining why, Brock cited his own work in the early 1990s for the Richard Mellon Scaife-funded "Arkansas Project," in which he dug up "a kitchen-sink-full of preposterous allegations," many of which entered mainstream publications, but "almost none" of which "turned out to be true."

Really? Many of the Arkansas Project allegations—that the Clintons oversaw a cocaine-smuggling ring, that they ordered the murder of Vince Foster—were of course preposterous. But Brock also uncovered a woman named "Paula," who later alleged that while working as an Arkansas state employee, she was escorted by Governor Clinton's bodyguard to his hotel room. There, she claims, Clinton exposed himself and demanded sex. When Paula Jones leveled her allegations, mainstream reporters like The Washington Post's Michael Isikoff and The American Lawyer's Stuart Taylor did exactly what Brock now says the media should not: They looked into it. And they concluded that—although Jones was clearly being used by Clinton's political enemies—her story had merit. (If you doubt that, read Taylor's summary in Slate of his much-longer American Lawyer investigation into what likely transpired between Clinton and Jones on May 8, 1991. It's horrifying).

...

Der Spiegel interviews airline pilot and author about the fate of MH370.

SPIEGEL: *Captain Palmer, was MH370 downed by terrorists?*

Palmer: *There's no evidence at all for terrorism. All the information that has been disclosed publicly so far is consistent with a purely mechanical cause.*

SPIEGEL: *Are those pilots in your view heroes or failures?*

Palmer: *I believe they had a major malfunction and tried to deal with it. And they were unable to.*

...

John Fund spots a greenie who's come to his senses.

Environmentalist and scientist James Lovelock has some cautionary words about the dire predictions in the new United Nations report on climate change. He [tells](#) Britain's leftist newspaper the Guardian that environmentalism has "become a religion" and does not pay enough heed to facts.

Lovelock himself became something of a guru to environmentalists in the 1960s when his Gaia hypothesis postulated that living and non-living parts of the Earth form a complex interacting system that has a regulatory effect on the Earth's environment that acts to sustain life.

*Now Lovelock says of his warnings of catastrophe in his 2006 book, *Revenge of Gaia*: "It's just as silly to be a denier as it is to be a believer. You can't be certain."*

“It [the impact from climate change] could be terrible within a few years, though that’s very unlikely, or it could be hundreds of years before the climate becomes unbearable,” he said.

That’s not the end of the 94-year-old Lovelock’s heresies. As the Guardian reports:

Lovelock reiterated his support for fracking for shale gas, which has been strongly backed by David Cameron and the government but vigorously opposed by anti-fracking activists and local people at sites from Salford to Balcombe in West Sussex.

“The government is too frightened to use nuclear, renewables won’t work — because we don’t have enough sun — and we can’t go on burning coal because it produces so much CO₂, so that leaves fracking. It produces only a fraction of the amount of CO₂ that coal does, and will make Britain secure in energy for quite a few years. We don’t have much choice,” he said.

Want to know what it was like when people prayed for global warming? [The NY Times](#), of all places
CLIMATOLOGISTS call it the Little Ice Age; historians, the General Crisis.

During the 17th century, longer winters and cooler summers disrupted growing seasons and destroyed harvests across Europe. It was the coldest century in a period of glacial expansion that lasted from the early 14th century until the mid-19th century. The summer of 1641 was the third-coldest recorded over the past six centuries in Europe; the winter of 1641-42 was the coldest ever recorded in Scandinavia. The unusual cold that lasted from the 1620s until the 1690s included ice on both the Bosphorus and the Baltic so thick that people could walk from one side to the other.

The deep cold in Europe and extreme weather events elsewhere resulted in a series of droughts, floods and harvest failures that led to forced migrations, wars and revolutions. The fatal synergy between human and natural disasters eradicated perhaps one-third of the human population.

There are two ways to consider the impact of climate change. We can predict the future based on current trends or we can study a well-documented episode of the past. ...

FiveThirtyEight

[A Gaffe Can Matter When It Motivates the Base](#)

by Nate Silver

We recently [published a forecast](#) that described the GOP as more likely than not to win the U.S. Senate in November. But our analysis was less bullish on Republicans’ prospects of flipping the seat in Iowa currently held by Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin, who is retiring. There, Democrats appeared to have a strong candidate in Rep. Bruce Braley, who has cleared his primary field.

Republicans, meanwhile, face a contentious primary with a number of candidates who have never won races for statewide or federal office.

After we published our forecast, the Republican PAC America Rising [released a video](#) of Braley, who represents the 1st Congressional District, referring to Iowa's other senator, Chuck Grassley, as a "farmer from Iowa who never went to law school." The comment might seem ill-considered in a state that [generates the fourth-highest income](#) per capita from crop production. It has sparked plenty of attention in the local news media; the Des Moines Register, Iowa's newspaper of record, has [published at least 14 pieces on Braley's comment](#).

Is Braley's remark another thing for Democrats to worry about — or is it the latest example of a purported "game changer" that will [prove to have little effect](#)?

Gaffes often resonate more with the news media than with voters. A reasonably large body of political science research has found [their impact is usually overstated](#) by those who cover campaigns. Take the examples of two other incidents that Braley's comment has been compared to.

The first is Barack Obama's remark at a San Francisco fundraiser about voters who "cling to guns and religion," which was [first reported](#) by the journalist Mayhill Fowler on Apr. 11, 2008. Then-candidate Obama's comment generated more than 2,500 news articles by the end of that month, according to a search of records at [NewsLibrary.com](#). But it had no effect on the polls, either [nationally](#) or in [Pennsylvania](#), which was the next state to vote in the Obama vs. Clinton Democratic primary. Instead, Hillary Clinton's win in Pennsylvania was [in line](#) with demographic trends from earlier primaries.

What about Mitt Romney's ["47 percent" comments](#) during the general election campaign in 2012? They barely moved the polls; there was a swing of perhaps [one percentage point toward President Obama](#).

These examples, however — and most others from the political science literature — are drawn from presidential campaigns. Races for the Senate differ in some important ways.

First, the candidates are usually less well-known to voters. Braley has strong name recognition in the northeastern quadrant of Iowa, which he represents in Congress. But statewide, 46 percent of Iowans hadn't known enough about him to form an opinion, according to a [Quinnipiac University poll](#) conducted before the release of the "farmer" video. For some of them, the "farmer" comment will represent their first impression of the candidate.

The second difference is that the presidential race is never a sideshow. Even contests as lopsided as Reagan vs. Mondale in 1984 generate a disproportionate amount of media attention. By contrast, senatorial campaigns compete against one another for scarce resources, such as funds from campaign committees, and attention from activists and the national press.

Braley's remark might not matter much unto itself. But it's plausible that it could spur activists and the news media into evaluating the Iowa race differently. That could matter, because Iowa's competitiveness was previously in some doubt. In the abstract, a race with no incumbent in a swing state in a [Republican-leaning national climate](#) would represent a good opportunity for the

GOP. However, parties sometimes squander these opportunities by failing to nominate strong candidates or by failing to provide marginal ones with sufficient support.

Moreover, gaffes have helped upend Senate campaigns in the past. Case in point: Virginia in 2006. The Republican candidate was Sen. George Allen, an incumbent who may have been hoping to use his re-election bid as a springboard to the 2008 presidential race. The Democratic nominee was James Webb, a former secretary of the Navy who was a favorite of the Democratic "[netroots](#)."

The race was only on the fringe of being competitive as of early 2006; Virginia had not yet begun to behave as a purple state, and Allen maintained a double-digit lead in [all nonpartisan polls](#). Then, on Aug. 14, a [video was released by Webb's campaign](#) of Allen referring to S.R. Sidarth, an Indian-American volunteer for the Webb campaign, by the term "macaca." The word, which [can be considered a racial slur](#), created a frenzy of attention, and Webb moved to within 3 to 5 percentage points of Allen in [polls](#) conducted immediately afterward by SurveyUSA and Rasmussen Reports.

Just as important as the gaffe itself was its staying power. That may have had a lot to do with the netroots.

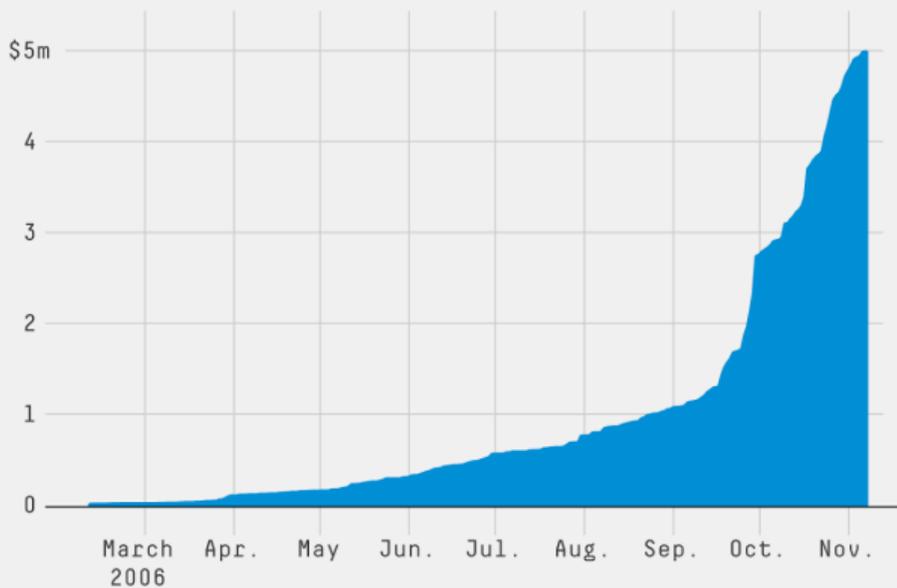
The political scientist David Karpf studied the Virginia campaign in [a 2009 paper](#). He found that the number of Daily Kos [diaries](#) on the campaign increased tenfold after Allen's comment. However, instead of reverting to its baseline (as was the case following a gaffe by Rep. Michele Bachmann that October), the amount of netroots attention on the Virginia campaign remained at a high level for the rest of the year.

You can also see the lasting effects of Allen's gaffe on grass-roots support in campaign contributions. In the chart below, I've plotted the cumulative total of individual, itemized contributions to the Webb campaign throughout the 2006 cycle. There is an inflection point in the chart, after which time Webb began to raise money at a much more vigorous pace.

However, the effect of Allen's gaffe was not instantaneous; instead, it came a few weeks later (in particular, toward the end of September as Webb was approaching his quarterly fundraising deadline).

Fundraising After an Opponent's Gaffe

Cumulative itemized individual contributions for James Webb



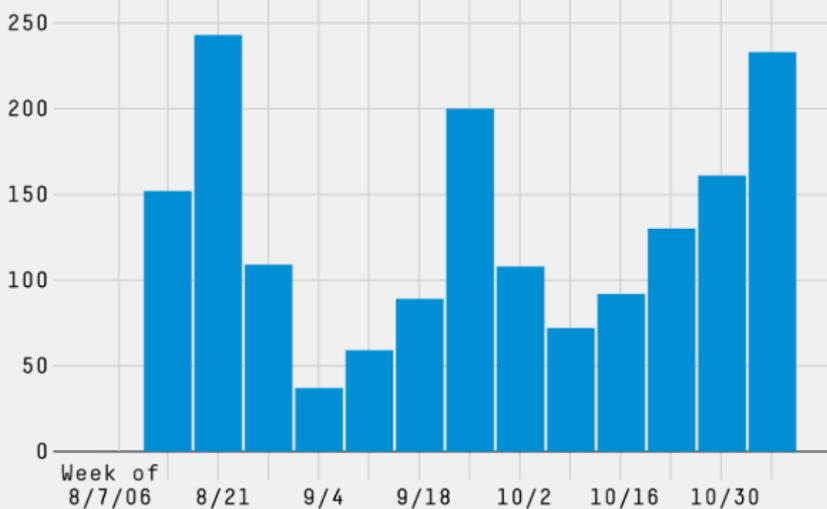
FIVETHIRTYEIGHT

SOURCE: FEC

Meanwhile, the comment had a long lifespan in the mainstream media. The next chart shows the number of news articles each week that mentioned both “Allen” and “macaca,” according to a search at NewsLibrary.com. Coverage reached a peak during the week of Aug. 21, a week after the release of the video clip on YouTube. But it remained at reasonably high levels from then until the November election. Part of the problem for Allen was that the news media uncovered [other instances of racially insensitive remarks](#) in his past, which triggered renewed interest in the “macaca” story. [Google searches for the term](#) followed a similar pattern.

Media Coverage

News articles mentioning "Allen" and "macaca"



FIVETHIRTYEIGHT

SOURCE: NEWSLIBRARY.COM

It's not easy to separate the impact of Webb's improved polling, his accelerated fundraising, the higher volume of news media attention devoted to his campaign and the greater attention paid to it by the netroots. These factors probably all contributed to one another in what worked out to be a virtuous cycle for Democrats. On Nov. 7, Webb defeated Allen by about 9,000 votes — and Democrats won exactly enough Senate seats, 51, to take control of the chamber.

I want to be clear that this analysis of Virginia represents a case study, rather than a prediction, of how Iowa will turn out. A gaffe swinging the balance in a race is more the exception than the rule. The reason why Allen's comment mattered in Virginia had to do with three major factors, in my view.

First, the race was on the fringe of being competitive before the gaffe. Webb's campaign wasn't a lost cause, but Allen was not an easy target, even in a Democratic-leaning environment. Webb probably needed some catalyst to generate more attention for his race and push him over the finish line.

Second, the news media found other examples of intemperate or insensitive remarks by Allen, which gave the story life and made it a prism for interpreting the campaign.

Third, the gaffe helped to mobilize the Democratic base around Webb's campaign. Although Webb was already a favorite of the netroots, Allen's comment dramatically increased their attention on Virginia. And the netroots maintained their heightened attention right up through the November election.

I'd argue that the first condition is replicated in Iowa. This was just the sort of race that may have needed an external stimulus to kickstart it into higher levels of activist and news media attention. But it's unclear whether the second and third conditions will be met.

Does Braley have a track record of making remarks that seem elitist, classist or otherwise disparaging of rural life, or will he make such comments in the future? And will Republican activists and officials maintain their focus on Iowa, rather than treating it as a passing fancy?

One problem for the GOP is that the Republican field in Iowa remains divided, with at least four plausible nominees. Joni Ernst, a state senator who has recently been endorsed by Romney and Sarah Palin, has so far done the most to [play up her farming heritage](#) and pivot off of Braley's remark. But she was [polling at just 13 percent](#) before Braley's comment. (There have been no polls of the primary since then.)

Furthermore, the decisions about which races deserve party resources involve trade-offs. Had Democrats lost Virginia by 9,000 votes in 2006, rather than winning it by that margin, their attention to the state might have seemed imprudent in retrospect.

But Iowa [is a more plausible option](#) for Republicans than it was a week ago. Braley has made their path to a Senate majority a little more robust.

The Atlantic

[Hillary Clinton Doesn't Deserve a Free Pass From the Media](#)

David Brock is wrong—the nation and her prospective campaign will be better off if journalists investigate her worst tendencies.

by Peter Beinart

The media loves conversion stories. So when David Brock, who once rummaged through Little Rock in pursuit of Bill Clinton's dirty laundry, returned to the city yesterday to speak at the Clinton School of Public Service at the University of Arkansas, both [The New York Times](#) and [Politico](#) took notice. Brock, *Politico* reported, came to Little Rock to "explain his transformation" from Clinton-hater to Clinton-defender. But his speech inadvertently did something else. It showed that in his approach to politics, David Brock hasn't changed much at all.

Brock's core argument was that as we approach 2016, mainstream journalists must stay far away from the anti-Clinton attack journalism peddled by the partisan right. In explaining why, Brock cited his own work in the early 1990s for the Richard Mellon Scaife-funded "Arkansas Project," in which he dug up "a kitchen-sink-full of preposterous allegations," many of which entered mainstream publications, but ["almost none" of which "turned out to be true."](#)

Really? Many of the Arkansas Project allegations—that the Clintons oversaw a cocaine-smuggling ring, that they ordered the murder of Vince Foster—were of course preposterous. But Brock also uncovered a woman named "Paula," who later alleged that while working as an Arkansas state employee, she was escorted by Governor Clinton's bodyguard to his hotel room. There, she claims, Clinton exposed himself and demanded sex. When Paula Jones leveled her allegations, mainstream reporters like *The Washington Post's* Michael Isikoff and *The American Lawyer's* Stuart Taylor did exactly what Brock now says the media should not: They looked into it. And they concluded that—although Jones was clearly being used by Clinton's political enemies—her story had merit. (If you doubt that, read [Taylor's summary in Slate](#) of his much-longer *American Lawyer* investigation into what likely transpired between Clinton and Jones on May 8, 1991. It's horrifying).

Clinton ultimately settled Jones' sexual-harassment case for the entire amount she requested. U.S. District Court Judge Susan Webber Wright found him in civil contempt of court for "intentionally false" testimony, which led to the suspension of his Arkansas law license. Despite this, Media Matters, the journalism watchdog organization that Brock founded in 2004, after his ideological conversion, still occasionally savages [Isikoff](#) and [Taylor](#) for the reporting they did.

The lesson for journalists covering 2016, Brock told the Little Rock crowd, is that "Clinton-hating had nothing to do with what the Clintons did or did not do." If only it were that simple. The truth is that while conservative outlets like the Scaife-funded *American Spectator* and the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page were wildly dishonest in their effort to gin up scandals that would sink Bill Clinton's presidency, and although Republicans should, to this day, be ashamed for having tried to impeach him, Clinton's behavior wasn't irrelevant. He used the powers of his office—both as governor and president—[to solicit sex](#) and [cover it up](#). He lied under oath and he urged others to lie. That's far worse than sexting, which destroyed Anthony Weiner's career.

Of course, Bill Clinton won't be on the ballot in 2016. But not everything Clinton-haters said about Hillary was wrong either. Yes, the "Whitewater" investigation into the Clintons' Arkansas real-estate investments—to which Senate Republicans devoted 300 hours of committee hearings over 13 months—turned out to be a colossal waste of time. Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr, despite

being appointed to investigate Whitewater, barely even mentioned it in his final report. Yes, “Travelgate”—in which the first lady influenced the decision to fire seven employees of the White House Travel Office—received far more attention than it ever deserved. Yes, some of the attacks on her reeked of sexism. Some still do.

But even when it comes to Hillary, it’s untrue that “Clinton-hating had nothing to do with what the Clintons did or did not do.” As Carl Bernstein details in his generally positive biography, [A Woman in Charge](#), Clinton’s us-versus-them approach to politics not only outraged her opponents but alienated some on her ideological side. Had she not overruled advisers David Gergen and George Stephanopoulos, who wanted to release Whitewater-related documents when the press initially requested them, Bernstein suggests, Attorney General Janet Reno might never have appointed a special prosecutor to investigate the matter, which ultimately led to Starr poking into Bill Clinton’s sex life.

Hillary Clinton’s suspicions of outsiders also undermined her effort on healthcare. Her health task force, Bernstein notes, operated with “military-like secrecy unprecedented for a peacetime domestic program.” Xeroxing documents under discussion was not allowed. At many task-force meetings, outsiders were forbidden from even bringing in pens. Controlling the process so tightly not only drove Clinton’s adversaries wild, it kept her from making the adjustments necessary to win over congressional moderates who might have supported reform.

It’s untrue that “Clinton-hating had nothing to do with what the Clintons did or did not do.”

Her “if-you’re-not-with-us-you’re-against-us” attitude even infuriated some congressional liberals. “You don’t tell members of the Senate you are going to demonize them” if they disagree with you, declared New Jersey Democrat Bill Bradley, who accused Hillary of working on “the assumption that people with questions are enemies.” Lawrence O’Donnell, then a key aide to New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, said that Hillary’s threat to “demonize” health care opponents “colored [Moynihan’s] perception of Hillary, and how she operated, for the rest of his life.”

In explaining his ideological transformation, Brock said on Tuesday, “I came to see what Hillary Clinton’s admirers saw in her... a steadfast commitment to public service and a deep desire to affirm the good and virtuous in politics.” I agree. Hillary Clinton is an unusually capable, hard-working, idealistic politician. Her husband was one of the best presidents America has ever had. But in the 1990s, both wounded themselves by assuming that because they were pursuing virtuous ends, they could employ dishonest (mostly him) and destructive (mostly her) means.

That tendency continued into 2008, when Hillary Clinton campaign strategist Mark Penn penned a memo [declaring that since Barack Obama](#) “is not at his center fundamentally American in his thinking and his values,” every Clinton “speech should contain the line that you were born in the middle of America to the middle class in the middle of the last century.”

And it lives on today with David Brock, who now [sits near the epicenter of the pro-Hillary effort in 2016](#). And who near the end of his Little Rock speech attacked Rand Paul for “setting the rules of the game in such a way that a candidate is responsible for the behavior of those closest them”—and then did exactly the same thing by slamming Paul for the neo-confederate views of his aides.

Between now and 2016, Brock will keep pressuring journalists—especially liberal ones—to view every criticism of Hillary Clinton through a partisan lens, to bury their qualms so as to avoid

complicity with the Fox News slime machine. Let's hope he fails. Clinton is a gifted, well-meaning politician whose Manichean tendencies can get her, and the country, in trouble. The 2016 race will be a better campaign, and she'll be a better president, if the press bears that in mind

Der Spiegel

[What Happened to MH370? 'The Biggest Mystery Since Amelia Earhart'](#)

by Marco Evers

For weeks, the world has been wondering what happened to flight MH370. New satellite data has apparently confirmed that it crashed in the Indian Ocean. But why? Captain Bill Palmer, author of "Understanding Air France 447," relates his theory.

SPIEGEL: Captain Palmer, was MH370 downed by terrorists?

Palmer: There's no evidence at all for terrorism. All the information that has been disclosed publicly so far is consistent with a purely mechanical cause.

SPIEGEL: Are those pilots in your view heroes or failures?

Palmer: I believe they had a major malfunction and tried to deal with it. And they were unable to.

SPIEGEL: The copilot says: "All right, good night" to Air Traffic Control. Just two minutes later the transponder is switched off along with other equipment and the airplane basically goes into cloak mode. Could this not be an indication for a sinister plot from within the cockpit?

Palmer: Not necessarily. There might have been an electrical fire that took out the transponder, the radios and even more equipment.

SPIEGEL: Of which there was no indication at all just two minutes earlier?

Palmer: Maybe the problem was unfolding, but the pilots hadn't realized it yet. Things can happen quickly. There could have been a major short circuit in the system. A fire in the electronics equipment bay just below the cockpit would explain the radio loss. Of course, we don't know what initiated the fire -- a meteor? A bomb? Bad wiring?

SPIEGEL: Then they changed their heading, all without declaring an emergency.

Palmer: In an emergency, pilots will try to aviate, navigate and communicate. In exactly that order. They might have been too busy dealing with the fire for any communication attempt. Just 40 minutes into the flight, they probably decided to go back to Kuala Lumpur which makes perfect sense.

SPIEGEL: Apparently, they changed their heading a second time -- in a northwesterly direction.

Palmer: That heading is consistent with an attempt to land at a diversionary airport on Pulau Lankawi, which has a very long runway and no terrain in the way. This would be a sensible course of action, especially at night with severely compromised equipment.

SPIEGEL: What is a fire like in the cockpit?

Palmer: It's the most critical emergency we can have. Think of Swissair Flight 111, which went down over Nova Scotia on Sept. 2, 1998. This was an MD-11 that had a fire in the overhead panel in the cockpit. The fire was due to improper wiring in the in-flight entertainment system. The crew did what they could, but within 15 minutes after noticing smoke, they had crashed. The cockpit literally turned into an oven, melting everything.

SPIEGEL: MH370 never landed on Pulau Langkawi. Instead it went up to 45,000 feet, well above its certified maximum. A little later, it plunged down to 23,000 feet. What does that tell you?

Palmer: Some experts have said that the captain might have tried a last resort attempt to extinguish the fire. That's why he climbed into thin air. This theory shouldn't be discounted. But my best guess is this: Everyone on the flight deck was incapacitated by now. The autopilot was off. The airplane was just flying on its own.

SPIEGEL: How is that possible?

Palmer: The 777 is a fly-by-wire plane. There are flight-control computers within the fuselage that will stabilize the airplane whatever it does. It will try to maintain the speed that the captain has selected. All by itself, it will pitch the nose down if the speed falls. It will pitch the nose up if it gets too fast. These computers will also make sure there is no banking in excess of 35 degrees.

SPIEGEL: So it is possible everything failed but the flight control computer?

Palmer: There are four sets of flight control computers on the 777, the so called "actuator control electronics." If just one is working, it will control the airplane -- it's wandering around, reacting to turbulence, wind, temperature changes. I wouldn't expect it to go as high as 45,000 feet, but I'm not surprised either.

SPIEGEL: So you have a ghost plane that flies itself to the southern part of the Indian Ocean ...

Palmer: Exactly. Until the fuel runs out. We can't know whether the passengers witnessed all this or if they had lost consciousness as well.

SPIEGEL: How does an airplane crash without fuel? Does it go down smoothly like a glider or will it hit the water hard at a steep angle?

Palmer: It will probably seem like a very normal descent, as normal descents are made with idle power, but it would be too steep and fast for a smooth water landing.

SPIEGEL: Will there ever be proof for your theory?

Palmer: Only if they find the airplane, the voice- and the data recorders. Otherwise, this will go down as aviation's biggest mystery since the disappearance of Amelia Earhart in 1937 over the Pacific.

The Corner

[Gaia Retreats: Environmentalist Has Second Thoughts](#)

by John Fund

Environmentalist and scientist James Lovelock has some cautionary words about the dire predictions in the new United Nations report on climate change. He [tells](#) Britain's leftist newspaper the *Guardian* that environmentalism has "become a religion" and does not pay enough heed to facts.

Lovelock himself became something of a guru to environmentalists in the 1960s when his Gaia hypothesis postulated that living and non-living parts of the Earth form a complex interacting system that has a regulatory effect on the Earth's environment that acts to sustain life.

Now Lovelock says of his warnings of catastrophe in his 2006 book, *Revenge of Gaia*: "It's just as silly to be a denier as it is to be a believer. You can't be certain."

"It [the impact from climate change] could be terrible within a few years, though that's very unlikely, or it could be hundreds of years before the climate becomes unbearable," he said.

That's not the end of the 94-year-old Lovelock's heresies. As the *Guardian* reports:

Lovelock reiterated his support for fracking for shale gas, which has been strongly backed by David Cameron and the government but vigorously opposed by anti-fracking activists and local people at sites from Salford to Balcombe in West Sussex.

"The government is too frightened to use nuclear, renewables won't work — because we don't have enough sun — and we can't go on burning coal because it produces so much CO₂, so that leaves fracking. It produces only a fraction of the amount of CO₂ that coal does, and will make Britain secure in energy for quite a few years. We don't have much choice," he said.

NY Times

[Lessons From the Little Ice Age](#)

by Geoffrey Parker

COLUMBUS, Ohio — CLIMATOLOGISTS call it the Little Ice Age; historians, the General Crisis.

During the 17th century, longer winters and cooler summers disrupted growing seasons and destroyed harvests across Europe. It was the coldest century in a period of glacial expansion that lasted from the early 14th century until the mid-19th century. The summer of 1641 was the third-coldest recorded over the past six centuries in Europe; the winter of 1641-42 was the coldest ever recorded in Scandinavia. The unusual cold that lasted from the 1620s until the 1690s included ice on both the Bosphorus and the Baltic so thick that people could walk from one side to the other.

The deep cold in Europe and extreme weather events elsewhere resulted in a series of droughts, floods and harvest failures that led to forced migrations, wars and revolutions. The fatal synergy between human and natural disasters eradicated perhaps one-third of the human population.

There are two ways to consider the impact of climate change. We can predict the future based on current trends or we can study a well-documented episode of the past.

What happened in the 17th century suggests that altered weather conditions can have catastrophic political and social consequences. Today, the nation's intelligence agencies have warned of similar repercussions as the planet warms — including more frequent but unpredictable crises involving water, food, energy supply chains and public health. States could fail, famine could overtake large populations and flood or disease could cross borders and lead to internal instability or international conflict.

Earth scientists have discerned three factors at work globally during the 17th century: increased volcanic eruptions, twice as many El Niño episodes (unusually warm ocean conditions along the tropical west coast of South America), and the virtual disappearance of sunspots, reducing solar output to warm the Earth.

The 17th century saw a proliferation of wars, civil wars and rebellions and more cases of state breakdown around the globe than any previous or subsequent age. Just in the year 1648, rebellions paralyzed both Russia (the largest state in the world) and France (the most populous state in Europe); civil wars broke out in Ukraine, England and Scotland; and irate subjects in Istanbul (Europe's largest city) strangled Sultan Ibrahim.

Climate alone did not cause all the catastrophes of the 17th century, but it exacerbated many of them. Outbreaks of disease, especially smallpox and plague, tended to be more common when harvests were poor or failed. When an uprising by Irish Catholics on Oct. 23, 1641, drove the Protestant minority from their homes, no one had foreseen a severe cold snap, with heavy frost and snow at a time and in a place that rarely has snow. Thousands of Protestants died of exposure, turning a political protest into a massacre that cried out for vengeance. Oliver Cromwell would later use that episode to justify his brutal campaign to restore Protestant supremacy in Ireland.

But the cold did take a more direct toll. Western Europe experienced the worst harvest of the century in 1648. Rioting broke out in Sicily, Stockholm and elsewhere when bread prices spiked. In the Alps, poor growing seasons became the norm in the 1640s, and records document the disappearance of fields, farmsteads and even whole villages as glaciers advanced to the farthest extent since the last Ice Age. One consequence of crop failures and food shortages stands out in French military records: Soldiers born in the second half of the 1600s were, on average, an inch shorter than those born after 1700, and those born in the famine years were noticeably shorter than the rest.

Few areas of the world survived the 17th century unscathed by extreme weather. In China, a combination of droughts and disastrous harvests, coupled with rising tax demands and cutbacks in government programs, unleashed a wave of banditry and chaos; starving Manchu clansmen from the north undertook a brutal conquest that lasted a generation. North America and West Africa both experienced famines and savage wars. In India, drought followed by floods killed over a million people in Gujarat between 1627 and 1630. In Japan, a mass rebellion broke out on the

island of Kyushu following several poor harvests. Five years later, famine, followed by an unusually severe winter, killed perhaps 500,000 Japanese.

No human intervention can avert volcanic eruptions, halt an El Niño episode or delay the onset of drought, despite the possibility that each could cause starvation, economic dislocation and political instability. But, unlike our ancestors who faced these changes 350 years ago, today we possess both the resources and the technology to prepare for them.

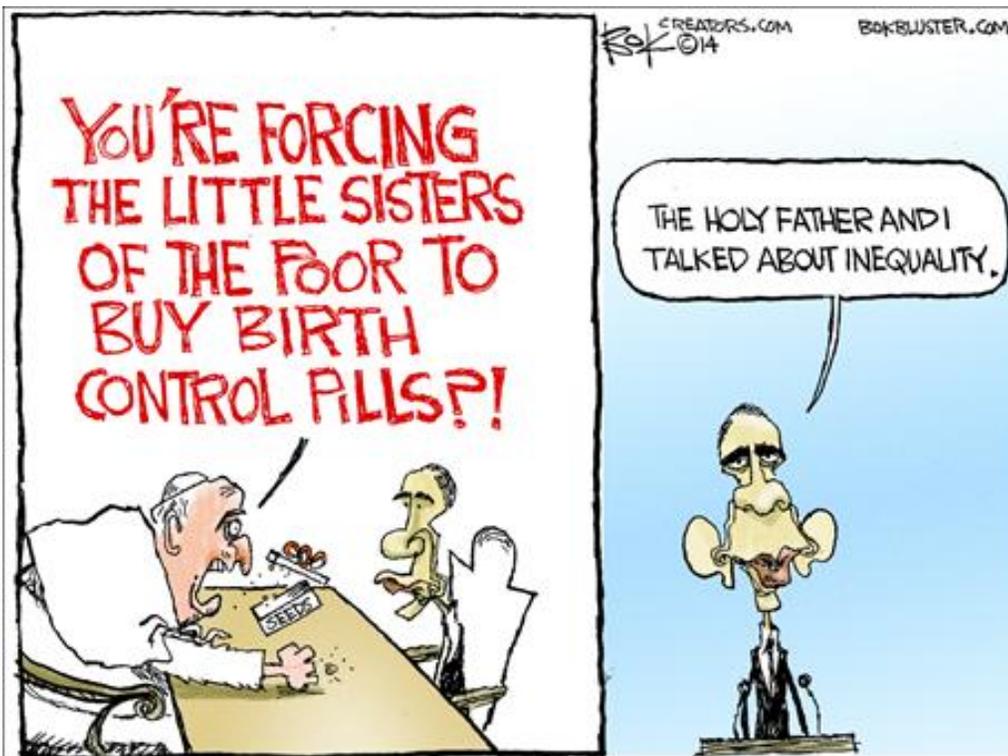
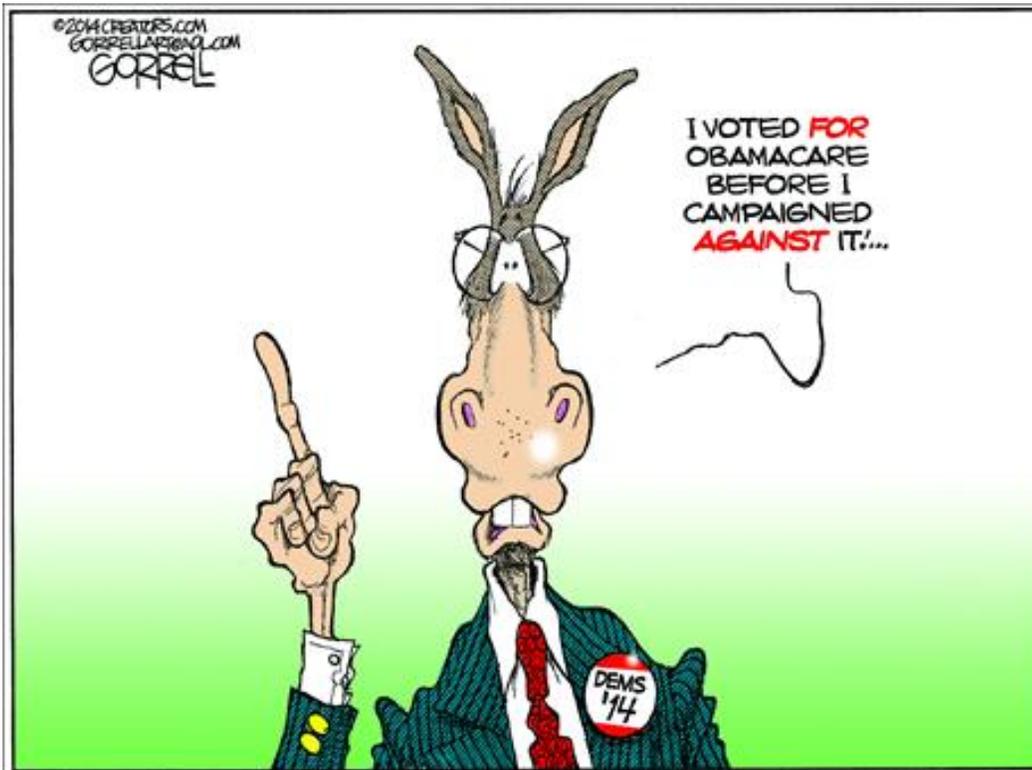
Britain's chief scientific officer has warned, for instance, that in the face of a seemingly inexorable rise in sea levels, "We must either invest more in sustainable approaches to flood and coastal management or learn to live with increased flooding." In short, we have only two choices: pay to prepare now — or prepare to pay much more later.

The experience of Somalia provides a terrible reminder of the consequences of inaction. Drought in the region between 2010 and 2012 created local famine, exacerbated by civil war that discouraged and disrupted relief efforts and killed some 250,000 people, half of them under the age of 5.

In the 17th century, the fatal synergy of weather, wars and rebellions killed millions. A natural catastrophe of analogous proportions today — whether or not humans are to blame — could kill billions. It would also produce dislocation and violence, and compromise international security, sustainability and cooperation.

So while we procrastinate over whether human activities cause climate change, let us remember the range of climate-induced catastrophes that history shows are inevitable — and prepare accordingly.

Geoffrey Parker is a [history professor](#) at Ohio State University and the author of "Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century."



SKILL

CREATORS SYNDICATE
© 2 0 1 4

39% OF THOSE
SURVEYED
SUPPORT MY
HEALTHCARE
LAW, UP FROM
35% IN
DECEMBER...



THE PERCENTAGE
WHO OPPOSE IT
IS DOWN 5%
IN THAT SAME
PERIOD...



AND NEARLY 60%
OF RESPONDENTS
SAY OBAMACARE
SHOULD BE FIXED
AND KEPT.



YET YOUR
DISAPPROVAL
RATING IS AT
AN ALL-TIME
HIGH.



I DON'T
PAY ANY
ATTENTION
TO POLLS.

