

August 20, 2014

The president gets some harsh treatment from [Jackson Diehl](#), a former fan at WaPo.

"What I just find interesting is the degree to which this issue keeps on coming up, as if this was my decision."

These words, marrying petulance and implausibility, were spoken by President Obama when he was asked, shortly after the beginning of U.S. airstrikes in Iraq, whether he regretted withdrawing all U.S. troops from the country during his first term. "That entire analysis is bogus and is wrong," was his startling answer.

That Obama is somehow not responsible for the Iraq pullout would be news to anyone who remembers his announcement of it, when he bragged of fulfilling his "promise" to end "America's war in Iraq"; or his subsequent election campaign, in which he tirelessly proclaimed that "the tide of war is receding." The sudden disclaimer certainly raised eyebrows among the numerous senior officials who have said, both on and off the record, that Obama resisted leaving behind a stay-on force, slashed its size far below that proposed by military commanders and expressed relief when a legal snag provided him a pretext to pull the plug on Iraq altogether.

What's most disturbing about Obama's outburst, however, is what it says about his willingness, with 2 and 1/2 years left in his term, to recognize his foreign policy mistakes and endeavor to correct them. Even as he has been forced to reverse his Iraq decision, the president appears stubbornly determined to reject the conclusion that has become conventional wisdom outside the White House: that his retreat in Iraq and passivity in Syria did much to create the ugly monster the United States now faces in the Islamic State, an organization that is more powerful, more vicious and more ambitious than al-Qaeda prior to Sept, 11, 2001.

The critique extends far beyond familiar Republican or neo-conservative precincts. ...

[Jonathan Tobin](#) expands on Diehl's column.

... no one is arguing that the president of the United States is all-powerful and has the capacity to fix everything in the world that is out of order. But the problem is not so much the steep odds against which the administration is currently struggling, as its utter incapacity to look honestly at the mistakes it has made in the past five and half years and to come to the conclusion that sometimes you've got to change course in order to avoid catastrophes.

As has been pointed out several times here at COMMENTARY [in the last month](#) and is again highlighted by Diehl in his column, Obama's efforts to absolve himself of all responsibility for the collapse in Iraq is completely disingenuous. The man who spent the last few years bragging about how he "ended the war in Iraq" now professes to have no responsibility for the fact that the U.S. pulled out all of its troops from the conflict.

Nor is he willing to second guess his dithering over intervention in Syria. The administration spent the last week pushing back hard against Hillary Clinton's correct, if transparently insincere, criticisms of the administration in which she served, for having stood by and watched helplessly there instead of taking the limited actions that might well have prevented much of that country — and much of Iraq — from falling into the hands of ISIS terrorists.

The same lack of honesty characterizes the administration's approach to the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the nuclear negotiations with Iran, two topics that Diehl chose not to highlight in his piece. ...

And Walter Russell Mead with more.

As Nouri al-Maliki agreed to step aside earlier this week, and even though the U.S. doesn't have a lot of confidence ("muted enthusiasm") in his replacement, President Obama's reluctant re-engagement with Iraq continued. It has been agonizingly painful for the man who made opposition to the war in Iraq the cornerstone of his national political appeal and who trumpeted his withdrawal from Iraq as a mission accomplished to recommit U.S. forces to the country, but President Obama has had little choice.

With Maliki gone, his choices get harder. The biggest problem is going to involve the fight against ISIS. So far, the administration's strategy seems to have three main components: bomb ISIS when it goes on the offensive beyond its current holdings, arm the Kurds, and use the carrot of more aid to persuade the Baghdad government to do a somewhat less awful job of running the country—less discrimination against Sunnis, less politicization of the army.

The trouble is that all these strategies so far are half hearted—and hedged about with the typical hesitations, restrictions and cautionary measures that are the hallmark of this president's foreign policy style. Bomb ISIS—but not too much. Help the Kurds—a little. Those policies are more likely to produce a stalemate than anything else, and at this point, a stalemate is a huge ISIS win. ...

It's a little thing, but the way AP has violated its Style Guide when referring to the man killed by police in Missouri as a teen, shows how the media always finds a way to push the narrative that advances the cause of statism and government power. Ed Driscoll has the story in Pajamas Media. While a little thing, it helps explain why the left has constructed an alternative reality.

*... The Associated Press Stylebook states that in reports referring to a person's age, the figure for the age number should be used. **It also states that reports should "use man or woman for individuals 18 and older."***

Why, then, are AP reports on the shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown solely referring to him as a "teen" and "teenager"?

"Don't know' if Missouri teen shot with hands up," reads one AP headline from Monday. "County autopsy: Unarmed teen shot 6 to 8 times," reads another.

And an excerpt from yet another AP story, emphasis added: "Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon lifted a curfew but ordered the National Guard to step in to help restore order. Holder over the weekend ordered a federal medical examiner to perform a third autopsy on the teenager, Michael Brown."

...

Real Clear Science reminds us of an infamous wine study.

A Little over a dozen years ago, "la merde... hit le ventilateur" in the world of wine.

*Nobody remembers the 2001 winner of Amorim Academy's annual competition to crown the greatest contribution to the science of wine ("a study of genetic polymorphism in the cultivated vine *Vitis vinifera* L. by means of microsatellite markers"), but many do recall the runner-up: a certain dissertation by Frédéric Brochet, then a PhD candidate at the University of Bordeaux II in Talence, France. His big finding lit a fire under the seats of wine snobs everywhere.*

In a sneaky study, Brochet dyed a white wine red and gave it to 54 oenology (wine science) students. The supposedly expert panel overwhelmingly described the beverage like they would a red wine. They were completely fooled.

*The research, later published in the journal *Brain and Language*, is now widely used to show why wine tasting is total BS. But more than that, the study says something fascinating about how we perceive the world around us: that visual cues can effectively override our senses of taste and smell (which are, of course, pretty much the same thing.)*

WHEN BROCHET BEGAN his study, scientists already knew that the brain processes olfactory (taste and smell) cues approximately ten times slower than sight -- 400 milliseconds versus 40 milliseconds. It's likely that in the interest of evolutionary fitness, i.e. spotting a predator, the brain gradually developed to fast track visual information. Brochet's research further demonstrated that, in the hierarchy of perception, vision clearly takes precedence. ...

Live Science reports on accidental archeological finds from the bottom of the Chesapeake Bay. However, some of this information doesn't add up. Pickerhead has spent more than a few hours navigating the Bay, and there is no place with depths mentioned in the article.

A 22,000-year-old mastodon skull and tool dredged from the seafloor in the Chesapeake Bay hints of early settlers in North America.

The two relics, which were pulled up together, may come from a place that hasn't been dry land since 14,000 years ago. If so, the combination of the finds may suggest that people lived in North America, and possibly butchered the mastodon, thousands of years before people from the Clovis culture, who are widely thought to be the first settlers of North America and the ancestors of all living Native Americans.

But that hypothesis is controversial, with one expert saying the finds are too far removed from their original setting to draw any conclusions from them. That's because the bones were found in a setting that makes it tricky for scientists to say with certainty where they originated and how they are related to one another.

"The bottom line is, there simply is no context for these discoveries," said Vance Holliday, an archaeologist at the University of Arizona in Tucson, who was not involved in the study. ...

August snow in Scotland? [Daily Mail, UK](#) with that report. This was cut short. Follow the link if you want to read all the details.

... Bitter Arctic winds could plunge parts of Britain into the coldest spell of August weather for almost a century. Thermometers are set to plummet as a stubborn band of low pressure drags air in from the north - with two weeks of wet, windy and cold weather on the horizon. There is even a chance of snow and sleet over the mountains of Scotland as it dips to near freezing overnight. Government figures show the last time it was this cold in August was in 1919 when the mercury rose no higher than 8.9C for four days in Yorkshire and Cumbria. ...

Late Night Humor from [Andy Malcolm](#).

Fallon: A new survey finds that 75% of Americans don't use up all of their vacation days. While the rest apparently loan them to President Obama. He's on vacation again!

Meyers: The Korean Aerospace Institute says its one and only astronaut resigned for personal reasons. Now all he has to do is get back to Earth.

Conan: The Kardashians' home has been burglarized three times this year. Still, no arrests. LA police say, "If only there was a video record of what goes on in the Kardashian home."

Washington Post

[To fix foreign policy mistakes, President Obama must first admit them](#)

by Jackson Diehl

"What I just find interesting is the degree to which this issue keeps on coming up, as if this was my decision."

These words, marrying petulance and implausibility, were [spoken by President Obama](#) when he was asked, shortly after the beginning of U.S. airstrikes in Iraq, whether he regretted withdrawing all U.S. troops from the country during his first term. "That entire analysis is bogus and is wrong," was his startling answer.

That Obama is somehow not responsible for the Iraq pullout would be news to anyone who remembers [his announcement of it](#), when he bragged of fulfilling his "promise" to end "America's war in Iraq"; or his subsequent election campaign, in which he tirelessly proclaimed that ["the tide of war is receding."](#) The sudden disclaimer certainly raised eyebrows among the numerous senior officials who [have said](#), both on and off the record, that Obama resisted leaving behind a stay-on force, slashed its size far below that proposed by military commanders and expressed relief when a legal snag provided him a pretext to pull the plug on Iraq altogether.

What's most disturbing about Obama's outburst, however, is what it says about his willingness, with 2 and 1/2 years left in his term, to recognize his foreign policy mistakes and endeavor to correct them. Even as he has been forced to reverse his Iraq decision, the president appears stubbornly determined to reject the conclusion that has become conventional wisdom outside the White House: that his retreat in Iraq and passivity in Syria did much to create the ugly

monster the United States now faces in the Islamic State, an organization that is more powerful, more vicious and more ambitious than al-Qaeda prior to Sept, 11, 2001.

The critique extends far beyond familiar Republican or neo-conservative precincts. To one degree or another, it has been voiced by former secretary of state [Hillary Clinton](#), by the Democratic chairmen of the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services committees, by four former ambassadors to Iraq and by Obama's own [former ambassador to Syria](#). In short, the din resembles that which George W. Bush faced on Iraq as he neared the midpoint of his second term.

Bush, too, resisted the conclusion that his toppling of Saddam Hussein had been a mistake and the subsequent occupation was disastrously managed. But beginning in the late summer of 2006, he quietly initiated a dramatic change of course. By the end of the year, [Donald Rumsfeld had been ousted](#) from the Pentagon and the "surge" — a bold offensive to turn around the war — was ready to be launched.

Bush's remedy was not what most of Washington wanted, but it reflected a willingness by a president derided as inflexible to rethink cherished assumptions and long-established policy. Most important, the surge largely succeeded — chiefly because it set aside a previous strategy aimed at reducing U.S. risks and burdens in Iraq for one intended to defeat al-Qaeda and other forces tearing the country apart.

Ironically, the approach Obama has now embraced for Iraq has the same logic that failed for Bush. It seeks to minimize the use of U.S. forces while pushing Iraqis to overcome their intractable political problems and field an army capable of defeating the Islamic State. The problem for Obama, as it was for Bush, is that neither part of the plan is particularly realistic. While they might eventually be strong-armed into forming some semblance of a government, Iraqis won't overcome their bitter sectarian divide among Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, which is part of a larger regional struggle. Meanwhile, the shattered Iraqi army won't be able to move on the heavily armed and highly motivated extremist forces anytime soon.

Like the failed U.S. commanders who preceded Gen. David Petraeus, Obama argues that "[there's no American military solution](#)" in Iraq. But Bush's surge disproved that thesis. Al-Qaeda was decisively defeated, providing Iraq several years of relative stability. The resurgence of the extremist forces is less the result of Iraqi political dysfunction than the civil war in Syria, where the West's failure to back moderate forces allowed the concentration of militants that birthed the Islamic State.

This is not to argue that Obama should dispatch hundreds of thousands of U.S. ground troops to the region. The point is that a doctrine whose first priority is avoiding U.S. engagement is bound to fail. The goal must be offensive: to defeat those forces that are destroying Iraq and Syria, from the Islamic State to the homicidal regime of Bashar al- Assad. That can be accomplished only with U.S. military and political leadership. And it will require Obama to accept the conclusion he still bitterly resists: that he was wrong.

Jackson Diehl is deputy editorial page editor of The Post. He is an editorial writer specializing in foreign affairs.

Contentions

Obama's Hubris is His Undoing

by Jonathan S. Tobin

Historians will have the rest of the century to unravel the mess that is the Barack Obama presidency. While they can explore these years of foreign policy disaster and domestic malaise at leisure, the rest of us have 29 more months to see just how awful things can get before he slides off to a lucrative retirement. But those who want to start the post-mortem on this historic presidency would do well to read Jackson Diehl's [most recent Washington Post column](#) in which he identifies Obama's hubris as the key element in his undoing.

[As our Pete Wehner wrote earlier today](#), the president's reactions to what even Chuck Hagel, his less-than-brilliant secretary of defense, has rightly called a world that is "exploding all over" by blaming it all on forces that he is powerless to control. As Pete correctly pointed out, no one is arguing that the president of the United States is all-powerful and has the capacity to fix everything in the world that is out of order. But the problem is not so much the steep odds against which the administration is currently struggling, as its utter incapacity to look honestly at the mistakes it has made in the past five and half years and to come to the conclusion that sometimes you've got to change course in order to avoid catastrophes.

As has been pointed out several times here at COMMENTARY [in the last month](#) and is again highlighted by Diehl in his column, Obama's efforts to absolve himself of all responsibility for the collapse in Iraq is completely disingenuous. The man who spent the last few years bragging about how he "ended the war in Iraq" now professes to have no responsibility for the fact that the U.S. pulled out all of its troops from the conflict.

Nor is he willing to second guess his dithering over intervention in Syria. The administration spent the last week pushing back hard against Hillary Clinton's correct, if transparently insincere, criticisms of the administration in which she served, for having stood by and watched helplessly there instead of taking the limited actions that might well have prevented much of that country — and much of Iraq — from falling into the hands of ISIS terrorists.

The same lack of honesty characterizes the administration's approach to the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the nuclear negotiations with Iran, two topics that Diehl chose not to highlight in his piece.

Obama wasted much of his first term pointlessly quarreling with Israel's government and then resumed that feud this year after an intermission for a re-election year Jewish charm offensive. This distancing from Israel and the reckless pursuit of an agreement when none was possible helped set up this summer's fighting. The result is not only an alliance that is at its low point since the presidency of the elder George Bush but a situation in which the U.S. now finds itself pushing the Israelis to make concessions to Hamas as well as the Palestinian Authority, a state of affairs that guarantees more fighting in the future and a further diminishment of U.S. interests in the region.

On Iran, Obama wasted years on feckless engagement efforts before finally accepting the need for tough sanctions on that nation to stop its nuclear threat. But the president tossed the advantage he worked so hard to build by foolishly pursuing détente with Tehran and loosening sanctions just at the moment when the Iranians looked to be in trouble.

On both the Palestinian and the Iranian front, an improvement in the current grim prospects for U.S. strategy is not impossible. But, as with the situation in Iraq, it will require the kind of grim soul-searching that, as Diehl points out, George W. Bush underwent in 2006 before changing both strategy and personnel in order to pursue the surge that changed the course of the Iraq War. Sadly, Obama threw away the victory he inherited from Bush. If he is to recover in this final two years in office the way Bush did, it will require the same sort of honesty and introspection.

But, unfortunately, that seems to be exactly the qualities that are absent from this otherwise brilliant politician. Obama is a great campaigner — a talent that is still on display every time he takes to the road to blame Republicans for the problems he created — and is still personally liked by much of the electorate (even if his charms are largely lost on conservative critics such as myself). But he seems incapable of ever admitting error, especially on big issues. At the heart of this problem is a self-regard and a contempt for critics that is so great that it renders him incapable of focusing his otherwise formidable intellect on the shortcomings in his own thinking or challenging the premises on which he has based his policies.

Saying you're wrong is not easy for any of us and has to be especially hard for a man who has been celebrated as a groundbreaking transformational figure in our history. But that is exactly what is required if the exploding world that Obama has helped set in motion is to be kept from careening even further out of control before his presidency ends. The president may think he's just having an unlucky streak that he can't do a thing about. While it is true that America's options are now limited (largely due to his mistakes) in Syria and Iraq, there is plenty he can do to prevent things from getting worse there. It is also largely up to him whether Iran gets a nuclear weapon or Hamas is able to launch yet another war in the near future rather than being isolated. But in order to do the right things on these fronts, he will have to first admit that his previous decisions were wrong. Until he shed the hubris that prevents him from doing so, it will be impossible.

American Interest

[Back to Iraq The Agony of Obama's Middle East Policy](#)

by Walter Russell Mead

As Nouri al-Maliki agreed to step aside earlier this week, and even though the U.S. doesn't have a lot of confidence ("[muted enthusiasm](#)") in his replacement, President Obama's reluctant re-engagement with Iraq continued. It has been agonizingly painful for the man who made opposition to the war in Iraq the cornerstone of his national political appeal and who trumpeted his withdrawal from Iraq as a mission accomplished to recommit U.S. forces to the country, but President Obama has had little choice.

With Maliki gone, his choices get harder. The biggest problem is going to involve the fight against ISIS. So far, the administration's strategy seems to have three main components: bomb ISIS when it goes on the offensive beyond its current holdings, arm the Kurds, and use the carrot of more aid to persuade the Baghdad government to do a somewhat less awful job of running the country—less discrimination against Sunnis, less politicization of the army.

The trouble is that all these strategies so far are half hearted—and hedged about with the typical hesitations, restrictions and cautionary measures that are the hallmark of this president's foreign policy style. Bomb ISIS—but not too much. Help the Kurds—a little. Those policies are more likely to produce a stalemate than anything else, and at this point, a stalemate is a huge ISIS

win. Every day ISIS controls huge chunks of territory is another day that hundreds and thousands of radicalized militants will see the 'caliph' as their leader. It is another day of collecting taxes, training fighters, teaching bearers of Western passports to carry the fight back into their home countries and otherwise building the legend of ISIS. It is also another day in which ISIS can go on slaughtering moderate Sunni opponents in Syria.

The core problem with President Obama's strategy isn't, in this case, the 'split the difference' approach that undermined his administration's effectiveness in Afghanistan and elsewhere. It's about substance. The only way to beat ISIS and bring about some kind of stability in the Middle East is to reach out to conservative Sunni forces who favor stability. In Iraq, this would be the tribal leaders and military figures responsible for the Anbar Awakening. In Syria and Lebanon it is a combination of the remnants of the sane wing of the Syrian opposition with the forces who support people like Hariri in Lebanon. Ultimately, it is about working with Saudi Arabia and the UAE to stabilize the Sunni world.

This is probably the safest and the most practical course for American policy, but it's likely that a solid U.S. commitment to this strategy would alienate Iran. The Obama administration up until now has consistently put the goal of reaching an accommodation with Iran ahead of its relationship with traditional allies in the region. This hasn't produced a nuclear deal, much less a workable grand geopolitical bargain, but it has allowed negotiations to go forward—albeit at great cost to American influence in the rest of the Middle East.

Now, however, this always difficult balancing act is getting more expensive. Without the serious support of Sunnis in Iraq and Syria, ISIS cannot be crushed. But the Sunnis are feeling betrayed at the moment—by the Obama Administration's record of hot words and cold deeds in Syria, and by its abandonment of the Iraqi Sunnis as part of the cut and run strategy in Obama's first term.

History has handed President Obama one great opportunity after another, but he keeps throwing them away. Had he worked harder with Iraqi Sunnis early in his administration, his predecessor could have had the blame for the war while President Obama could have reaped the rewards of a stabilizing Iraq. Had he moved hard against Assad early on, Iran would have been under tremendous pressure to reach a compromise with the US—or watch its entire regional position collapse. Even in the last two months, the willingness of the Saudis and Egyptians to work with Israel offered an unprecedented opportunity for a different and much more productive approach to the peace process and to Israel's relations with the Arab world.

It's not clear how many more opportunities President Obama will have.

Pajamas Media

[Yes, AP Violated Its Style Guide to Refer to Michael Brown, 18, as a 'Youth'](#)

by Ed Driscoll

The most recent copy of the [*Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*](#) I own is dated 1998; I scanned the relevant page and highlighted the text in question. I also own a copy from my college days with a 1977 copyright on it. They both have the same guidelines for referring to someone as a "youth:"

youth Applicable to boys and girls from age 13 until 18th birthday. Use man or woman for individuals 18 and older.

“AP violating own style guidelines to refer to Michael Brown as ‘teenager’?”, [Allahpundit asks at Hot Air](#). “Question mark in the headline because the AP Stylebook’s not available online, so I can’t confirm that it’s true. But I’m going to [trust Eddie Scarry](#)” of *Mediaite*:

The Associated Press Stylebook states that in reports referring to a person’s age, the figure for the age number should be used. **It also states that reports should “use man or woman for individuals 18 and older.”**

Why, then, are AP reports on the shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown solely referring to him as a “teen” and “teenager”?

“Don’t know’ if Missouri teen shot with hands up,” reads one AP headline from Monday. “County autopsy: Unarmed teen shot 6 to 8 times,” reads another.

And an excerpt from yet another AP story, emphasis added: “Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon lifted a curfew but ordered the National Guard to step in to help restore order. Holder over the weekend ordered a federal medical examiner to perform a third autopsy on the teenager, Michael Brown.”

Unless the rules have changed at AP after 1998, then yes, they violated their Style Guide. But hey, [that narrative doesn’t write itself](#), you know.

Real Clear Science

[The Most Infamous Study on Wine Tasting](#)

by Ross Pomeroy



A LITTLE OVER a dozen years ago, "[la merde... hit le ventilateur](#)" in the world of wine.

Nobody remembers the 2001 winner of [Amorim Academy's](#) annual competition to crown the greatest contribution to the science of wine ("a study of genetic polymorphism in the cultivated

vine *Vitis vinifera* L. by means of microsatellite markers"), but many do recall the runner-up: a certain [dissertation](#) by Frédéric Brochet, then a PhD candidate at the University of Bordeaux II in Talence, France. His big finding lit a fire under the seats of wine snobs everywhere.

In a sneaky study, Brochet dyed a white wine red and gave it to 54 oenology (wine science) students. The supposedly expert panel overwhelmingly described the beverage like they would a red wine. They were completely fooled.

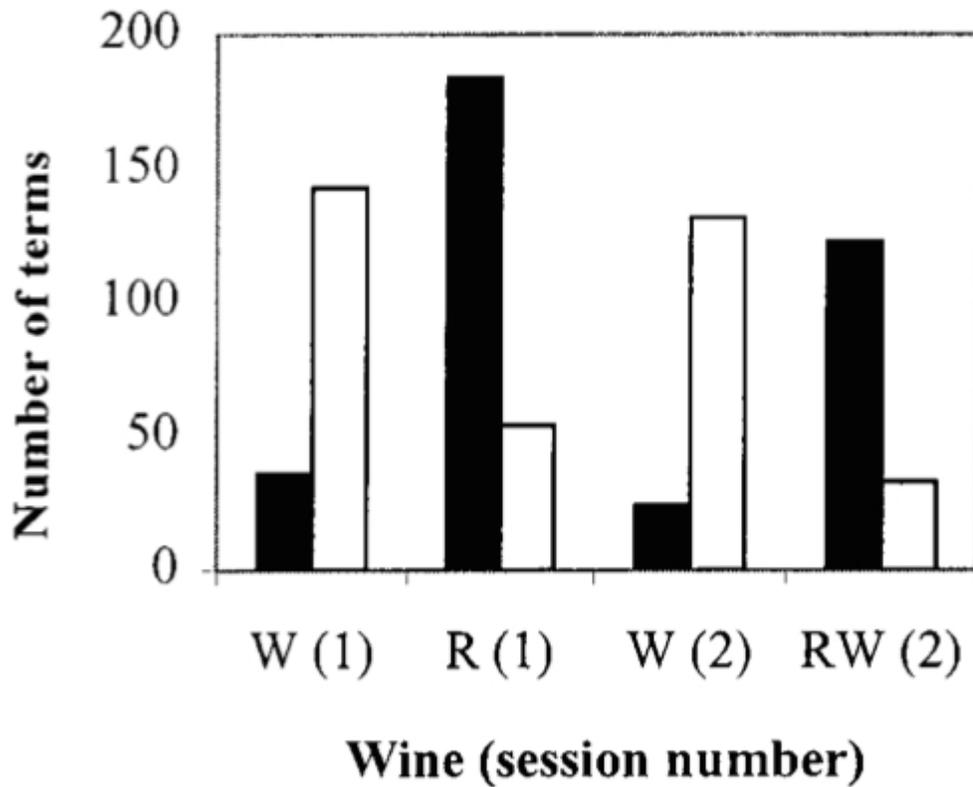
The [research](#), later published in the journal *Brain and Language*, is now widely used to show [why wine tasting is total BS](#). But more than that, the study says something fascinating about how we perceive the world around us: that visual cues can effectively override our senses of taste and smell ([which are, of course, pretty much the same thing.](#))

WHEN BROCHET BEGAN his study, scientists already knew that the brain processes olfactory (taste and smell) cues approximately ten times slower than sight -- 400 milliseconds versus 40 milliseconds. It's likely that in the interest of evolutionary fitness, i.e. spotting a predator, the brain gradually developed to fast track visual information. Brochet's research further demonstrated that, in the hierarchy of perception, vision clearly takes precedence.

Here's how the research went down. First, Brochet gave 27 male and 27 female oenology students a glass of red and a glass of white wine and asked them to describe the flavor of each. The students described the white with terms like "floral," "honey," "peach," and "lemon." The red elicited descriptions of "raspberry," "cherry," "cedar," and "chicory."

A week later, the students were invited back for another tasting session. Brochet again offered them a glass of red wine and a glass of white. But he deceived them. The two wines were actually the same white wine as before, but one was dyed with tasteless red food coloring. The white wine (W) was described similar to how it was previously. The white wine dyed red (RW), however, was described with the same terms commonly ascribed to a red wine.

		Descriptors used for wine W	Descriptors used for wine RW
White wine descriptors	LIT	***	.
	FLO	..	..
	MIE	..	..
	AGR	..	..
	FRU	..	..
	POM	..	..
	BAN	..	..
	BON	..	..
	POI	..	..
	ANA	..	..
	PAM	..	..
	ACA	..	..
	PEC	..	..
	BEU	..	..
Red wine descriptors	EPI	.	..
	BOI	.	..
	CAS	.	..
	FRA	.	..
	CER	.	..
	PRU	.	..
	FRS	.	..
	VAN	.	..
	CAN	.	..
	POV	.	..
	ANI	.	..
	REG	.	..



"The wine's color appears to provide significant sensory information, which misleads the subjects' ability to judge flavor," Brochet wrote of the results.

"The observed phenomenon is a real perceptual illusion," he added. "The subjects smell the wine, make the conscious act of odor determination and verbalize their olfactory perception by using odor descriptors. However, the sensory and cognitive processes were mostly based on the wine color."



Brochet also noted that, in general, descriptions of smell are almost entirely based off of what we see.

"The fact that there are no specific terms to describe odors supports the idea of a defective association between odor and language. Odors take the name of the objects that have these odors."

Now that's deep. Something to ponder over your next glass of Merlot, perhaps?

A FEW YEARS after publishing his infamous paper, the amiable, bespectacled, and lean Brochet turned away from the unkind, meritocratic, and bloated culture of French academia and launched a career that blended his love for science and his passion for "creating stuff."

Yep. You guess it. [He makes wine.](#)

Live Science

[Fisherman Pulls Up Beastly Evidence of Early Americans](#)

by Tia Ghose



A flaked blade unearthed from the Chesapeake Bay along with a mastodon skull shows evidence of weathering in open air, then saltwater marshes, and finally the ocean. Because sea levels submerged the area about 14,000 years ago, the weathering suggests that the tool was made at least that long ago, and that people may have been living on the Atlantic Coast at that time.

A 22,000-year-old mastodon skull and tool dredged from the seafloor in the Chesapeake Bay hints of early settlers in North America.

The two relics, which were pulled up together, may come from a place that hasn't been dry land since 14,000 years ago. If so, the combination of the finds may suggest that people lived in North America, and possibly butchered the mastodon, thousands of years before people from the Clovis culture, who are widely thought to be the first settlers of North America and the ancestors of [all living Native Americans](#).

But that hypothesis is controversial, with one expert saying the finds are too far removed from their original setting to draw any conclusions from them. That's because the bones were found in a setting that makes it tricky for scientists to say with certainty where they originated and how they are related to one another.

"The bottom line is, there simply is no context for these discoveries," said Vance Holliday, an archaeologist at the University of Arizona in Tucson, who was not involved in the study.

Deep-sea fishing

Most researchers believe the [first Americans crossed the Bering Strait](#) from Siberia about 15,000 years ago and quickly colonized North America. Artifacts from these ancient settlers, dubbed the Clovis culture after one of their iconic archaeological sites in Clovis, New Mexico, have been found from Canada to the edges of North America. [[In Photos: The Clovis Culture and Stone Tools](#)]

But in 1974, a small wooden scallop trawler was dredging the seafloor, about 230 feet (70 meters) below the sea surface and nearly 60 miles (100 kilometers) off the coastline in the Chesapeake Bay.

"They hit a snag, or a hang, as they like to say, which meant that something pretty heavy was in their net," said Dennis Stanford, an archaeologist with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., who has analyzed the find.

When they pulled up their net, they found the partial [skull of a mastodon](#), a distant cousin of the woolly mammoth that began its slide into extinction about 12,000 years ago, Stanford said. The fishermen also noticed a flaked blade made of a volcanic rock called rhyolite.

Rediscovered treasure

The fisherman couldn't lug the skull back to shore in their tiny wooden boat, so they sawed off the tusks and teeth, tossed the rest overboard and eventually handed portions to the crew as souvenirs. Capt. Thurston Shawn gave the remaining tusk portions, teeth and knife to a relative, who donated the remains to Gwynn's Island Museum in Virginia. There they sat, unnoticed, for decades.

But while doing his doctoral dissertation, Darrin Lowery, a geologist at the University of Delaware, noticed the teeth and the tusk at the museum, and said, "Ooh, it's something Dennis would be real interested in," Stanford told Live Science. [[See Images of the Mastodon Tusk and Tool from the Site](#)]

By measuring the fraction of radioactive carbon isotopes (elements of carbon with different numbers of neutrons), the team found that the mastodon tusk was more than 22,000 years old.

There was no way to date the blade precisely, but the deft flint-knapping technique used to make it was similar to that found in Solutrean tools, which were made in Europe between 22,000 and 17,000 years ago.

Melting glaciers raised sea levels and submerged that area of the continental shelf about 14,000 years ago, so the knife must have been at least that old, Stanford added.

In addition, both pieces showed characteristic weathering that indicated they were exposed to the air for a while and then submerged in a saltwater marsh, before finally being buried in seawater.

That finding suggested that the two artifacts were possibly from the same environment — such as the marshes found between sand dunes that are often set back from the seashore. That would have been a perfect place for [mastodons](#) to find food, Stanford said.

"They like to chew on bushes and more rough shrubbery," Stanford said.

To Stanford, Lowery and their colleagues, the discoveries suggest that people lived along the East Coast more than 14,000 years ago — potentially thousands of years before the Clovis culture emerged there. These first American colonizers may have even crossed the Atlantic Ocean from Europe, Stanford said. [[Top 10 Mysteries of the First Humans](#)]

Pre-Clovis Americans?

"I think it's very convincing," said Michael B. Collins, an anthropologist at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, who was not involved in the current work.

The weathering on both items — first with open air, then saltwater, then seawater exposure — would be almost impossible to get without them having been on land prior to rising sea levels toward the close of the [Pleistocene Epoch](#), which lasted from 1.7 million to 11,700 years ago, Collins said.

But the person who wielded the rhyolite knife may not have hunted the mastodon, Collins said.

"Those things could have come to rest there together at different times," with the tool possibly being 18,000 or 19,000 years old, Collins told Live Science.

The idea that the [first Americans were European](#) "has been around for a long time, and it's a tough case to make," Holliday said.

A 2007 study in the journal PLOS Genetics tied all living Native American populations to [ancestors that crossed the Bering Strait](#) from Siberia. If Europeans did reach the Americas 18,000 years ago, they left little genetic trace in living populations.

"There's absolutely no DNA evidence," Holliday said.

Archaeological evidence is also scarce. A few East Coast sites, such as Cactus Hill in Virginia and Meadowcroft Rockshelter in Pennsylvania, may have been inhabited up to 16,000 to 18,000 years ago, but the dating and provenance of artifacts from the sites are debatable, Holliday said.

Either way, it's impossible to know how the mastodon tusk and knife are connected, Holliday said.

"You would have to demonstrate that the artifact was associated with the mastodon — in the same geologic layers," Holliday said.

But many other fishing boats could have come and mixed up the sediments at the ocean floor prior to the scallop trawler's dredging. And with thousands of years of ocean currents, the artifacts could have originated in different locations. For all anybody knows, an ancient fisherman could have dropped the knife from a canoe 8,000 years ago, Holliday said.

The new discovery was described in May in a chapter of the book "Prehistoric Archaeology on the Continental Shelf" (Springer, 2014), though it has not been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Daily Mail, UK

[So much for summer: Snow set to blast Scotland as forecasters warn of 'coldest August spell in a century'](#)

Forecasters have warned that Cumbria and Yorkshire could see the coldest August spell in 95 years.

by Jenny Awford

The temperature rose no higher than 8.9C (**48 degrees F**) in 1919 and it is expected to dip that low again later this week. Snow is predicted in the mountains of Scotland as a stubborn band of low pressure drags air in from the north. Experts are predicting scattered showers, cool temperatures and windy weather for the next two weeks. MeteoGroup has said there is 'not much to be optimistic about' as the Bank Holiday weather looks 'disappointing'

Bitter Arctic winds could plunge parts of Britain into the coldest spell of August weather for almost a century. Thermometers are set to plummet as a stubborn band of low pressure drags air in from the north - with two weeks of wet, windy and cold weather on the horizon. There is even a chance of snow and sleet over the mountains of Scotland as it dips to near freezing overnight. Government figures show the last time it was this cold in August was in 1919 when the mercury rose no higher than 8.9C for four days in Yorkshire and Cumbria.

It is not expected to rise above 9C in parts of the north during the day all week with chilly winds making it feel much colder. The Met Office said Loadpot Hill, in Cumbria, is unlikely to see a maximum daytime temperature of more than 8C on Thursday. ...

Investor's Business Daily

Late Night Humor

by Andrew Malcolm

Fallon: A new survey finds that 75% of Americans don't use up all of their vacation days. While the rest apparently loan them to President Obama. He's on vacation *again!*

Fallon: The Secret Service busts a New Jersey counterfeit op. One prisoner made it worse when he said, "Are you sure this isn't something a seven-dollar bill can't get me out of?"

Meyers: The Korean Aerospace Institute says its one and only astronaut resigned for personal reasons. Now all he has to do is get back to Earth.

Conan: The Kardashians' home has been burglarized three times this year. Still, no arrests. LA police say, "If only there was a video record of what goes on in the Kardashian home."

Meyers: University of Illinois doctors think they may have found a way to stop cancer cell growth using venom from bees, snakes and scorpions. Because apparently, cancer cells stop growing when you're dead.

Fallon: Scrabble just announced it's adding more than 5,000 words to its dictionary, including "buzz-kill." As in, "anyone who reads the dictionary for Scrabble is a total buzz-kill."

Meyers: A British man was arrested after a USB drive fell out of his buttocks while being frisked by police. But in his defense, most people insert those wrong on the first try.

Conan: A Florida murder suspect asked Siri where to hide the body. Which explains why the body was found at a hot new tapas place that got five stars on Yelp.

Fallon: Starbucks is offering its fall Pumpkin Spice Latte early this year. Because nothing says summer refreshment like a piping hot cup of caffeinated squash.

Conan: The Kardashians are outraged they've been robbed three times this year, but police have arrested no one. Kim said, "We just want back what's wrongfully ours."

Meyers: A company in India is releasing the first-ever "smart shoe" that connects with Google Maps to track your footsteps. "Merry Christmas," said your wife.

Meyers: French officials say the Louvre gardens have become overrun with rats. Officials later apologized and promised from now on to refer to us as Americans.

Conan: The Oxford Dictionary adds new words: "YOLO" and 'Amazeballs.' The Oxford Dictionary also announced it will no longer include the word "standards."

Meyers: An Oregon man calls police to report traffic stopped by a chicken crossing the road. Next day he calls to report a priest and a rabbi walking into a bar.

Meyers: A study says men over 5'10 are twice as likely to cheat on their partners, while men under 5'10 are twice as likely to cheat when listing their height.

Conan: A fight broke out at a joint Raiders and Cowboys practice. Refs said, "There's a proper way for NFL players to settle disputes, and it's called 'murder.'"

Meyers: A Tokyo store is selling a male bra for man-boobs. Men say once you try one on you'll never take it off, because they can't figure out how.

Conan: The Pope came out with 10 tips for happiness. Surprisingly, Number 8 was Jell-O shots.

Meyers: A woman was arrested at LaGuardia Airport after stealing an iPad & iPhone. The woman could be sentenced to as much as six months at LaGuardia.

Meyers: Kim Kardashian has signed a new deal for a coffee table book of her selfies called "Selfish." You can find it on Amazon under "Customers who bought this also have never bought another book before."

Fallon: Everyone likes Cinnabon. They're testing a new concept store that will sell smaller cinnamon rolls. It's perfect for people who love kidding themselves: "I'm just gonna grab one or eight of these little guys here."

Conan: Photos were leaked the other day of Dallas Cowboys owner 71-year-old Jerry Jones with two much younger women. The photos were leaked by Jerry Jones.

Meyers: The inventor of SPANX has sold her New York City apartment for \$30 million. But remember, that apartment is a lot bigger than it looks.

Conan: A Russian man has repelled a bear attack by playing his Justin Bieber ringtone. The man's okay, but the bear is in critical condition.

Meyers: Obama's approval rating has fallen to an all-time low. He gave Sasha a ride to a friend's house and she asked him to drop her off two blocks away.

Meyers: A New York mother was arrested for leaving her seven-year-old alone in a Lego store. Fortunately, by the time police found the child, he'd built a better mother.

Conan: A man set a new Guinness world record by solving five Rubik's Cubes in one minute and 18 seconds, underwater. The previous record was held by nobody.

Conan: The 25th Annual Scrabble Championship was held in New York City last weekend. The champion gets their choice of \$100,000 — OR the touch of another human being.

Conan: The Kardashians refuse to air any new 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' until police find who robbed their house. Which explains why today police stopped looking

**MORE ICE AT THE POLES? GLOBAL WARMING
LESS ICE AT THE POLES? GLOBAL WARMING**



**AND LIBERALS ARE SURE OF THIS
BECAUSE OF THEIR B.A. IN ART HISTORY**



