

July 24, 2014

As a rule, items about foreign affairs are posted first, but today [Kevin Williamson](#) has written a great piece on the importance of property. Not just to our prosperity, but also to peace.

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The foundation of classical liberalism, and of the American order, is not the rule of law, a written constitution, freedom of speech and worship, one-man/one-vote democracy, or the Christian moral tradition — necessary as those things are. The irreplaceable basis for a prosperous, decent, liberal, stable society is property. Forget Thomas Jefferson's epicurean flourish — John Locke and the First Continental Congress had it right on the first go-round: "Life, liberty, and property." ...

... But we do not have any property.

The governments of these United States, from the federal to the local level, have managed to insinuate themselves between citizens and their property at every point of significance. In that, our governments are very much like most other governments, liberal and illiberal, democratic and undemocratic. We have allowed ourselves to be in effect converted from a nation of owners to a nation of renters. But while medieval serfs had only the one landlord, we have a rogue's gallery of them: the local school board, the criminals at the IRS, the vehicle-registry office, etc. Never-ending property taxes ensure that as a matter of economic function, you never really own your house — you rent it from the government. Vehicle registration fees and, in some jurisdiction, outright taxes on automobile ownership ensure in precisely the same way that you never really own your car: You rent it from the government. Stock portfolio? Held at the sufferance of politicians. A profitable business? You'll keep what income they decide you can keep. Your own body? Not yours — not if you use it for profitable labor.

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... You want a less polarized politics? Consider that the God of the Old Testament asked only for 10 percent, and had Ten Commandments, not ten thousand.

[Mark Steyn](#) connects the dots between the downing of the Malaysian plane and the present fighting in Gaza and Israel.

The two big international headlines of the moment are the downing of the Malaysian jet over Ukraine and Israel's incursion into Gaza. On the face of it, these two stories don't have much in common, but they are in fact part of the same story. To know Israel it helps to know Ukraine, and to know Ukraine it helps to know Israel. ...

... In the Sixties and Seventies, many anti-colonial movements used terrorism to advance their nationalist goals. Hamas uses nationalism to advance its terrorist goals.

Likewise, the forces Putin has loosed in eastern Ukraine: They're a terrorist movement masquerading as "separatists". And Putin is to these guys as Iran is to Hamas. That's to say, he could make the desecration of the MH17 site end - with one phone call.

And yet he chose not to. Because whatever misgivings he had about what his killers had done were quickly allayed by the feeble passivity of Obama's response, and the mulligans and do-overs President Fundraiser has had to take in the days since. ...

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But Obama doesn't believe in "the free world" and certainly not in America as "leader" of it. And so Putin took his wretched passivity at face value, and figured there was no need to stop his ghouls from mugging the dead.

In Ukraine as in the Holy Land, civilization sits precariously on a field sodden in blood. Israel understands this. Obama and Kerry never will.

Bret Stephens reviews the Putin record.

... Vladimir Putin's first major act in power had been to lay waste to the city of Grozny in a manner reminiscent of Tamerlane. Next he went after his domestic opponents in show trials that recalled the methods of Andrey Vyshinsky. Soon he linked hands with Jacques Chirac of France and Gerhard Schröder of Germany to try to stop the Iraq war—which is to say, to keep Saddam Hussein in power. Then he supplied Iran with its first nuclear reactor.

In 2005 Mr. Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the 20th century. In 2006 a mysterious pipeline explosion left Georgia without gas in the dead of winter, a tactic used against several of Russia's neighbors. Later that year came the murders of Anna Politkovskaya, a muckraking journalist, and Alexander Litvinenko, a Russian intelligence officer who had defected to Britain and was dispatched with a dose of polonium. A few months later Estonia, another free-world thorn in Russia's side, was subjected to a massive cyberattack.

This is only a partial list of the evidence available at the time of the debate. But it suggested a definite trend. The invasions of Georgia, Crimea and eastern Ukraine still lay in the future. So did the murder of Sergei Magnitsky, the prison sentences for Pussy Riot, the legal harassment of Alexei Navalny, the asylum granted to Ed Snowden, the cheating on the IMF Treaty.

And now the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 and the murder of its 298 passengers and crew, followed by the coverup. How do you "reset" that? ...

Speaking of "reset," Jennifer Rubin wants to know how non-intervention and "smart diplomacy" have worked.

... Russia is especially illuminating. There are few people who have been wrong about Russia as Hillary Clinton. She was the champion of the Russian reset. She repeatedly went to Russia looking for help with Syria's civil war (the naïveté is stunning). She championed START, with which the Russians may not be complying, and admission of Russia into WTO. (She was still cheerleading about that in 2012.) Also as late as April 2012, she was insisting Mitt Romney was delusional about Russia, insisting, "In many of the areas where we are working to solve problems, Russia has been an ally." At the State Department she opposed the Magnitsky Act until its passage was inevitable. All of this was entirely misguided — with the results playing out to this day. Along with prematurely celebrating the decline of al-Qaeda (and taking her eye off the ball in North Africa and elsewhere) her wrong-headedness about Russia was expressed in too many places in too many contexts to entirely extricate her from responsibility for the fiasco that is/was our Russia policy. She can rewrite just so much history. (In her infamous 60 Minutes softball interview with the president she cooed, "I mean [our relationship is] very warm, close. I think there's a sense of understanding that, you know, sometimes doesn't even take words because we have similar views. We have similar experiences that I think provide a bond that may seem unlikely to some, but has been really at the core of our relationship over the last four years.") ...

It's time for a look at what the elections might bring in four months. Jay Cost from The Weekly Standard is first.

Democratic polling firm Public Policy Polling (PPP) has released a new poll of the North Carolina Senate race, featuring Democratic incumbent Kay Hagan squaring off against Republican state house speaker Thom Tillis, with ostensibly good news for the Democrat: She's up seven points and expanded on her lead. Their headline: "Hagan continues to grow lead."

But dig a little deeper and the story is mixed for the Democrat. Hagan's seven-point lead is due largely to the libertarian candidate, who is polling 8 percent. In no cycle since 1986 has the libertarian pulled more than 3.4 percent in North Carolina; on average the libertarian has won 2.1 percent of the vote. And a deeper dive into PPP's cross-tabs suggests that a large portion of the libertarian support is actually Republican.

In the head to head match-up, excluding the libertarian, Hagan's lead is 3 points, which is less than the 4 point lead she posted in their last head-to-head poll. Moreover, she pulls just 42 percent of the vote, a bad spot for any candidate with 90%+ name recognition.

Another complication worth noting: PPP has a peculiar method in the spring and summer months, when they poll "voters." I do not mean registered voters or likely voters, but people who voted in previous cycles, including presidential ones. This means that they are inevitably sampling an electorate that is much broader than what we will see in November. Turnout in 2012 was 60.2 percent of the voting age population in North Carolina; in 2010 it was 36.4 percent. I know of no other pollster that uses this methodology.

I think the bottom line is that North Carolina joins a list of nearly a dozen states where the real world state of the race is within spitting distance of a tie, with 15 to 20 percent of the electorate still undecided. That is how I would characterize the Democratic-held seats in Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Louisiana, and North Carolina, as well as Republican-held seats in Georgia and Kentucky. ...

Jennifer Rubin says it's good news the GOP is competitive in Colorado and Iowa.

... the most surprising factor in these two races is candidate quality. Democrats had high hopes for Rep. Braley, but his non-stop gaffes on farmers and abrasive personality have sent voters fleeing. Ernst has had a few rocky moments but has capitalized on Braley's slips and radiates a positive, populist message. She was able to unite both tea party and establishment Republicans in her big primary win. Colorado Republicans got a high-quality candidate when Garner not only decided to run but cleared out other Republican opposition. He's been on the offensive — battering Udall on Obamacare and on the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Now remember, Republicans thought they had a clear path to the six Senate seats needed for a victory even without these states. Most pollsters have relatively easy pickups for the GOP in Montana, South Dakota and West Virginia. Throw in hobbled incumbents running in states Mitt Romney won in 2012 (Alaska, Louisiana, North Carolina and Arkansas) and it's hard to see how the Democrats could hold the Senate if they lose either — and surely if they lose both — Iowa and Colorado. ...

National Review

Property and Peace

The irreplaceable basis for a prosperous and decent society is property.

by Kevin Williamson

There is not very much good to say about the life and career of Vladimir Lenin, but give the pickled old monster this much: He cut through more than two centuries' worth of bull and straight to the heart of all politics with his simple question: "Who? Whom?" Which is to say: Who acts? Who is acted upon? Even here in the land of the free, meditating upon that question can be an uncomfortable exercise.

The foundation of classical liberalism, and of the American order, is not the rule of law, a written constitution, freedom of speech and worship, one-man/one-vote democracy, or the Christian moral tradition — necessary as those things are. The irreplaceable basis for a prosperous, decent, liberal, stable society is property. Forget Thomas Jefferson's epicurean flourish — John Locke and the First Continental Congress had it right on the first go-round: "Life, liberty, and property." Despite the presence of the serial commas in that formulation, these are not really three different things: Perhaps we should render the concept "lifelibertyproperty" the way the physicists write about "spacetime."

But we do not have any property.

The governments of these United States, from the federal to the local level, have managed to insinuate themselves between citizens and their property at every point of significance. In that, our governments are very much like most other governments, liberal and illiberal, democratic and undemocratic. We have allowed ourselves to be in effect converted from a nation of owners to a nation of renters. But while medieval serfs had only the one landlord, we have a rogue's gallery of them: the local school board, the criminals at the IRS, the vehicle-registry office, etc. Never-ending property taxes ensure that as a matter of economic function, you never really own your house — you rent it from the government. Vehicle registration fees and, in some jurisdiction, outright taxes

on automobile ownership ensure in precisely the same way that you never really own your car: You rent it from the government. Stock portfolio? Held at the sufferance of politicians. A profitable business? You'll keep what income they decide you can keep. Your own body? Not yours — not if you use it for profitable labor.

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Good government is a constable — it keeps the peace and protects property. Parasitic government — which is, sad to say, practically the only form known in the modern world — is at its best a middleman that takes a cut of every transaction by positioning itself as a nuisance separating you from your goals. At its worst, it is functionally identical to a goon running a protection racket.

Julian Sanchez of Cato is having none of that. On Monday, he published a column heaping scorn upon the slogan “taxation is theft,” writing:

First, a point so trivial I'd hope it wouldn't need to be made, but which apparently does: Taken in a strict or literal sense, the claim that “taxation is theft” is just false. Standard dictionary definitions pretty uniformly include the idea that “theft” is a form of non-consensual property transfer that is “unlawful” or “felonious” or “without legal right.”

Mr. Sanchez, whose work I admire, is studiously ignoring the point. Taxation is as a phenomenon identical to theft in that it involves the non-consensual transfer of property from one party to another. Insisting that taxation cannot be identical to theft because it is lawful is an exercise in question-begging: Does the endorsement of 50 percent + 1 of the voting population transform the seizure of property into something else? Is formal statutory codification the only criterion for “lawfulness”? If so, how can we say that the Third Reich or the U.S.S.R. murdered their millions — when their actions were perfectly lawful? Either *lawful* means something more than formal codification, or it is a trivial standard.

In James Bovard's cutting formulation: “Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner.” Or: Who (dines on) whom?

The desire to be left alone is a powerful one, and an American one. It is not, contrary to the rhetoric proffered by the off-brand Cherokee princess currently representing the masochistic masses of Massachusetts in the Senate, an anti-social sentiment. It is not that we necessarily desire to be left alone full stop — it is that we desire to be left alone by people who intend to forcibly seize our assets for their own use. You need not be a radical to desire to live in your own home, to drive your own car, and to perform your own work without having to beg the permission of a politician — and pay them 40 percent for the privilege.

Principles are dangerous things — whiskey is for drinking, water and principles are for fighting over. The anti-ideological current in conservative thinking appreciates this: If we all seek complete and comprehensive satisfaction of our principles, then there will never be peace. This is why scale matters and why priorities matter. In a world in which the public sector consumes 5 percent of my income and uses it for such legitimate public goods as law enforcement and border security, I do not much care whether the tax system is fair or just on a theoretical level; and while I may resent it as a matter of principle, the cost of my consent is relatively low, and I have other things to think about. But in a world in which the parasites take *half*, and use it mainly to buy political support from an increasingly ovine and dependent electorate, then I care intensely.

The founding ideal of this republic is that we are the *who* and government is the *whom*, a necessary evil that is to some degree necessarily evil. On the right scale and in its proper place,

that necessary evil is bearable. But when it oversteps, we are under no obligation to bear it — in fact, we are morally obliged by our particular American patrimony to resist. That is why the usual progressive taunt, “If you don’t like it, why don’t you move to Somalia?” is foolish and shallow: The American government exists at our sufferance — we do not exist at its sufferance. George W. Bush was mocked for talking about an “ownership society,” but if you want peace, that’s precisely what you should be trying to build. The alternative is to have 50 percent + 1 arbitrating the uncomfortable question of *who* in effect owns *whom*.

You want a less polarized politics? Consider that the God of the Old Testament asked only for 10 percent, and had Ten Commandments, not ten thousand.

Steyn On Line
Fields of Blood
by Mark Steyn



Jewish schoolboys in Lviv, a city that was a center of Jewish life for centuries

The two big international headlines of the moment are the downing of the Malaysian jet over Ukraine and Israel's incursion into Gaza. On the face of it, these two stories don't have much in common, but they are in fact part of the same story. To know Israel it helps to know Ukraine, and to know Ukraine it helps to know Israel.

~This weekend marks the 70th anniversary of the day the Soviets re-took the city of Lviv (or Lvov, according to taste) in the western Ukraine, and ended a three-year German occupation. Before the Germans arrived, there were well over 100,000 Jews in the city and just shy of 50 synagogues. On July 26th 1944, when the Soviets returned, there were a couple of hundred Jews left.

Lviv, Lvov, Lemberg had been, variously, Polish, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Habsburg, Soviet - but always, across the centuries, Jewish. All gone.

Same with any number of Ukrainian cities. Chernivtsi, or Czernowitz, was once known as "Jerusalem on the Prut". There were 50,000 Jews out of a population of approximately 100,000, and they dominated the city's commercial life. "There is not a shop that has not a Jewish name painted above its windows," wrote Sir Sacheverell Sitwell in 1937, when it was part of the Kingdom of Roumania. "The entire commerce of the place is in the hands of the Jews. Yiddish is spoken here more than German." Not anymore. Today, the city's population is over a quarter of a million, but only 2,000 are Jews.

There are cities like Lviv or Chernivtsi all over the world, where within living memory the streets were full of Jews - people went to school with Jews, lived next door to Jews, accompanied their mothers as they shopped from Jews. And now there are no Jews. In his what-if? novel *Fatherland*, Robert Harris captures very well the silence that settles in such communities: no one ever asks, "Do you remember the such-and-such family across the street?" - or what happened to them. Just as, a few years hence, everyone in Sarcelles will agree not to ask "[Whatever happened to that pharmacy?](#)"

Which brings us to the tiny Jewish state built in a sliver of a minority of the total land of the British Mandate of Palestine. Israel is dedicated to the proposition that there should be one place on earth where what happened to the Jews in Lviv and Chernivtsi and Baghdad (once the second largest Jewish city in the world) and Tripoli (which was once 40 per cent Jewish) and all over the map *will not happen here*.

Hamas, by contrast, is committed to the proposition that what happened to the Jews of Lviv should happen here, too.

~But it works the other way round: to know the Ukraine it helps to know Israel. The least worst explanation for what happened to MH17 is that "pro-Russian separatists" mistook it for a Ukrainian military transport and blew it out of the sky: A horrible accident in the fog of war. If that was the agreed storyline, you'd be anxious to make yourself respectable again in the eyes of the world as quickly as possible: You'd seal off the crash site until the international investigators and representatives of the governments who'd lost citizens could get there and retrieve the black boxes and recover the bodies. Instead, as I discussed on Rush on Friday, the "separatists" immediately refused to allow anybody near the site and began looting and defiling the bodies, stealing cash and credit cards and trophies and leaving what's left decomposing out in a field for anyone with a cellphone to shoot souvenir snaps of. As Greg Gutfeld [says](#), "That field is no longer a war zone. It is an international crime scene."

Why? Why would you do this? Why, having "accidentally" shot down a passenger jet, would you then *deliberately* desecrate and dishonor the dead?

Well, here's Ukraine's president, Petro Poroshenko, in [his first international interview since the atrocity](#):

Those armed in eastern Ukraine should not be referred to as "separatists," he insisted. "There are no separatists there. They are terrorists."

He's right. The word "separatists" conjures something like the Parti Québécois or East Timor or southern Sudan. But these guys have no interest in running a state. They're Putin's goons acting on direct orders from Moscow: It was, for example, almost certainly a Russian dispatched by the Kremlin who actually shot down the Malaysian jet since firing these missiles requires a degree of skill the locals don't have. The purpose of this "separatist" movement is not to build a country but to use the territory they hold to harass and terrorize and weaken the Ukrainian state.

Now who does that sound like? The "Palestinian Authority" is not a fully sovereign nation but it holds roughly the powers the Irish Free State had in 1922. Many aspects of that settlement were obnoxious to southern Ireland's "separatists" - the oath of allegiance to the King, the viceroy, their status as British subjects, the Royal Navy ports - but they nevertheless got on with building an Irish nation. Which is to say, boring stuff like fiscal policy and the education ministry and the department of public works.

Nobody in the "government" of Gaza wants to do that. They were left a lot of great infrastructure and viable businesses when the Israelis withdrew - and they let it all die. They were bequeathed 3,000 greenhouses that grew flowers and fruit for export - and they demolished them. Oh, sure, there's still work to be found in Gaza: They're big customers of construction materials, but they don't use them to build factories or schools or tourist hotels, only a network of state-of-the-art concrete tunnels under the border with Israel, so they can sneak in and kill Jews. In the Sixties and Seventies, many anti-colonial movements used terrorism to advance their nationalist goals. Hamas uses nationalism to advance its terrorist goals.

Likewise, the forces Putin has loosed in eastern Ukraine: They're a terrorist movement masquerading as "separatists". And Putin is to these guys as Iran is to Hamas. That's to say, he could make the desecration of the MH17 site end - with one phone call.

And yet he chose not to. Because whatever misgivings he had about what his killers had done were quickly allayed by the feeble passivity of Obama's response, and the mulligans and do-overs President Fundraiser has had to take in the days since. On Friday, Obama was all about "internationalizing" the situation - an "Asian plane" had come down on "European soil" - ie, it's the world's problem. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the dead are citizens of the core west - 154 Dutch, 27 Australians, plus British, German, Canadian, American. Were Obama willing to accept the role, he would have spoken to Putin as "the leader of the free world" and said that, having conferred with the Prime Ministers of the Netherlands, Malaysia, Australia, the United Kingdom, etc, he wanted to let him know an investigatory team representing the countries of those murdered was en route and expected full access to a properly preserved debris scene.

But Obama doesn't believe in "the free world" and certainly not in America as "leader" of it. And so Putin took his wretched passivity at face value, and figured there was no need to stop his ghouls from mugging the dead.

In Ukraine as in the Holy Land, civilization sits precariously on a field sodden in blood. Israel understands this. Obama and Kerry never will.

WSJ

Seeing Putin Plain

Russia revealed its real face long before Flight 17.

by Bret Stephens

In the fall of 2007 I participated in a debate in New York on the question of whether Russia was again becoming an enemy of the United States. I argued it was.

"We worry about political trends within Russia," I said in my [closing statement](#), "not just because we are friends of democracy, human rights, freedom, the rule of law, but also because the respect that governments have for their own people tend to correlate with their attitude and behavior vis-à-

vis the outside world. We worry about Russian behavior toward countries like Ukraine, Estonia and Georgia because we fear that behavior is a harbinger for what's in store for Europe and the United States."

If you think I'm claiming vindication here, you would be right. But it wasn't as if it took great political acumen to come to such conclusions.

[Vladimir Putin](#)'s first major act in power had been to lay waste to the city of Grozny in a manner reminiscent of Tamerlane. Next he went after his domestic opponents in show trials that recalled the methods of Andrey Vyshinsky. Soon he linked hands with Jacques Chirac of France and Gerhard Schröder of Germany to try to stop the Iraq war—which is to say, to keep Saddam Hussein in power. Then he supplied Iran with its first nuclear reactor.

In 2005 Mr. Putin called the *collapse* of the Soviet Union "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the 20th century. In 2006 a mysterious pipeline explosion left Georgia without gas in the dead of winter, a tactic used against several of Russia's neighbors. Later that year came the murders of Anna Politkovskaya, a muckraking journalist, and Alexander Litvinenko, a Russian intelligence officer who had defected to Britain and was dispatched with a dose of polonium. A few months later Estonia, another free-world thorn in Russia's side, was subjected to a massive cyberattack.

This is only a partial list of the evidence available at the time of the debate. But it suggested a definite trend. The invasions of Georgia, Crimea and eastern Ukraine still lay in the future. So did the murder of Sergei Magnitsky, the prison sentences for Pussy Riot, the legal harassment of Alexei Navalny, the asylum granted to Ed Snowden, the cheating on the IMF Treaty.

And now the shooting down of [Malaysia Airlines](#) Flight 17 and the murder of its 298 passengers and crew, followed by the coverup. How do you "reset" that?

You don't. You can't. But you can at least try to figure out where you went wrong at the start.

Take Columbia University professor and Russia expert Robert Levgold, who took the opposite side in that 2007 debate. Russia, he argued, was not an enemy but "a challenge." The problem of Russian foreign policy wasn't so much its aggressive efforts to reconstitute the old Soviet sphere of influence, but rather its "ambiguity and shapelessness." U.S. policy should focus on "constructive and effective dialogue."

In a Foreign Affairs article in 2009, Mr. Levgold went a step further: "Too many Americans," he cautioned, "mistakenly believe that Russia's leaders are incorrigibly antidemocratic and bent on bludgeoning Russia's neighbors, blackmailing Europeans, and causing trouble for the United States." It was important, he added, to change the tone. "If the style and substance of Obama's foreign policy change as much as he and his team have suggested they will, the context for U.S. policy toward Russia will improve no matter what happens on the specific issues that set the two countries at odds."

By and large, the professor got exactly the policy he wanted. Yet the results were precisely the opposite of the ones he forecast.

U.S.-Russia relations were strained at the time of the debate. They are in shambles today. Mr. Obama's good will did not beget conciliation from Mr. Putin. It elicited contempt. A more cautious and less unilateral U.S. foreign policy did not turn Russia into a team player at the U.N. Security Council. It merely facilitated Russian obstructionism. Consistent attempts to de-escalate tensions

over Ukraine, to offer Mr. Putin this or that off-ramp, did not induce better behavior. It signaled that the West lacked any will to stand in Russia's way.

There was no White House outrage when Russian separatists were shooting down Ukrainian aircraft in recent weeks. On the contrary, Mr. Obama was trying to ring-fence events in the region as "a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing," as somebody once said.

Does it occur to anyone in the administration that U.S. efforts to play down events in eastern Ukraine contributed to the permissive environment in which Flight 17 was brought down?

Political shortsightedness being almost incurable, Mr. Legvold has taken to the pages of the current issue of Foreign Affairs to urge "damage control" in relations with Russia and to avoid "misperceptions." But the main misperception has been his—and the administration's—view of today's Russia. Too bad Vladimir Putin sees this White House exactly for what it is.

Right Turn

How'd that nonintervention and 'smart diplomacy' work out?

by Jennifer Rubin

These days are troubled for anti-interventionists and multi-lateralists. Virtually all of their nostrums have proven false.

We can woo powers by economic engagement? That didn't work with Russia. We let Russia into the World Trade Organization, and Europe's economy is more intertwined than ever with Russia's. That, it seems, has made it [harder, not easier, to check Russian aggression](#).

Not antagonizing ("tweaking" in Sen. Rand Paul's words) Vladimir Putin? To the contrary, he's shown he believes he has nothing to fear from the administration. His brazen occupation of Crimea, fomenting of civil war and support for the separatists who killed nearly 300 innocents (and then concealed and lied about their conduct) revealed — for those who doubted — precisely why it would have been useful to act sooner and more firmly with him.

No "dog in the fight in Iraq"? Not even the administration doubts that the emergence of an Islamic State-controlled territory is a direct threat to the United States. Moreover (and this should concern Sen. Paul, who was so concerned about Christians he was willing to make excuses for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad) Christians are [now in jeopardy](#):

They have been given a choice either to convert to Islam or flee. They were warned before a weekend deadline that if they remained and didn't convert, they would be killed. Thousands — often entire families — have had to leave the city with nothing more than their clothes as militants robbed them of money or jewelry. Crosses have been destroyed across the city.

That such violent bigotry in the name of religion can exist in the 21st century is hard for many in the Christian world to believe, but that is part of the West's problem. Jews know all too well that anti-Semitism can inspire murderous behavior. But Christians or post-Christian secularists who are content in their modern prosperity often prefer to turn their heads or blame all religions as equally intolerant.

Innocent Christians — and people of diverse religions in Syria — bear the brunt of U.S. reticence. It's pure fantasy to think that simply cutting aid to this country and is sufficient to protect the world's oppressed people and U.S. interests.

Liberal fans of “smart diplomacy” and engagement with tyrants without sufficient leverage — favored by isolationists and “realists” (hardly) in the Democratic camp — have in the real world been a loser. “Give time” for diplomacy with Iran? The mullahs have used the time to recover economically, move forward with weapons delivery systems and conduct advanced centrifuge research. This administration, for more than five years (and in fairness the Bush administration before that), has “engaged” Iran. The result is a revolutionary Islamist state on the verge of nuclear breakout and that is more aggressive than ever in using terrorism as an instrument of state craft. Talking didn't end the Syria conflict, and Secretary of State John F. Kerry's endless obsession with the “peace process” did no good whatsoever and wasted precious capital.

Russia is especially illuminating. There are few people who have been [wrong about Russia as Hillary Clinton](#). She was the champion of the Russian reset. She repeatedly went to Russia looking for help with Syria's civil war (the naivete is stunning). She [championed START](#), with which the [Russians may not be complying](#), and admission of Russia into WTO. (She was still cheerleading about that in [2012](#).) Also as late as [April 2012](#), she was insisting Mitt Romney was delusional about Russia, insisting, “In many of the areas where we are working to solve problems, Russia has been an ally.” At the State Department she opposed the [Magnitsky Act](#) until its passage was inevitable. All of this was entirely misguided — with the results playing out to this day. Along with prematurely celebrating the decline of al-Qaeda (and taking her eye off the ball in North Africa and elsewhere) her wrong-headedness about Russia was expressed in too many places in too many contexts to entirely extricate her from responsibility for the fiasco that is/was our Russia policy. She can rewrite just so much history. (In her infamous [60 Minutes softball interview with the president](#) she cooed, “I mean [our relationship is] very warm, close. I think there's a sense of understanding that, you know, sometimes doesn't even take words because we have similar views. We have similar experiences that I think provide a bond that may seem unlikely to some, but has been really at the core of our relationship over the last four years.”)

In short, American retrenchment begets terror, violence, persecution and instability. Why in the world would we ever trust its exponents again?

Weekly Standard

[On North Carolina and the State of the Midterm Battle](#)

by Jay Cost

Democratic polling firm Public Policy Polling (PPP) has [released](#) a new poll of the North Carolina Senate race, featuring Democratic incumbent Kay Hagan squaring off against Republican state house speaker Thom Tillis, with ostensibly good news for the Democrat: She's up seven points and expanded on her lead. Their [headline](#): “Hagan continues to grow lead.”

But dig a little deeper and the story is mixed for the Democrat. Hagan's seven-point lead is due largely to the libertarian candidate, who is polling 8 percent. In no cycle since 1986 has the libertarian pulled more than 3.4 percent in North Carolina; on average the libertarian has won 2.1 percent of the vote. And a deeper dive into PPP's cross-tabs suggests that a large portion of the libertarian support is actually Republican.

In the head to head match-up, excluding the libertarian, Hagan's lead is 3 points, which is less than the 4 point lead she posted in their last head-to-head poll. Moreover, she pulls just 42 percent of the vote, a bad spot for any candidate with 90%+ name recognition.

Another complication worth noting: PPP has a peculiar method in the spring and summer months, when they poll "voters." I do not mean registered voters or likely voters, but people who voted in previous cycles, including presidential ones. This means that they are inevitably sampling an electorate that is much broader than what we will see in November. Turnout in 2012 was 60.2 percent of the voting age population in North Carolina; in 2010 it was 36.4 percent. I know of no other pollster that uses this methodology.

I think the bottom line is that North Carolina joins a list of nearly a dozen states where the real world state of the race is within spitting distance of a tie, with 15 to 20 percent of the electorate still undecided. That is how I would characterize the Democratic-held seats in Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Louisiana, and North Carolina, as well as Republican-held seats in Georgia and Kentucky.

Moreover, this appears to have been the state of the race a month ago, even two months ago (although Michigan has since slipped from a toss-up to back to favoring the Democrats).

Nate Cohn of the *New York Times* had an interesting piece suggesting that this was bad news for the Republicans. He [wrote](#):

But as July turns to August, the G.O.P. is now on the clock. If there is to be a wave this November, the signs of a shift toward the G.O.P. ought to start to show up, somewhere, soon. Every day that goes by without a shift toward the G.O.P. increases the odds that there will not be a wave at all.

I am not sure this withstands historical scrutiny. At this point in 2010, Marco Rubio was [trailing](#) Charlie Crist. Rob Portman was in a tie in his [battle](#) against Lee Fisher in Ohio. Both won comfortably. Meanwhile, Wisconsin was just popping up on the radar as a pickup for the GOP, and everybody thought Delaware was in the bag. Furthermore, at this point the Cook Political Report also [listed](#) Kentucky, Missouri, and New Hampshire as Republican toss-ups, though the GOP won them all comfortably. On the House side, few people saw the magnitude of the GOP victory at this point in the cycle.

If you go back to 2006, you see something similar. Democrats were set to pick up Senate seats, but the contours of their victory were not yet apparent. Virginia certainly was not on the radar at this point in 2006; nobody thought Harold Ford would run a close race in Tennessee; and few people expected the GOP would lose all the close incumbent-held races.

Go back to 1994, and very few of the major pundits saw the GOP wave coming -- even until the very end. Michael Barone was a notable exception.

In other words, big midterm victories are often not apparent at this point in the cycle. And why should they be? In this case, the GOP has only recently selected a number of its nominees, and anyway voters are not yet fully engaged. It's vacation time!

So, I would not put the GOP "on the clock" for another month. And my guess is that in a month things will still look roughly the same as they do today.

Cohn is certainly right about one thing: The Republican party is enormously unpopular, and that could spoil any wave that might otherwise build. One could argue that something like this happened to the party in 1978, as well. But it is still quite early in the cycle to make that call.

Right Turn

[If Colorado and/or Iowa go, Dems' Senate majority will disappear](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

Millions of news cycles (and a few months) ago, Senate seats from Colorado and Iowa were not thought to be in play. But now polls have each of them in a virtual tie. In Iowa, Republican Joni Ernst has a statistically insignificant 0.7 point lead in the RealClearPolitics average over Rep. Bruce Braley, and in Colorado Rep. Cory Gardner (R) trails incumbent Sen. Mark Udall, also by an insignificant amount (1 point in the RCP average).

Certainly Obamacare and a listless economy play a part, as does the president's plummeting appeal. Dems in both states voted for Obamacare; both Republicans have pledged to repeal it. It is not surprising that [third-party](#) anti-Obamacare ads have already appeared in both states.

As for Colorado, [The Post reported last week](#), "In Colorado, 46 percent of voters say they 'strongly' believe that passing Obamacare was a bad idea. . . . In other words, many more voters are motivated by their distaste for Obamacare than by how much they like it. And the number who strongly dislike it is approaching half of all registered voters — and probably even closer to half among *likely* voters."

Overall in battleground states, [joint polling](#) released at the end of June found that Obama's approval is only 38 percent (58 percent disapprove) in the 12 competitive states and voters disapprove of Obamacare by an 18-point margin. With new attention focused on Obamacare as a result of the [split decisions on the federal exchange subsidies](#), the Democrats are likely to face a new round of scrutiny over their support for a law so unclear that circuit court judges can't agree on what it means.

But the most surprising factor in these two races is candidate quality. Democrats had high hopes for Rep. Braley, but his non-stop gaffes on farmers and abrasive personality have sent voters fleeing. Ernst has had a few rocky moments but has capitalized on Braley's slips and radiates a positive, populist message. She was able to unite both tea party and establishment Republicans in her big primary win. Colorado Republicans got a high-quality candidate when Gardner not only decided to run but cleared out other Republican opposition. He's been on the offensive — battering Udall on Obamacare and on the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Now remember, Republicans thought they had a clear path to the six Senate seats needed for a victory *even without these states*. Most pollsters have relatively easy pickups for the GOP in Montana, South Dakota and West Virginia. Throw in hobbled incumbents running in states Mitt Romney won in 2012 (Alaska, Louisiana, North Carolina and Arkansas) and it's hard to see how the Democrats could hold the Senate if they lose either — and surely if they lose both — Iowa and Colorado.

True, we are four months out from the election, but are views of the economy and Obamacare going to change all that much before November? Probably not. Candidates nevertheless can falter

and both Republicans will need to keep on the offensive, rebut the onslaught of attack ads coming their way and present a responsible, positive set of policies they'd be willing to support. If they do, one or both of them are likely to win (both incumbents are well below 50 percent). And with that will go the Democratic majority.



CROCODILE TEARS

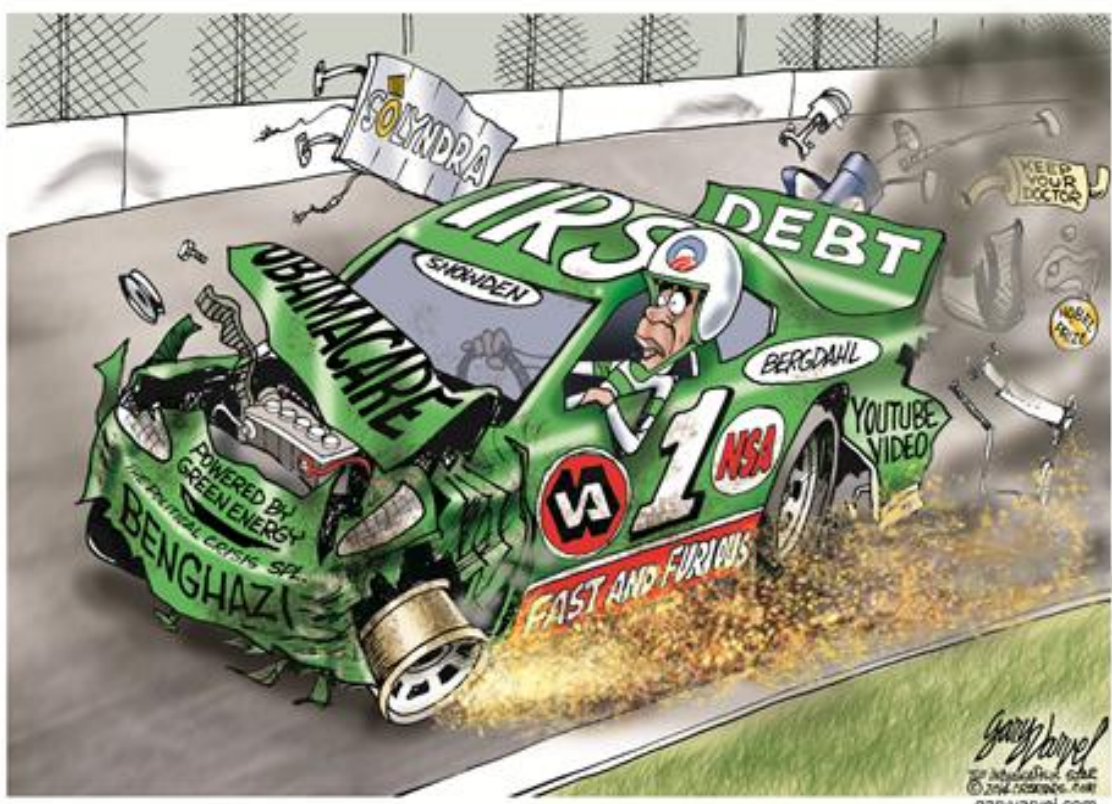


MAKE NO MISTAKE...
AMERICA STANDS
BEHIND ISRAEL.

WELL
MAYBE BACK
AND A LITTLE
TO ONE SIDE
WHILE THEY
OVER REACT TO
HAMMAS'S
SHENANIGANS



KERRY SWIFTBOATS ISRAEL



**DO YOU KNOW THE
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
"LAY" AND "LIE"?**



**SURE...
MICROSOFT
IS GOING
TO LAY
18,000
PEOPLE
OFF.**



**BUT
WHEN IRS
OFFICIALS
TESTIFY
BEFORE
CONGRESS,
THEY LIE.**

