

September 15, 2014

OK, time to turn our attention to the jerks in Washington. Daniel Henninger writes about humbling of one of them.

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Mr. Plouffe writes that during an earlier election race, Mr. Obama had a "hard time allowing his campaign staff to take more responsibility." To which Barack Obama answered: "I think I could probably do every job on the campaign better than the people I'll hire to do it." Audacity indeed.

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What we now know is that Mr. Obama is not even close to being his own best Secretary of State, his own best Secretary of Defense, his own best national security adviser or his own best CIA director.

The question is: Does he know it?

Can a humbling experience of such startling proportions have sunk in? ...

Henninger is with the Wall Street Journal. How about Peter Baker from the NY Times?

When President Obama addresses the nation on Wednesday to explain his plan to defeat Islamic extremists in Iraq and Syria, it is a fair bet he will not call them the "JV team."

Nor does he seem likely to describe Iraq as "sovereign, stable and self-reliant" with a "representative government." And presumably he will not assert after more than a decade of conflict that "the tide of war is receding."

As he seeks to rally Americans behind a new military campaign in the Middle East, Mr. Obama finds his own past statements coming back to haunt him. Time and again, he has expressed assessments of the world that in the harsh glare of hindsight look out of kilter with the changed reality he now confronts.

In making his speech, Mr. Obama faces the challenge of reconciling those views with the new mission he is presenting to the American public to recommit the armed forces of the United States to the region he tried to leave. Rather than a junior varsity nuisance, he will try to convince Americans that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria represents a clear threat to national

security in a state that is hardly stable. And he will seek to win patience for more war from a public that wishes it really was receding.

To Mr. Obama's critics, the disparity between the president's previous statements and today's reality reflects not simply poorly chosen words but a fundamentally misguided view of the world. Rather than clearly see the persistent dangers as the United States approaches the 13th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, they said, Mr. Obama perpetually imagines a world as he wishes it were.

"I don't think it is just loose talk, I think it's actually revealing talk," said Peter H. Wehner, a former adviser to President George W. Bush now at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. "Sometimes words are mistakes; they're just poorly put. But sometimes they're a manifestation of one's deep belief in the world and that's what you really get with President Obama." ...

Mark Steyn posts on the ISIS speech.

I was overseas when Obama gave his momentous ISIS address, but figured I could pretty much guess how things would go. Despite being the greatest orator of the last thousand years, he's a complete bust at selling anything but himself, as comprehensively demonstrated in his first couple of years: see his rhetorical efforts on behalf of ObamaCare, or Massachusetts Senate candidate Martha Coakley, or Chicago's Olympics bid. When it comes to war, he suffers from an additional burden: before he can persuade anybody else, he first has to persuade himself. And he can't do it. So he gave the usual listless performance of a surly actor who resents the part he's been given. It's not just the accumulation of equivocations and qualifications - the "Islamic State" is not Islamic, our war with them is not a war, there'll be no boots on the ground except the exotic footwear of a vast unspecified coalition - but something more basic: What he mainly communicates is that he doesn't mean it.

That's what the jihadist militias now in control of Tripoli understood about his "leading from behind". That's what Putin grasped about Obama's "red line" in Syria. And that's what any Isis member who took time out of his beheading schedule to watch the President on CNN International will have taken away from this week's speech. ...

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Roger Simon posts on the "nowhere man" as he goes to war.

Pity Barack Obama. Our hapless chief executive must be suffering from a cognitive disorder the size of Alpha Centauri. The poor guy grew up on the anti-imperialist mouthings of lefty poet Frank Marshall Davis, schoolboy revolutionary Bill Ayers and later anti-Israel professor Rashid Khalidi, not to mention the well-known anti-American excrescences of the Reverend Jeremiah

Wright, and now he has to go to war — as an imperialist — against the very Third World people he was told again and again we colonized and destroyed. His head must be about to explode.

No wonder he insisted in his Wednesday night speech that the Islamic State is not Islamic — what is it? Hindu? Zoroastrian? A lost tribe of Hasidic Jews? ...

... Welcome to nowhere war waged by a nowhere man.

Staying in a Beatles mode, we might say Obama is getting what he deserves — [Instant Karma](#). (“Instant Karma’s gonna get you/ Gonna knock you right on the head/You better get yourself together, etc.”)

But Obama’s not going to “get himself together” because there’s no way he can. You reap what you sow. Win the Nobel Peace Prize for no discernible reason and suffer the consequences of the famous dictum attributed to Leon Trotsky: “You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you.” And at this moment war is very interested in Barack Hussein Obama even though he couldn’t be less interested in it. ...

Mark Steyn again.

... From Benghazi to the Baltic, the world has the measure of Obama. The only people who don’t are America’s besotted, parochial elite and the deluded electorate who made this man “leader of the free world”.

Streetwise Professor gets his turn too.

Obama’s cultists often compare him to a chess master, playing the long game. There is another chess metaphor that is far more apt, however. Specifically, there is a story that has gained wide currency in which Vladimir Putin compares Obama to a chess playing pigeon. Putin supposedly said: “Negotiating with Obama is like playing chess with a pigeon. The pigeon knocks over all the pieces, shits on the board and then struts around like it won the game.”

This story is almost certainly false. The chess playing pigeon meme dates to far before Obama’s time. But there is no person that the story fits better. The story has resonated precisely because it is so right. If Putin didn’t say it, he should have, and he would have been dead on. ...

Karen Tumulty writes for WaPo on the electorate that has finally wised up.

Kimberly Cole was part of the coalition that voted in 2008 to make Barack Obama the 44th president and gave him another four years in 2012 to deliver on his promises of hope and change.

Now, the 36-year-old mother of three young children in Valencia, Calif., is among the majority of Americans who have lost confidence in Obama’s leadership and the job he is doing as president.

"He's been faced with a lot of challenges, and he's lost his way," Cole said in an interview. She worries that Obama lacks the resolve needed at a time when things at home and abroad are looking scarier.

On the other side of the country, Karlene Richardson, 44, once counted herself a "very strong supporter" of the president. But now she feels much the same as Cole does.

"Honestly, I just feel that what I bought into is not what I'm getting," said Richardson, an author and motivational speaker who teaches health-care administration at a community college in Queens. "I'm starting to wonder whether the world takes us seriously."

Both Cole and Richardson were surveyed in the latest Washington Post-ABC News poll and represent one of its most striking findings: the degree to which the president's approval has slipped among key parts of the Obama coalition — the women, youth and Latino voters most responsible for putting him into office. ...

WSJ

The Humbling of a President

In the war with ISIS, the U.S. needs genuine presidential leadership, not a utility infielder playing everyone else's position.

by Daniel Henninger

Let us note briefly the commanding irony of Barack Obama delivering—hours before 9/11—the anti-terrorism speech that history required of his predecessor after September 11, 2001. There is one thing to say: If we are lucky, President Obama will hand off to his successor a terrorist enemy as diminished as the one George Bush, David Petraeus and many others left him.

If we're lucky.

There is a story about Mr. Obama relevant to the war, battle or whatever he declared Wednesday evening against the Islamic State, aka ISIS. It is found in his former campaign manager David Plouffe's account of the 2008 election, "The Audacity to Win."

Mr. Plouffe writes that during an earlier election race, Mr. Obama had a "hard time allowing his campaign staff to take more responsibility." To which Barack Obama answered: "I think I could probably do every job on the campaign better than the people I'll hire to do it." Audacity indeed.

In a 2008 New Yorker article by Ryan Lizza, Mr. Obama is quoted telling another aide: "I know more about policies on any particular issue than my policy directors." Also, "I think I'm a better speechwriter than my speechwriters."

And here we are.

In the days before Mr. Obama's ISIS address to the nation, news accounts cataloged his now-embarrassing statements about terrorism's decline on his watch—the terrorists are JV teams, the tide of war is receding and all that.

Set aside that Mr. Obama outputted this viewpoint even as Nigeria's homicidal Boko Haram kidnapped 275 schoolgirls, an act that appalled and galvanized the world into "Bring Back Our Girls." No matter. Boko Haram slaughtered on, unabated.

Some of these gaffes came in offhand comments, but others were embedded in formal speeches from the presidential pen, such as the definitive Obama statement on terrorism last May at the National Defense University: "So that's the current threat—lethal yet less-capable al Qaeda affiliates." A year later, ISIS seized one-third of Iraq inside a week.

Worse than misstatements have been the misdecisions on policy: the erased red line in Syria, the unattainable reset with [Vladimir Putin](#)'s brainwashed Russia, the nuclear deal with the ruling shadows in Iran. The first two bad calls have pitched significant regions of the world into crises of virtually unmanageable complexity.

What we now know is that Mr. Obama is not even close to being his own best Secretary of State, his own best Secretary of Defense, his own best national security adviser or his own best CIA director.

The question is: Does he know it?

Can a humbling experience of such startling proportions have sunk in? It had better. What the U.S. needs if it is to prevail in the battle Mr. Obama put forth Wednesday is the genuine article of presidential leadership. What the U.S. does not need in the Oval Office is a utility infielder playing everyone else's position. We are competing against global terrorism's heaviest hitters, who have established state seizure as a strategic goal.

If Mr. Obama still thinks he's better than [Susan Rice](#), [John Kerry](#), Chuck Hagel and [John Brennan](#), then he and the nation supporting his anti-ISIS effort are being poorly served. He should fire them all and bring in people who know more about fighting terrorists than he does. Barack Obama admires Abraham Lincoln. Act like him. Appoint the best people and let them win it.

Winning would also require a president willing to confront the political correctness that has undermined the U.S.'s battle against terror.

No more sophistry about whether a Benghazi qualifies as terrorism. After the videotaped beheadings of James Foley and Steven Sotloff, is anyone still lying awake at night worrying that their iPhone number is among millions of others in the National Security Agency's data mines?

Closing Gitmo goes on the backburner. "Boots on the ground"—kill that too. It has become code for boots going nowhere, as Mr. Obama's airpower-only campaign made clear Wednesday evening.

It has taken 13 years to this day, September 11, for the reality of global Islamic terrorism to finally sink in—here in the U.S. and everywhere else, including the ever-equivocal capitals of the Middle East.

In the years after 9/11 came London, Madrid, the Boston Marathon, multiple failed attempts to bomb New York City, Mumbai, Kenya, Boko Haram, the re-rocketing of Tel Aviv, Christian holy places destroyed, thousands of Arabs blown up in the act of daily life. That's the short list. ISIS is just the tip of the world's unstable iceberg. We're all living on the Titanic.

Now a reluctant progressive president goes to war without admitting it is war. It's even money at best that he or the Left will stay the course if the going gets tough beyond Iraq's borders.

A final irony. In that National Defense speech, Mr. Obama defended the drone killing in Yemen of the American-born jihadist Anwar al-Awlaki: "His citizenship should no more serve as a shield than a sniper shooting down on an innocent crowd should be protected from a SWAT team."

If Barack Obama would put a plaque with those words on his Oval Office desk, the world's innocents may have a shot at defeating the world's snipers. A long shot.

NY Times

A President Whose Assurances Have Come Back to Haunt Him

by Peter Baker

WASHINGTON — When [President Obama](#) addresses the nation on Wednesday to explain his plan to defeat Islamic extremists in Iraq and Syria, it is a fair bet he will not call them the "JV team."

Nor does he seem likely to describe [Iraq](#) as "sovereign, stable and self-reliant" with a "representative government." And presumably he will not assert after more than a decade of conflict that "the tide of war is receding."

As he seeks to rally Americans behind a new military campaign in the Middle East, Mr. Obama finds his own past statements coming back to haunt him. Time and again, he has expressed assessments of the world that in the harsh glare of hindsight look out of kilter with the changed reality he now confronts.

In making his speech, Mr. Obama faces the challenge of reconciling those views with the new mission he is presenting to the American public to recommit the armed forces of the United States to the region he tried to leave. Rather than a junior varsity nuisance, he will try to convince Americans that the [Islamic State in Iraq and Syria](#) represents a clear threat to national security in a state that is hardly stable. And he will seek to win patience for more war from a public that wishes it really was receding.

To Mr. Obama's critics, the disparity between the president's previous statements and today's reality reflects not simply poorly chosen words but a fundamentally misguided view of the world. Rather than clearly see the persistent dangers as the United States approaches the 13th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, they said, Mr. Obama perpetually imagines a world as he wishes it were.

"I don't think it is just loose talk, I think it's actually revealing talk," said Peter H. Wehner, a former adviser to President George W. Bush now at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. "Sometimes words are mistakes; they're just poorly put. But sometimes they're a manifestation of one's deep belief in the world and that's what you really get with President Obama."

White House officials said the president's opponents distorted what he said to score political points or hold him responsible for evolving events that were not foreseen. They also say Mr. Obama's past statements are hardly on a scale of Mr. Bush's unfounded assertions about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, not to mention Mr. Bush's May 2003 speech in front of a banner that said "Mission Accomplished," meant to signal an end to the major combat in Iraq.

"There is context or facts that explain what the president meant at the time, or things change over the course of time," said Dan Pfeiffer, a senior adviser to Mr. Obama. "The people who try to beat us up over these things will continue to do so."

The comment that has caused Mr. Obama the most grief in recent days was his judgment about groups like ISIS. In an interview last winter with David Remnick of The New Yorker, Mr. Obama sought to make the point that not every terrorist group is a threat like Al Qaeda, requiring extraordinary American action.

"The analogy we use around here sometimes, and I think is accurate, is if a JV team puts on Lakers uniforms, that doesn't make them Kobe Bryant," Mr. Obama told Mr. Remnick. He drew a distinction between Al Qaeda and "jihadists who are engaged in various local power struggles and disputes, often sectarian."

Asked about that by Chuck Todd on "Meet the Press" last weekend, Mr. Obama denied that he necessarily meant ISIS. "Keep in mind I wasn't specifically referring to ISIL," he said, using an alternate acronym for the group.

"I've said that regionally, there were a whole series of organizations that were focused primarily locally — weren't focused on homeland, because I think a lot of us, when we think about terrorism, the model is Osama bin Laden and 9/11," Mr. Obama said. And some groups evolve, he noted. "They're not a JV team," he added of ISIS.

But the transcript of the New Yorker interview showed that Mr. Obama made his JV team comment directly after being asked about terrorists in Iraq, [Syria](#) and Africa, which would include ISIS. After Mr. Obama's initial answer, Mr. Remnick pointed out that "that JV team just took over Fallujah," a city in western Iraq seized by ISIS. Mr. Obama replied that terrorism in many places around the world was not necessarily "a direct threat to us or something that we have to wade into."

Journalistic organizations like PolitiFact, [Factcheck.org](#) and The Washington Post's Fact Checker all rejected the contention that Mr. Obama was not referring to ISIS when he made his comment about JV teams.

Other statements by Mr. Obama look different today as well. When the president pulled American troops out of Iraq near the end of 2011 against the urging of some Republicans, he said the armed forces were "leaving behind a sovereign, stable and self-reliant Iraq with a representative government."

Aides defended the conclusion, saying that was the president's hope and it was up to the Iraqis to make good on that promise, an opportunity they squandered, leading to the emergence of ISIS as a major threat.

Just a few months before that, Mr. Obama told the United Nations that "the tide of war is receding." Aides said that statement had to be viewed in the context of two wars fought with hundreds of thousands of American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last 13 years. Even with new airstrikes in Iraq and potentially in Syria, they noted, just a fraction of those troops were still overseas.

Other statements that have come under fire lately include Mr. Obama's comment setting a "red line" if the government of President Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons against his people, which he eventually did. Mr. Obama vowed to retaliate but instead accepted a deal to remove and destroy Mr. Assad's chemical weapons.

Just a month ago, Mr. Obama told Thomas L. Friedman, an op-ed columnist for The New York Times, that it had "always been a fantasy" to think that arming moderate rebels in Syria a few years ago would have made a difference in Syria. But now his emerging strategy for combating ISIS in Syria involves bolstering those same rebels rather than using American ground troops. Aides said Mr. Obama was referring to the rebels as they were three years ago, arguing that they have developed a lot since then.

Either way, Aaron David Miller, author of the forthcoming "The End of Greatness: Why America Can't Have (and Doesn't Want) Another Great President," said Mr. Obama would have a real challenge selling his new approach to the public on Wednesday.

"Presidents rarely persuade through speeches, unless the words are rooted in context that seems real and credible," Mr. Miller said. "Obama has a problem in this regard because his rhetoric has often gone beyond his capacity to deliver, especially on Syria."

Steyn On Line
Coalition of the Unwilling
by Mark Steyn

I was overseas when Obama gave his momentous ISIS address, but figured I could pretty much guess how things would go. Despite being the greatest orator of the last thousand years, he's a complete bust at selling anything but himself, as comprehensively demonstrated in his first couple of years: see his rhetorical efforts on behalf of ObamaCare, or Massachusetts Senate candidate Martha Coakley, or Chicago's Olympics bid. When it comes to war, he suffers from an additional burden: before he can persuade anybody else, he first has to persuade himself. And he can't do it. So he gave the usual listless performance of a surly actor who resents the part he's been given. It's not just the accumulation of equivocations and qualifications - the "Islamic State" is not Islamic, our war with them is not a war, there'll be no boots on the ground except the exotic footwear of a vast unspecified coalition - but something more basic: What he mainly communicates is that he doesn't mean it.

That's what the jihadist militias now in control of Tripoli understood about his "leading from behind". That's what Putin grasped about Obama's "red line" in Syria. And that's what any Isis member who took time out of his beheading schedule to watch the President on CNN International will have taken away from this week's speech.

As for the "coalition", they seem to intuit that, with a leader leading from this far behind, you want to stand even further back. From the mellifluously named [Jacaranda FM](#):

Turkey will refuse to allow a US-led coalition to attack jihadists in neighbouring Iraq and Syria from its air bases, nor will it take part in combat operations against militants, a government official told AFP Thursday.

So much for the only Nato member to border Isis. What of the other [Atlantic allies](#)?

Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told journalists on Friday that Germany will not take part in US-led air strikes against Islamic extremists Isis in Syria.

The United Kingdom's position is more, ah, nuanced. First, [the Foreign Secretary](#):

Asked about plans for an open-ended bombing campaign, Mr Hammond said: 'Let me be clear – Britain will not be taking part in any air strikes in Syria. We have already had that discussion in our parliament last year and we won't be revisiting that position.'

On the other hand, the Queen's first minister:

Hours after Mr Hammond's appearance in Germany, the Prime Minister's official spokesman insisted Mr Cameron was 'not ruling anything out'.

What about American allies [closer to the action](#)?

There is a disinclination to believe his promises, said Mustafa Alani of the Gulf Research Center in Dubai.

"We have reached a low point of trust in this administration," he said. "We think in a time of crisis Mr. Obama will walk away from everyone if it means saving his own skin."

Different countries are suspicious of the United States for different reasons, but all feel betrayed in some way by recent U.S. policies, said Salman Shaikh of the Brookings Doha Institute in Qatar.

They, too, take "the leader of the free world" at face value: If he can't sell it to himself, why should they buy it? The good news is that there is one nation state interested in [signing on in a big way](#):

US Opposes Iran Role in Coalition Against Islamic State

One sympathizes with Obama at having to pretend to be interested in tedious briefings about which set of unlovely ingrate natives we should back against the other. He was elected to be the post-war president - Clement Attlee to Bush's Winston Churchill, an analogy that's almost perfect except for the minor detail that in this case the enemy did not accept that the war was

over. Still, it takes two to tango, and Obama's principal dance move is to stand at the side of the floor looking cool. The Obama Doctrine - "Don't do stupid sh*t" - has been rendered in non-PG version as "Don't do stupid stuff". But it should be more pithily streamlined yet: Don't do. The Obama "Doctrine" attempts to dignify inertia as strategy. As Noemie Emery [writes](#):

It implies in effect that wisdom is measured in negative energy, that by declining to act one can stay out of trouble, that passivity is the key to a guilt-free existence and a serene and an untroubled world.

Never use force, don't threaten force, and no one will blame you for anything. Pull out of wars and your foes will stop fighting. Don't send men to war and your hands will be clean.

And so the President assures us that his determination to "destroy" Isis won't be anything like Iraq and Afghanistan, but more on the lines of Yemen and Somalia - that's to say, one more failed state we'll drone now and again. Can you really treat one of the world's deepest pools of oil as just another piffling fringe-of-the-map basket-case? Don't worry about it. For the modern progressive, the entire planet is fringe-of-the-map. Real politics is about free contraceptives for thirtysomething college students, and transgender bathrooms for grade-schoolers. "Foreign policy" is something old bitter white men do.

And so it was that Barack Obama observed the anniversary of 9/11 by visiting something called Ka-BOOM!, a non-profit that helps build playgrounds for children. Neither the President nor the First Lady nor anyone else in the 40-car motorcade appears to have thought it odd that, on the day the Twin Towers went Ka-BOOM!, America's Commander-in-Chief should be [helping put children's toys in backpacks marked Ka-BOOM!](#) From Kabul to Madrid, Bali to London, a lot of backpacks have gone Ka-BOOM! over the past 13 years, but evidently the thought did not discombobulate those who manage what the President calls his "optics". And so a day in which Islamic imperialists killed thousands of Americans by flying planes into skyscrapers has somehow devolved into a day for raising awareness of the need for better play facilities for children. Did he also visit Habitat for Humanity and help hang a new window treatment? Did he plant a tree?

In the land of [micro-aggressions](#), macro-aggressions are so last century.

Roger L Simon [The Nowhere Man Goes to War](#)

Pity Barack Obama. Our hapless chief executive must be suffering from a cognitive disorder the size of Alpha Centauri. The poor guy grew up on the anti-imperialist mouthings of lefty poet Frank Marshall Davis, schoolboy revolutionary Bill Ayers and later anti-Israel professor [Rashid Khalidi](#), not to mention the well-known anti-American excrescences of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, and now he has to go to war — as an imperialist — against the very Third World people he was told again and again we colonized and destroyed. His head must be about to explode.

No wonder he insisted in his Wednesday night speech that the Islamic State is *not* Islamic — what is it? Hindu? Zoroastrian? A lost tribe of Hasidic Jews? — and that we are fighting an amorphous “terrorist group” (the Irish Republican Army? Basque separatists perhaps?), not the

jihadism whose violent ideology has so obviously metastasized across several continents under many guises during his administration with no end remotely in sight. He dares not name our enemy, although it's almost impossible to imagine how we could win without doing so. He cannot say anything that's true because he doesn't know what is true or, perhaps more likely, is terrified to know and then have to admit it. If he did, everything would unravel, not just the *jejune* Marxism of Frank Marshall Davis. Everything.

But he does know what his poll numbers are and they aren't good. So we are where we are. Half way in and half way out. Forget Winston Churchill. Forget Douglas MacArthur. The USA is going to war with a nowhere man who no longer knows what he stands for — and who originally stood for very little more than widely discredited and tired left-wing drivel masquerading as hope and change. Now even that's gone, a distant memory.

We all remember the Beatles' lyrics:

*He's a real Nowhere Man
Sitting in his Nowhere Land
Making all his nowhere plans for nobody*

Two days ago, according to reports, Obama was still reluctant to do anything about the beheaders of ISIS, but was finally driven to act because of those disastrous polls and broad hints from some of his party members that he was leading them to electoral disaster. Others in that same party were mortified he might actually go to war, so, being Barack Obama, in other words a nowhere man, he split the difference — no boots on the ground (except for a piddling 475 advisers — let's hope there won't be any "mission creep").

Welcome to nowhere war waged by a nowhere man.

Staying in a Beatles mode, we might say Obama is getting what he deserves — *Instant Karma*. ("Instant Karma's gonna get you/ Gonna knock you right on the head/You better get yourself together, etc.")

But Obama's not going to "get himself together" because there's no way he can. You reap what you sow. Win the Nobel Peace Prize for no discernible reason and suffer the consequences of the famous dictum attributed to Leon Trotsky: "You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you." And at this moment war is very interested in Barack Hussein Obama even though he couldn't be less interested in it.

But, as a wiser head once said, "You go to war with the army you have." And we can't allow ISIS, or ISIL, as our president prefers to call it, to continue its murderous activities. We have no choice but to exterminate them. Let's hope we really do it. But while we're at it, let's keep our eye extra peeled on the far bigger enemy, the one that Obama has coddled since before he was in office and continues to coddle until now. You know — Iran. They don't like ISIS either, so they'll be cheering us on... while they build their bomb.

Steyn On Line

Kicking Sand in Obama's Face

by Mark Steyn

Obama on [August 29th](#):

We are not taking military action to solve the Ukrainian problem... It is not in the cards for us to see a military confrontation between Russia and the United States in this region. Keep in mind, however, that I'm about to go to a NATO conference. Ukraine is not a member of NATO, but a number of those states that are close by are. And we take our Article Five commitments to defend each other very seriously.

Steyn on [August 29th](#):

If you were the Estonian government, would you actually be reassured by that? And if you were Putin, if you were Putin sitting in the Kremlin, and you just wanted to mess with Obama, wouldn't you be slightly ever-so-tempted just to invade Estonia, just to see whether Obama follows through on that Article Five thing?

Putin on [September 5th](#):

On Friday morning, less than 48 hours after President Obama delivered a speech in Estonia warning that Russian aggression against Estonia could trigger war with the US and NATO, Russian security forces have seized an officer with Estonia's state security bureau at gunpoint and taken him into Russia.

From Benghazi to the Baltic, the world has the measure of Obama. The only people who don't are America's besotted, parochial elite and the deluded electorate who made this man "leader of the free world".

Streetwise Professor

Obama The Chess Playing Pigeon Struts Around the Board & Claims Victory Over Putin

by Craig Pirrong

[Obama's cultists often compare him to a chess master, playing the long game](#). There is another chess metaphor that is far more apt, however. Specifically, there is a story that has gained wide currency in which Vladimir Putin compares Obama to a chess playing pigeon. Putin supposedly said: "Negotiating with Obama is like playing chess with a pigeon. The pigeon knocks over all the pieces, shits on the board and then struts around like it won the game."



This story is almost certainly false. The chess playing pigeon meme dates to far before Obama's time. But there is no person that the story fits better. The story has resonated precisely because it is so *right*. If Putin didn't say it, he should have, and he would have been dead on.

[For proof, one need go no further than Obama's claim that he, and he alone, is responsible for the cease fire agreement \(such as it is\) in Ukraine:](#)

"I want to point out, the *only* reason that we're seeing the ceasefire at this moment is because of both the sanctions that have already been applied and the threat of further sanctions," Obama said from Wales where a NATO summit is taking place. [Emphasis added.]

The *Reason* article linked above points out several of the problems with Obama's statement, but it misses the biggest one. The colossal one.

Obama effectively asserts that the ceasefire is a setback for Putin that he was forced to accept due to the pain of sanctions and the prospect of worse sanctions to come.

This is a total inversion of reality. The reality is that this is a major victory for Putin. For crissakes, Putin and Lavrov have been demanding a ceasefire for weeks. Months even. Demanding. It's what they've wanted all along, and has led their list of demands. It saves the Russian rebel puppets from defeat, and allows them to cement their position in Donbas. It forces Poroshenko to acknowledge the Russian puppet states as legitimate interlocutors. It creates a frozen conflict that makes Ukraine toxic for Europe and Nato. It creates a bleeding ulcer inside Ukraine that will sap the poor country of its vitality, and keep it on the precipice of becoming a failed state.

From Putin's perspective, what's not to like? To love, even, given his obsessive hatred for an independent Ukraine.

The timing is also telling. When did the ceasefire happen? In the immediate aftermath of a dramatic Russian escalation that inflicted a bloody, devastating defeat on Ukraine and turned the tide of battle. This forced Poroshenko to negotiate from a position of weakness, and allowed Putin to negotiate from a position of strength. This is exactly contrary to the impression that Obama attempts to convey, which is that Putin was forced into concessions.

There are two, and only two, possibilities here. It is hard to decide which one is more frightening.

The first one is that Obama is so clueless that he does not know that Putin has been demanding a ceasefire, and that a ceasefire achieves his main strategic objectives. So clueless that he does not know that this is exactly what Putin wants. Hell, he's not even B'r'er Rabbit, who had to use reverse psychology to get thrown into the b'r'er patch where he was born and bred. Putin said that's exactly where he wanted to go, and Obama doesn't even understand.

The second is that Obama knows, but is so intent on shunting the Ukrainian crisis to the bottom of the pile that he shamelessly goes all Orwell, and declares down to be up, war to be peace, and defeat to be victory. That Obama wants to put the "Problem Managed" stamp on Ukraine, and walk away, perhaps to sneak a peek at his Nobel Peace Prize, and say "I've earned it!-or at least I can pretend I did!"

Clueless or mendacious. Pick one. There is no third choice.

Ukraine: you're on your own. Which, methinks, is precisely why you entered into such a humiliating deal.

But don't think Putin will rest on his laurels. To the contrary, he smells weakness. How else to explain that a mere two days after Obama stood in Tallinn, Estonia and delivered in stentorian tones a solemn promise to defend Estonia and other allies to the last, that the FSB launched an operation inside Estonia, and kidnapped a member of the country's counterintelligence service?

This isn't over, people. Not by a long shot. The fecklessness on display daily, including notably at today's Nato summit in Wales, acts on Putin like an aphrodisiac. The escalations have just begun, and either President Pigeon doesn't understand, or understands but doesn't care enough to do anything about it.

Washington Post

[Obama losing the confidence of key parts of the coalition that elected him](#)

by Karen Tumulty

Kimberly Cole was part of the coalition that voted in 2008 to make Barack Obama the 44th president and gave him another four years in 2012 to deliver on his promises of hope and change.

Now, the 36-year-old mother of three young children in Valencia, Calif., is among the majority of Americans who have lost confidence in Obama's leadership and the job he is doing as president.

"He's been faced with a lot of challenges, and he's lost his way," Cole said in an interview. She worries that Obama lacks the resolve needed at a time when things at home and abroad are looking scarier.

On the other side of the country, Karlene Richardson, 44, once counted herself a "very strong supporter" of the president. But now she feels much the same as Cole does.

"Honestly, I just feel that what I bought into is not what I'm getting," said Richardson, an author and motivational speaker who teaches health-care administration at a community college in Queens. "I'm starting to wonder whether the world takes us seriously."

Both Cole and Richardson were surveyed in [the latest Washington Post-ABC News poll](#) and represent one of its most striking findings: the degree to which the president's approval has slipped among key parts of the Obama coalition — the women, youth and Latino voters most responsible for putting him into office.

Women surveyed said they disapprove of Obama by a 50 percent to 44 percent margin — nearing an all-time low in the poll. It's almost the reverse of the 55 percent to 44 percent breakdown for Obama among female voters in 2012, according to exit polls.

His approval rating among women has slipped four percentage points from a year ago and 16 points since his second inaugural in January 2013, when his approval was 60 percent among the group.

Among younger voting-age Americans, Obama's approval rating stood at 43 percent. That marked an 11-point drop since June among those 18 to 29 years old. Voters younger than 30 supported Obama by 60 percent to 37 percent in 2012.

Meanwhile, support for Obama among Hispanics stood at 57 percent, which is down markedly from the first half of 2013, when approval among Latinos soared to about 75 percent.

Obama's support remains solid among African Americans, with 87 percent approving of his job performance. That is a modest erosion from the 93 percent of black voters who supported his reelection.

Of all of those groups, women are traditionally most likely to be swing voters — and the two parties have fought fiercely for their loyalties, with the Democrats coming out ahead in recent election cycles. At slightly over half the electorate, they are not a monolith, of course. Single women tend to vote more solidly Democratic; married women, more Republican. There are also ethnic differences in their electoral behavior.

But there is fresh and growing evidence that many women's faith in Obama has turned to misgivings — possibly making it more difficult for his party to retain their support in this year's midterms and beyond.

Virginia Wilson, 60, of Charleston, W.Va., is another disillusioned Obama voter.

"I can't blame it all on him," she said, but added, "There was going to be a change, that we would see people coming together, instead of falling apart."

Suburban women's concerns, in particular, change from election to election, and over the years, pollsters and political strategists have come up with different labels to describe this crucial slice of the electorate.

In the 1990s, these middle-class women were known as "soccer moms," and President Bill Clinton won reelection in part because of how well he related to their harried lives.

After the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, there were "[security moms](#)" — a term coined by then-Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-Del.). This group was seen as a major reason why, in 2002, George W. Bush became the first Republican president in a century to see his party pick up seats in a midterm election. But by 2006, as the country had soured on the Iraq war, they swung back to the Democrats.

About five years ago, with economic insecurity rising to the top of their concerns, the [political shorthand](#) for swing-voting women became "[Wal-Mart Moms.](#)" The retail giant began commissioning a pollster from each party to jointly conduct regular focus groups of women who shopped at its stores.

On Tuesday night, two of those focus groups met in Little Rock and Des Moines. Both represent states with tight Senate races that could help determine whether the chamber remains in Democratic hands.

Neil Newhouse, the GOP pollster, said that the groups are usually focused on "economic anxiety" but that the main concern has shifted to security issues in the wake of atrocities committed by the Islamic State terrorist group ascendant in Iraq and Syria.

"There was a sense that their personal safety and security was threatened," Newhouse said, adding that the threat posed by the terrorist group "has these moms concerned, and these are women who don't naturally gravitate to international issues."

Margie Omero, Newhouse's Democratic partner in conducting the focus groups, agreed, noting that the women had also cited crime in their communities and unrest after the police shooting of an unarmed 18-year-old in Ferguson, Mo.

"It was more pronounced than concerns about the economic downturn," Omero said. "There was a lot more concern about crime and international unrest than we've seen in the past."

The two pollsters wrote in a memo summarizing their findings from the focus groups: "Regardless of their 2012 vote, moms' opinions of Obama have dulled. At best, some feel sorry for him."

The beheading of two journalists by Islamic State terrorists does appear to have been a galvanizing event for many Americans. A [newly released Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll](#) found that 94 percent had heard news of the murders — "a higher level of public attention than given to any of 22 news events" tested since 2009, the journal wrote.

In the Post-ABC poll, Obama's handling of international affairs loomed as a significant problem with women. Just 37 percent said they approve of the job he is doing, which is his lowest rating on this issue among women in Post-ABC polls and nearly matches his 38 percent approval among men.

When called back for follow-up interviews, some of the women who responded to the Post-ABC poll said they, too, had been unsettled by the beheadings — and by Obama's decision to play golf just minutes after giving a statement expressing his revulsion at the death of journalist James Foley.

Cole, the California woman, said it seemed to her that Obama was "very nonchalant. ... The personal side of it, that he has feelings, is gone."

And Richardson — interviewed before Obama gave a prime-time speech Wednesday laying out plans to target the Islamic State with airstrikes — said "he just made these promises that he doesn't go through with" related to the terrorist group.

How much effect this will have on the midterm elections is unclear.

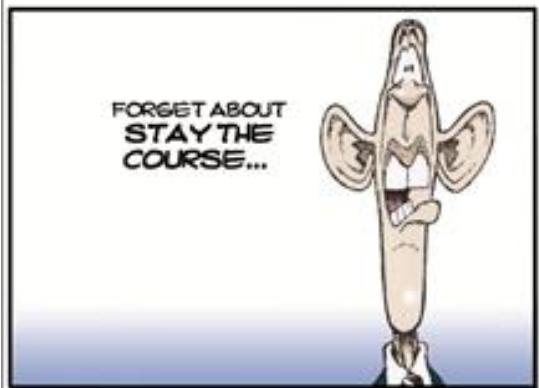
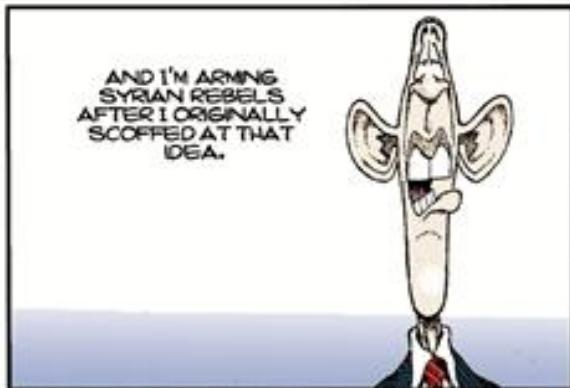
The two pollsters who conducted the Wal-Mart Moms focus groups wrote that it will be indirect with those voters: "While he may be a player in how moms perceive the dysfunction in Washington, they will not have President Obama directly in mind when casting their vote in November."

Newhouse predicted that the shift in sentiment away from the president is likely to have more implications in 2016. He said voters are likely to be looking for someone they think has more foreign policy experience and a stronger leadership style.

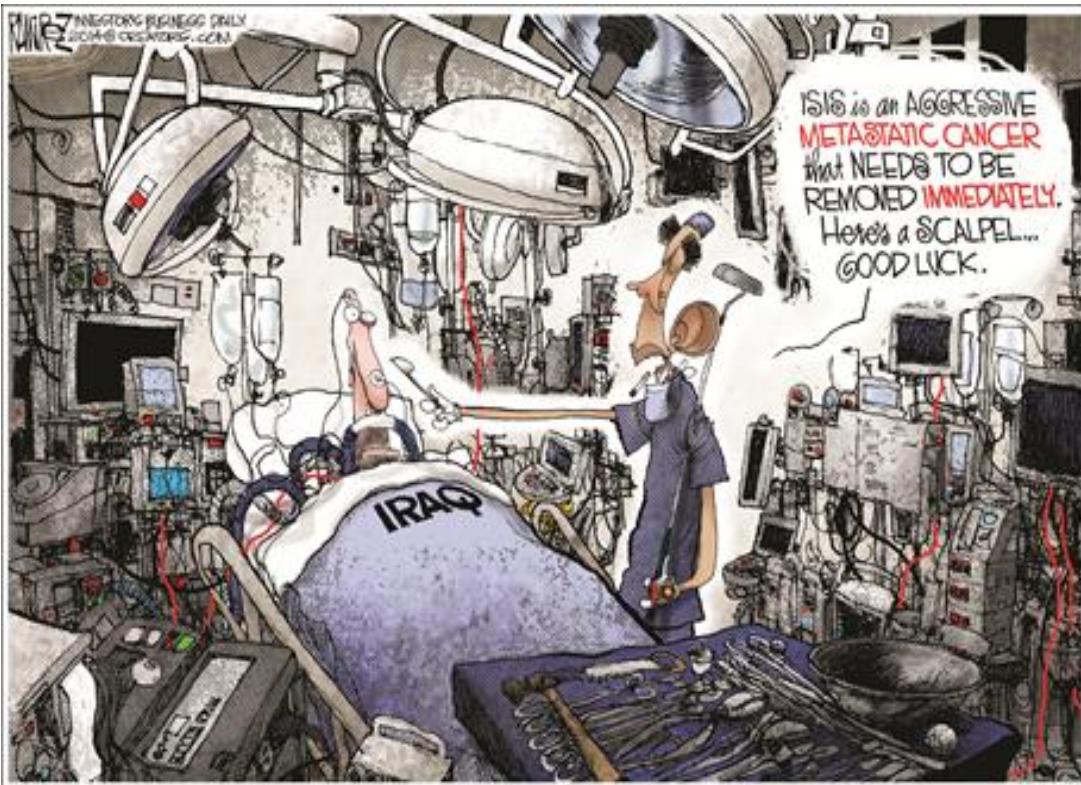
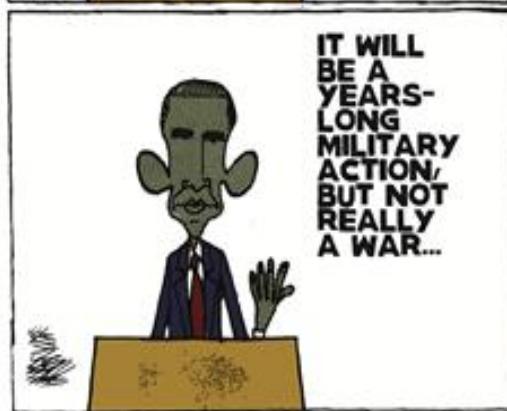
But at the moment, some say they are just feeling burned and unsure whether they can put their trust in any candidate.

Wilson, the West Virginian, said her father was an immigrant from Yugoslavia, whose experiences there had impressed on her the importance of voting.

"It's almost like I don't care any more, and don't want to support anybody," she said. "And that's really a shame."







This can't be good!

