

May 27, 2014

Mark Steyn treats us to the history of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

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They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps...***

She finished the words and went back to bed. It was published in The Atlantic Monthly in February 1862. They didn't credit Mrs Howe and they paid her only four dollars.

Julia Ward Howe came from a distinguished lineage. Her forebear Richard Ward was Royal Governor of the British colony of Rhode Island and his son Samuel Ward was Governor of the American State of Rhode Island. Her husband, like his friend, the poet Lord Byron, had played an important role in helping the Greeks win independence from the Turks. Mrs Howe herself wrote many poems, Broadway plays and newspaper columns. But "The Battle Hymn Of The Republic" is her greatest achievement. Henry Steele Commager called it "the one great song to come out of the Civil War, the one great song ever written in America".

Whether or not that's true, most of us understand it has a depth and a power beyond most formal national songs. When John F Kennedy was assassinated, Judy Garland insisted on singing it on her TV show – the producers weren't happy about it, and one sneered that nobody would give a damn about Kennedy in a month's time. But it's an extraordinary performance. Little more than a year later, it was played at the state funeral of Winston Churchill at St Paul's Cathedral. Among those singing it was the Queen. She sang it again in public, again at St Paul's, for the second time in her life at the service of remembrance in London three days after September 11th 2001. That day, she also broke with precedent and for the first time sang another country's national anthem – "The Star-Spangled Banner". But it was Julia Ward Howe's words that echoed most powerfully that morning as they have done since she wrote them in her bedroom in Washington 140 years earlier:

***As He died to make men holy
Let us die to make men free
While God is marching on.***

Charles Krauthammer says someone knows geopolitical strategy.

On Wednesday, it finally happened — the pivot to Asia. No, not the United States. It was Russia that turned East.

In Shanghai, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping signed a spectacular energy deal — \$400 billion of Siberian natural gas to be exported to China over 30 years.

This is huge. By indelibly linking producer and consumer — the pipeline alone is a \$70 billion infrastructure project — it deflates the post-Ukraine Western threat (mostly empty, but still very loud) to cut European imports of Russian gas. Putin has just defiantly demonstrated that he has other places to go.

The Russia-China deal also makes a mockery of U.S. boasts to have isolated Russia because of Ukraine. Not even Germany wants to risk a serious rupture with Russia (hence the absence of significant sanctions). And now Putin has just ostentatiously unveiled a signal 30-year energy partnership with the world's second-largest economy. Some isolation.

The contrast with President Obama's own vaunted pivot to Asia is embarrassing (to say nothing of the Keystone pipeline with Canada). He went to Japan last month also seeking a major trade agreement that would symbolize and cement a pivotal strategic alliance. He came home empty-handed. ...

Phillip Howard on what broke Washington.

... The main culprit, ironically, is law. Generations of lawmakers and regulators have written so much law, in such detail, that officials are barred from acting sensibly. Like sediment in the harbor, law has piled up until it is almost impossible — indeed, illegal — for officials to make choices needed for government to get where it needs to go.

The most rudimentary decisions of government require moving mountains. Approving new infrastructure projects takes a decade or longer. Failures of implementation become failures of policy. Recently the White House issued a five-year report on the \$800 billion stimulus plan from 2009. Part of the original goal, as President Obama announced then, was to “rebuild America's infrastructure.” So how much of that huge stimulus went to this worthwhile goal? Buried in the fine print of the report is this fact — barely 3 percent went to transportation infrastructure.

Why? The president of the United States lacks the power to approve the rebuilding of decrepit bridges and roads. In the New Deal, by contrast, Harry Hopkins had employed 2.6 million people two months after he was named head of the new Civilian Works Administration.

An aging democracy is part of the problem. Each law gets piled on top of the last one. Special education, for example, now consumes about 25 percent of the total K-12 expenditures. There's almost no funding for gifted programs or early childhood education. Is this the right balance? No one is even asking the question. The law just evolved this way.

Reviews for highway projects took an average of two years in the 1970s; by 2011, they were up to eight years. The 1956 law authorizing the interstate highway system was 29 pages. The law remaking the welfare system in 1996 was 251 pages. In this new century, statutes run a thousand pages or longer. The Volcker Rule to regulate proprietary trading — just one part of the massive Dodd-Frank law — is more than 950 pages. ...

As if [Matthew Continetti](#) knows the previous item makes us think of the reform conservative movement, he posts on what that movement lacks.

An intellectually stimulating and potentially historic event was held at the American Enterprise Institute on Thursday. House majority leader Eric Cantor, Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell, and Senators Mike Lee and Tim Scott appeared alongside conservative thinkers and journalists such as Arthur Brooks, Ross Douthat, Reihan Salam, Ramesh Ponnuru, Peter Wehner, Yuval Levin, and Kate O’Beirne to discuss “solutions for the middle class.” The AEI panel was noteworthy not only for its content but also for the presence of Republican elected officials. It was the debut, however modest, of “[reform conservatism](#)” as a political force.

Plenty has been written about the need for the GOP to adopt economic policies that help middle-class families, and [Room to Grow](#), the book put together by event co-sponsor YG Network, is the best primer I have seen on the various proposals that constitute reform conservatism. I do not doubt for a moment that if the Republican Party adopted Room to Grow as its platform tomorrow, then both the GOP and the country would enjoy a better future.

But that is the problem. Close to six years after Barack Obama’s election, the party as an institution is no closer to embracing the ideas of Salam, Douthat, Ponnuru, and Levin than it was when we celebrated the publication of [Grand New Party](#) at the Watergate in 2008. For reform conservatism to have any real-world application, it needs to find a presidential champion. And the prospects of that happening are not what you would call overwhelming. ...

Does immigration reform become part of reform conservatism? Asked and answered by [Jennifer Rubin](#).

Among conservatives, there is, quite obviously, disagreement on how comprehensive immigration reform fits into a forward-looking agenda. Opponents of comprehensive immigration reform are certain this is a zero risk game — newcomers will push out lower- and middle-class workers, thereby harming the same people Republicans are trying to help with the rest of their agenda. Proponents of immigration reform as part of a pro-growth, pro-reform agenda look at things from a different economic and cultural perspective.

The economic data, to be generous to opponents, is mixed as to immigrants’ short-term effect on current workers. But wait. The workers in question are already here. And, in many cases, they are working off the books, undercutting the wages and working conditions of Americans born here. Unless we want to kick all of the illegal immigrants out, the damage, so to speak, has been done at the low end of the wage scale. And reform offers the realistic possibility for establishing border security and visa overstay solutions to control the flow of immigrants. Moreover, reams of data show that all classes benefit over the long term, revenues rise and the economic pie gets bigger — provided other policies are sound. (The great example of this is Texas.)

But in focusing purely on wage data, conservatives who oppose immigration reform depart, I think, from the spirit of modern conservative movement, exemplified by Jack Kemp and Ronald Reagan. Conservatives who argue for limited government postulate that America is a diverse, boisterous place in which communal, nongovernmental action matters a great deal. Whenever possible we should encourage economic growth and vibrant social and cultural institutions, not top-down directives. ...

The rise of the master's degree examined by the [American Interest](#).

Eight percent of the population now holds Master's degrees, the same percentage that held bachelor's degrees (or higher) in the 1960s, [reports](#) Vox. Master's degrees in education were by far the most popular, holding at around a third to a quarter of all such degrees from 1971 to 2012, though MBAs had taken the top spot by 2010. In fact, the increase in the number of MBA degrees is astonishing: Only 11.2 percent of master's degrees were in business in 1971, but in 2012, they were a whopping 25.4 percent.

The rise of the master's degree is likely a product of credential inflation. As more and more people acquire bachelor's degrees, those who wish to make themselves stand out go on to get the MA. And as Vox points out, while a Master's degree does have a positive impact on earnings, the overall debt of people with undergraduate and Master's degrees has grown markedly in the past decade. In fact, as we recently [noted](#), graduate student debt is in large part driving the student loan crisis.

Employers are also likely to use degrees as screening tools, eliminating people who don't have a certain level of education in order to expedite the selection process—regardless of whether the advanced degree is really necessary for the job. But we shouldn't want an economy that favors people with polished résumés over people with good ideas. This data is not a good sign for our economic health.

Steyn On Line

[The Battle Hymn of the Republic](#)

A Song for the Season

by Mark Steyn

by Julia Ward Howe and William Steffe



This essay is adapted from Mark's book [A Song For The Season](#):

Memorial Day in America – or, if you're a real old-timer, Decoration Day, a day for decorating the graves of the Civil War dead. The songs many of those soldiers marched to are still known today – "The Yellow Rose Of Texas", "When Johnny Comes Marching Home", "Dixie". But this one belongs in a category all its own:

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored...*

In 1861, the United States had nothing that was recognized as a national anthem, and, given that they were now at war, it was thought they ought to find one – a song "that would inspire Americans to patriotism and military ardor". A 13-member committee was appointed and on May 17th they invited submissions of appropriate anthems, the eventual winner to receive \$500, or medal of equal value. By the end of July, they had a thousand submissions, including some from Europe, but nothing with what they felt was real feeling. It's hard to write a patriotic song to order.

At the time, Dr Samuel Howe was working with the Sanitary Commission of the Department of War, and one fall day he and Mrs Howe were taken to a camp a few miles from Washington for a review of General McClellan's Army of the Potomac. That day, for the first time in her life, Julia Ward Howe heard soldiers singing:

*John Brown's body lies a-mould'ring in the grave
John Brown's body lies a-mould'ring in the grave...*

Ah, yes. The famous song about the famous abolitionist hanged in 1859 in Charlestown, Virginia before a crowd including Robert E Lee, Stonewall Jackson and John Wilkes Booth.

Well, no, not exactly. "By a strange quirk of history," wrote Irwin Silber, the great musicologist of Civil War folk songs, "'John Brown's Body' was not composed originally about the fiery Abolitionist at all. The namesake for the song, it turns out, was Sergeant John Brown, a Scotsman, a member of the Second Battalion, Boston Light Infantry Volunteer Militia." This group enlisted with the Twelfth Massachusetts Regiment and formed a glee club at Fort Warren in Boston. Brown was second tenor, and the subject of a lot of good-natured joshing, including a song about him mould'ring in his grave, which at that time had just one verse, plus chorus:

*Glory, glory, hallelujah
Glory, glory, hallelujah...*

They called it "The John Brown Song". On July 18th 1861, at a regimental march past the Old State House in Boston, the boys sang the song and the crowd assumed, reasonably enough, that it was inspired by the life of John Brown the Kansas abolitionist, not John Brown the Scots tenor. Over the years in the SteynOnline Song of the Week, we've discussed lyrics featuring real people. But, as far as I know, this is the only song about a real person in which posterity has mistaken it for a song about a completely different person: "John Brown's Body" is about some other fellow's body, not John Brown the somebody but John Brown the comparative nobody. Later on, various other verses were written about the famous John Brown and the original John Brown found his comrades' musical tribute to him gradually annexed by the other guy.

Sergeant Brown died during a Union retreat: when the enlistment of Colonel Webster's Twelfth Massachusetts Regiment expired in July 1864, only 85 of more than a thousand men were left to return home to New England. (That statistic alone tells you the difference between the Civil

War and Iraq.) Huge crowds in Boston greeted the survivors with cries to sing "John Brown's Body" but, as one report commented, "the brave heroes marched silently to their barracks and the 'Websters' passed into history."

When the lads from the Boston Light Infantry cooked up their John Brown song, they used an old Methodist camp-meeting tune, "Brothers, Will You Meet Us?" So where did that come from? Well, back in the 1850s, a Sunday school composer, William Steffe of Richmond, Virginia, was asked to go and lead the singing at a Georgia camp meeting. When he got there, he found there were no song books and so improvised some words to one of those tunes that – like most of the others in those pre-copyright days – was just sorta floating in the ether. Steffe's lyric, like the original John Brown song, had one verse – "Say, brothers, will you meet us?" – and one chorus: "Glory, glory, hallelujah..."

And somehow this combination – an improvised camp-meeting chorus with an in-joke verse about a Boston Scotsman – became the most popular marching song of the Union forces, the one bellowed out as Sherman's men marched through Georgia in 1864. According to William Hubbard's *History Of American Music*:

Lieutenant Chandler, in writing of Sherman's March to the Sea, tells that when the troops were halted at Shady Dale, Georgia, the regimental band played 'John Brown's Body', whereupon a number of Negro girls coming from houses supposed to have been deserted, formed a circle around the band, and in a solemn and dignified manner danced to the tune. The Negro girls, with faces grave and demeanor characteristic of having performed a ceremony of religious tenor, retired to their cabins. It was learned from the older Negroes that this air, without any particular words to it, had long been known among them as the 'wedding tune'. They considered it a sort of voodoo air, which held within its strains a mysterious hold upon the young colored women, who had been taught that unless they danced when they heard it played they would be doomed to a life of spinsterhood.

There doesn't seem to be a lot of evidence to support that last fancy. But, whatever the tune's origin, when Julia Ward Howe heard the song for the first time that fall day, "John Brown's Body" was already famous. She loved the martial vigor of the music, but knew the words were "inadequate for a lasting hymn". So her minister, Dr Clark, suggested she write some new ones. And early the following morning at her Washington hotel she rose before dawn and on a piece of Sanitary Commission paper wrote the words we sing today, casting the war as a conflict in which one side has the advantage of God's "terrible swift sword":

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Washington Post

Who made the pivot to Asia? Putin.

by Charles Krauthammer

On Wednesday, it finally happened — the pivot to Asia. No, not the United States. It was Russia that turned East.

In Shanghai, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping [signed a spectacular energy deal](#) — \$400 billion of Siberian natural gas to be exported to China over 30 years.

This is huge. By indelibly linking producer and consumer — the pipeline alone is a [\\$70billion infrastructure project](#) — it deflates the post-Ukraine Western threat (mostly empty, but still very loud) to cut European imports of Russian gas. Putin has just defiantly demonstrated that he has other places to go.

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Does the Obama foreign policy team even understand what is happening? For them, the Russia-China alliance is simply more retrograde, 19th-century, balance-of-power maneuvering by men of the past oblivious to the reality of a 21st century governed by law and norms. A place where, for example, [one simply doesn't annex](#) a neighbor's territory. Indeed, Obama scolds

Russia and China for not living up to their obligations as major stakeholders in this new interdependent world.

The Chinese and Russians can only roll their eyes. These norms and rules mean nothing to them. Sure, they'll join the World Trade Organization for the commercial advantages – then cheat like hell with cyberespionage and intellectual piracy. They see these alleged norms as forms of velvet-glove imperialism, clever extensions of a Western hegemony meant to keep Russia in its reduced post-Soviet condition and China contained by a dominant U.S. military.

Obama cites modern rules; Russia and China, animated by resurgent nationalism, are governed by ancient maps. Putin refers to eastern and southern Ukraine by [the old czarist term of “New Russia.”](#) And China's foreign minister justifies vast territorial claims that violate maritime law by citing traditional (“nine-dash”) [maps that grant China dominion](#) over the East and South China seas.

Which makes this alignment of the world's two leading anti-Western powers all the more significant. It marks a major alteration in the global balance of power.

Putin to Shanghai reprises Nixon to China. To be sure, it's not the surprise that Henry Kissinger pulled off in secret. But it is the capstone of a gradual — now accelerated — Russia-China rapprochement that essentially undoes the Kissinger-Nixon achievement.

Their 1972 strategic coup fundamentally turned the geopolitical tables on Moscow. Putin has now turned the same tables on us. China and Russia together represent the core of a new coalition of anti-democratic autocracies challenging the Western-imposed, post-Cold War status quo. Their enhanced partnership marks the first emergence of a global coalition against American hegemony since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Indeed, at this week's Asian cooperation conference, [Xi proposed](#) a brand-new continental security system to include Russia and Iran (lest anyone mistake its anti-imperialist essence) and exclude America. This is an open challenge to the post-Cold War, U.S.-dominated world that Obama inherited and then weakened beyond imagining.

If carried through, it would mark the end of a quarter-century of unipolarity. And herald a return to a form of bipolarity — two global coalitions: one free, one not — though, with communism dead, not as structurally rigid or ideologically dangerous as Cold War bipolarity. Not a fight to the finish, but a struggle nonetheless — for dominion and domination.

To which Obama, who once proclaimed that “no one nation can or should try to dominate another nation,” is passive, perhaps even oblivious. His pivot to Asia remains a dead letter. Yet his withdrawal from the Middle East — where from Egypt to Saudi Arabia, from Libya to Syria, U.S. influence is at its lowest ebb in 40 years — is a *fait accompli*.

The retreat is compounded by Obama's proposed massive cuts in defense spending (down to below 3 percent of GDP by 2017) even as Russia is rearming and [China is creating](#) a sophisticated military soon capable of denying America access to the waters of the Pacific Rim.

Decline is not a condition. Decline is a choice. In this case, Obama's choice. And it's the one area where he can be said to be succeeding splendidly.

Washington Post

What broke Washington

by Philip K. Howard

It's time to stop taking Washington seriously. How likely is it that Congress will deal with unsustainable deficits, climate change, decrepit infrastructure, unaffordable health care, muddled immigration policy, obsolete laws, unmanageable civil service, rigged electoral districts...? The list of failures of our democratic government is getting long. Responsible reform seems hopeless.

But hopelessness, it turns out, has its own political arc. Most change comes not incrementally, but in large gulps after long periods of inertia, according to political scientists [Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones](#). It may look like nothing will ever change, but the pressures keep building until, all at once, like the "[stick-slip](#)" phenomenon of earthquakes, the ground gives way and a new order evolves.

Revolutions occur this way. In the United States, most major changes in social policy have occurred in tectonic shifts after pressures built up for decades, such as in the 1960s (civil rights), in the progressive era (regulation) or during the Civil War (ending slavery). The New Deal (social safety nets) differed only in that pressures of the Great Depression were more immediate.

Americans know government is broken, but a vital piece of change is missing. The widespread public dissatisfaction has no center of gravity. The tea party has no coherent solution — simply getting rid of most government programs is not a workable plan. Most reform groups have lost moral authority by acting like special interests, concerned only about their cause and not the broader good. Instead of coming together to promote a new order, environmentalists, budget hawks and other reformers end up competing for airtime.

What's the new philosophy of how democracy should work? A laundry list of specific reforms is unlikely to galvanize a public movement. All the reform periods in U.S. history had a clear goal with a moral high ground, such as ending laissez faire or segregation. The major overhaul needed today also requires a clear goal that citizens can understand and get behind.

What's gone wrong with modern democracy? Polarized politics is one villain. The rise of political extremism is apparent.

But why is it happening?

I think we have it backward. Polarization is mainly a symptom, not the cause, of paralysis. Democracy has become powerless. Politicians who are impotent have no way to compete except by pointing fingers.

The main culprit, ironically, is law. Generations of lawmakers and regulators have written so much law, in such detail, that officials are barred from acting sensibly. Like sediment in the harbor, law has piled up until it is almost impossible — indeed, illegal — for officials to make choices needed for government to get where it needs to go.

The most rudimentary decisions of government require moving mountains. Approving new infrastructure projects takes a decade or longer. Failures of implementation become failures of policy. Recently the White House issued a five-year report on the [\\$800 billion stimulus plan from 2009](#). Part of the original goal, as President Obama announced then, was to “rebuild America’s infrastructure.” So how much of that huge stimulus went to this worthwhile goal? Buried in the fine print of [the report](#) is this fact — barely 3 percent went to transportation infrastructure.

Why? The president of the United States lacks the power to approve the rebuilding of decrepit bridges and roads. In the New Deal, by contrast, [Harry Hopkins had employed 2.6 million people](#) two months after he was named head of the new Civilian Works Administration.

An aging democracy is part of the problem. Each law gets piled on top of the last one. Special education, for example, now consumes about [25 percent](#) of the total K-12 expenditures. There’s almost no funding for gifted programs or early childhood education. Is this the right balance? No one is even asking the question. The law just evolved this way.

[Reviews for highway projects](#) took an average of two years in the 1970s; by 2011, they were up to eight years. The 1956 [law authorizing the interstate highway system](#) was 29 pages. The [law remaking the welfare system](#) in 1996 was 251 pages. In this new century, statutes run a thousand pages or longer. The [Volcker Rule](#) to regulate proprietary trading — just one part of the massive Dodd-Frank law — is [more than 950 pages](#).

Human responsibility should be restored as the operating philosophy for democracy. Only real people, not bureaucratic rules, can make adjustments to balance a budget, or be fair, or change priorities. Democracy cannot function unless identifiable people can make public choices and be accountable for the results.

In concept, restoring responsibility is not difficult. Every law with budgetary impact should sunset, so that lawmakers must reset priorities and adapt to new circumstances. Most laws should be radically simplified into an open structure of goals and principles, leaving flexibility for officials to get the job done.

But the problem with too much law is that it’s the law. No one, not even the president, can get around it. Democracy can’t work until this dense legal jungle is rewritten to permit officials to take responsibility again.

Toppling this paralyzed system requires not reforms here or there but a heave-ho. Wherever you think the United States needs to go, we can’t get there from here. Let’s stop beating our heads against the wall. Our government is failing not because of bad policies but because of flawed institutional design. No one is allowed to take responsibility.

Sooner or later, this system will collapse. It’s time to form a movement to rebuild this broken structure.

Philip Howard is the author of “The Rule of Nobody: Saving America from Dead Laws and Broken Government.”

Free Beacon

The Problem with Reform Conservatism

It needs a presidential champion

by Matthew Continetti

An [intellectually stimulating and potentially historic event](#) was held at the American Enterprise Institute on Thursday. House majority leader Eric Cantor, Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell, and Senators Mike Lee and Tim Scott appeared alongside conservative thinkers and journalists such as Arthur Brooks, Ross Douthat, Reihan Salam, Ramesh Ponnuru, Peter Wehner, Yuval Levin, and Kate O’Beirne to discuss “solutions for the middle class.” The AEI panel was noteworthy not only for its content but also for the presence of Republican elected officials. It was the debut, however modest, of “[reform conservatism](#)” as a political force.

Plenty has been written about the need for the GOP to adopt economic policies that help middle-class families, and [Room to Grow](#), the book put together by event co-sponsor YG Network, is the best primer I have seen on the various proposals that constitute reform conservatism. I do not doubt for a moment that if the Republican Party adopted *Room to Grow* as its platform tomorrow, then both the GOP and the country would enjoy a better future.

But that is the problem. Close to six years after Barack Obama’s election, the party as an institution is no closer to embracing the ideas of Salam, Douthat, Ponnuru, and Levin than it was when we celebrated the publication of [Grand New Party](#) at the Watergate in 2008. For reform conservatism to have any real-world application, it needs to find a presidential champion. And the prospects of that happening are not what you would call overwhelming.

I do not mean to sell the reformers short. The very fact that this discussion is taking place at all, and that the participants in the discussion include members of the House and Senate GOP leadership, is an achievement. Another achievement is a series of recent speeches delivered by Marco Rubio and Cantor and Lee. Those speeches discussed the importance of work and family, and proposed concrete ways to use the power of the federal government to improve work and family life. The speeches set a tone and established an approach that, in an ideal world (which this is not), would inform Republican campaigns and Republican legislative strategy.

That Rubio gave one of those speeches is both significant and revealing. Significant, because Rubio is likely to run for president, and is therefore in a position to adopt the reform conservatives as his policy advisers and to champion their cause in the primaries, in the general election, and, Allah willing, in the formation of the FY2018 budget. But Rubio’s presence is also revealing, because he is the only national Republican identified with reform conservatism that is also widely and legitimately considered a presidential contender. Where is everyone else?

Well, at the moment, everyone else seems distinctly uninterested in reform conservatism. The governors are content to tell their own stories—Walker’s story of government reform, Kasich’s story of compassion, Perry’s story of economic growth, Christie’s story of bridge-building, as it were, between the executive and a hostile legislature. Jindal and Brownback might be interested in reform conservatism, but seem not to have adopted its D.C. version. Mike Pence is certainly interested in policy innovations and in entitlement reforms—but after the rollout of his [Medicaid privatization this week](#), he may think twice before announcing any further initiatives.

The legislators are not much different. Rand Paul advocates not reform conservatism but reform libertarianism. The conservatism Ted Cruz seems most interested in reforming is that practiced by the Senate Republican leadership. Jack Kemp and Edward Conard have more influence over Paul Ryan and his budget, which has served as the de facto governing document of the GOP since 2010, than do Mike Lee and Ross Douthat.

As for the question mark, Jeb Bush, who knows what he is thinking or what he is planning. We know only that he is a serious policy-thinker who had a successful run as governor of Florida between 1998 and 2006. And we also know that he is interested in reform—in education reform and, most infamously, in immigration reform.

It is the issue of immigration that presents the greatest challenge to the prospects of reform conservatism. Immigration represents most fully the divide between the Republican leadership, including some of the elected advocates of reform conservatism, and the Republican base. Every time the Republican leadership brings up the prospect of an immigration reform that includes some sort of amnesty, they provoke a loud and vitriolic and self-defeating intra-party debate. Every time, that debate has the same consequences: The Republican leadership backs down and Hispanic voters are left with the impression that the GOP hates them.

[The party is trapped in a double bind.](#) The outreach Republicans make to single women and to minorities inevitably repels the groups that give the party 48 percent of the popular vote—Christians and seniors and men. As has been made abundantly clear, 48 percent of the popular vote does not a presidential victory make. But 48 percent is not quite something to sniff at either. That number can always go down.

I don't think you can have a pro-middle-class conservatism while supporting an amnesty that will incentivize a flood of cheap labor into this country. Nor do I think you can have a pro-middle-class conservatism that politely overlooks the issue of global trade and the economic and strategic and moral costs of our Most-Favored-Nation trading relationship with China. Finally, I do not think you can have a winning pro-middle-class conservatism that runs away from the hot-button social issues of abortion, marriage, guns, welfare, and affirmative action. These issues are polarizing and potentially inflammatory. But Republican voters care deeply about these issues, as Republicans should, and they are, like it or not, the issues that drive GOP voters to the polls.

What reform conservatives might hope for is a replay of the 1980 primary. Ronald Reagan, it is important to remember, was not always a supply-sider. For most of his career he supported the principle of balanced budgets. It was Jack Kemp, not Reagan, who was the great hope of an earlier generation of reform conservatives. "I think he'll be on the ticket," Irving Kristol said of Kemp in a 1979 interview.

Jack is a quick study. He reads, and he thinks. He knows what he's talking about on the tax issue. Nobody is coaching him. Besides, you don't necessarily have to be that smart to be president. What you need is character and guts. Jack has those.

Kemp was not on the ticket in 1980; he had to wait until 1996. But Kemp's ideas—specifically, his big idea of a massive tax cut—were on the ticket in 1980 in the form of Ronald Reagan. The dynamics of the Republican primary led Reagan to adopt the supply-side model. His victory was a victory for the reform conservatism of its time.

So, too, the dynamics of the 2016 primary may—emphasis on the “may”—lead a nominee with character and guts to adopt whole-heartedly the agenda of reform conservatism. We have yet to see whether reform conservatism is the blueprint for political and policy success, and whether it is the solution to, rather than a (benign!) symptom of, the problematic situation in which the Republican Party finds itself. It will take a champion to discover the answer. Marco, I’m looking at you.

Right Turn

[How does immigration reform fit into reform conservatism?](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

Among conservatives, there is, quite obviously, disagreement on how comprehensive immigration reform fits into a forward-looking agenda. Opponents of comprehensive immigration reform are certain this is a zero risk game — newcomers will push out lower- and middle-class workers, thereby harming the same people Republicans are trying to help with the rest of their agenda. Proponents of immigration reform as part of a pro-growth, pro-reform agenda look at things from a different economic and cultural perspective.

The economic data, to be generous to opponents, is mixed as to immigrants’ short-term effect on current workers. But wait. *The workers in question are already here.* And, in many cases, they are working off the books, undercutting the wages and working conditions of Americans born here. Unless we want to kick all of the illegal immigrants out, the damage, so to speak, has been done at the low end of the wage scale. And reform offers the realistic possibility for establishing border security and visa overstay solutions to control the flow of immigrants. Moreover, reams of data show that all classes benefit over the long term, revenues rise and the economic pie gets bigger — provided other policies are sound. (The great example of this is Texas.)

But in focusing purely on wage data, conservatives who oppose immigration reform depart, I think, from the spirit of modern conservative movement, exemplified by Jack Kemp and Ronald Reagan. Conservatives who argue for limited government postulate that America is a diverse, boisterous place in which communal, nongovernmental action matters a great deal. Whenever possible we should encourage economic growth and vibrant social and cultural institutions, not top-down directives.

By definition, those who came here for a better life are risk-takers, visionaries and go-getters. In other words, they are believers in the American dream. We need immigrants, not simply wage earners. Whether it is food, fashion, design, architecture, popular culture, religiosity, start-up tech companies or innovative consumer products, they bring different perspectives and create new markets or new variations on existing themes. Their enthusiasm for the American experiment is infectious.

On this point, Russell Shorto’s [“The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony That Shaped America”](#) is instructive. It documents the diverse polyglot that existed in our largest city from its earliest days. Unlike the Puritan colonies to the North (featuring witch-burning and religious uniformity), New York’s popular ethos was vibrant, tolerant, diverse and busy — and remains so. It was not just geography that made

Manhattan the commercial center of the world, but also the people and the mind-set that took root there.

That phenomenon — the X factor, the additional spark and excitement when diverse people get thrown together — can be chaotic, messy and overwhelming. That is the American experience, not simply of the early 20th century but for more than 200 years. That might wig out a segment of anti-immigrant activists who seek cultural homogeneity and fear dilution of our Anglo roots, but the United States must constantly revive itself and draw the best, brightest and most dogged people in the world. We are not a nation defined by birth or nationality, but by adherence to a set of ideals, which immigrants often embrace with fervor.

Immigration, I would say to conservatives, makes the space between the individual and government bigger and more robust. That space, civil society, is where all conservatives want government to get out of the way and individuals to flourish in communities and associations of their choosing. If that space is monochrome that vision may work, but not as well and as robustly as it could. (If they want statistics, immigrants also have higher rates of marriage, childbearing and homeownership.) The question for conservatives then is not whether to include immigration reform in its agenda but what sort of immigration will rejuvenate America, expand the pie and enrich that space between government and individuals.

The policy argument for a pro-growth immigration system does not determine the timing, pace or nature of immigration reform. It is debatable whether immigration reform can get done this year or whether as a strategic matter it is better dealt with after the mid-terms. Instead of one comprehensive bill, the sides might agree to smaller nuggets on the “easier” issues including DREAMers, high-skilled visas and e-Verify. Reforms can be implemented in steps as Americans gain confidence the border is secured. Whatever we do with regard to those who have been here illegally for years and for the rest of the pieces of immigration policy, the aim should be to promote the pro-growth, pro-civil society aims of reformers. (As a practical matter, a country with a growing economy and enhanced upward mobility is more likely to embrace a generous immigration system.) There is perhaps more agreement than some of the heated rhetoric of a small sliver of anti-immigration reform advocates might suggest.

In an discussion that will be posted tomorrow with three key figures in the reform conservative movement, Peter Wehner of the Ethics and Public Policy makes the case, “Even most of those who are visible critics of illegal immigration don’t support mass deportation, while on the flip side those who are less worried about the effects of illegal immigration don’t tend to support blanket amnesty.” He observes, “For reasons that are not entirely clear to me, there’s a tendency to exaggerate the divisions that exist rather than focus on the things we share in common. It shouldn’t be all that difficult to settle on an immigration approach that most people on the right can support, if not in every respect than certainly as an improvement to the current system.” I heartily concur.

Republicans soon will need to decide: Do they want to be the people who holler to deport more people more rapidly or the people who want to replenish the reservoir of talents that make the United States culturally dynamic and economically robust? The latter vision is, I would argue, the only sustainable political message for a national party in a diverse society and, is the one most consistent with a comprehensive message of conservative reform. As noted above, tomorrow we’ll look at this and other aspects of the reform conservative agenda with some of its leading lights.

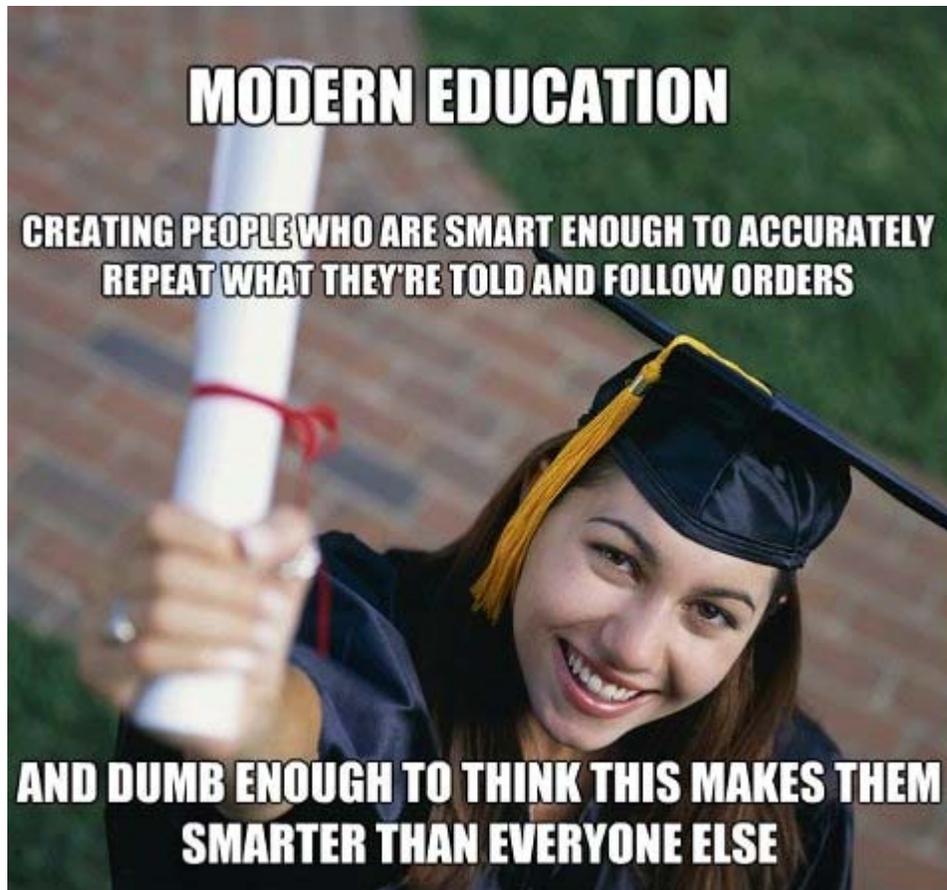
American Interest

Higher Education Bubble The Rise of the Master's Degree

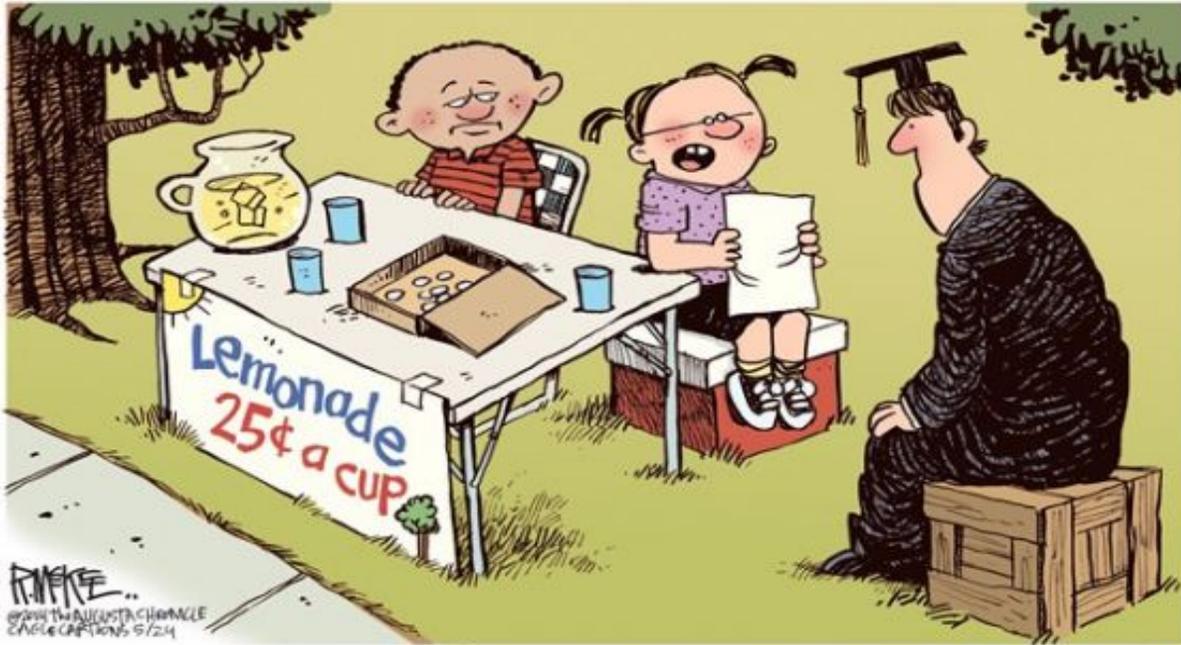
Eight percent of the population now holds Master's degrees, the same percentage that held bachelor's degrees (or higher) in the 1960s, [reports](#) Vox. Master's degrees in education were by far the most popular, holding at around a third to a quarter of all such degrees from 1971 to 2012, though MBAs had taken the top spot by 2010. In fact, the increase in the number of MBA degrees is astonishing: Only 11.2 percent of master's degrees were in business in 1971, but in 2012, they were a whopping 25.4 percent.

The rise of the master's degree is likely a product of credential inflation. As more and more people acquire bachelor's degrees, those who wish to make themselves stand out go on to get the MA. And as Vox points out, while a Master's degree does have a positive impact on earnings, the overall debt of people with undergraduate and Master's degrees has grown markedly in the past decade. In fact, as we recently [noted](#), graduate student debt is in large part driving the student loan crisis.

Employers are also likely to use degrees as screening tools, eliminating people who don't have a certain level of education in order to expedite the selection process—regardless of whether the advanced degree is really necessary for the job. But we shouldn't want an economy that favors people with polished résumés over people with good ideas. This data is not a good sign for our economic health.







R. M. K. E.
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"YOUR RESUMÉ IS CERTAINLY IMPRESSIVE....
I'LL KEEP IT ON FILE SHOULD A POSITION OPEN UP."