

November 27, 2014

The recent House Benghazi committee report prompted Walter Russell Mead to retail the idea we need more congressional involvement in our foreign policy.

... At the same time, with our Libyan policy, like the country itself, in ruins, one has the sense that the Benghazi investigation missed the larger point. The United States participated in the overthrow of the Qaddafi government, largely on humanitarian grounds, but we were utterly unprepared for the aftermath. Libya is in chaos today, radical jihadi groups have proliferated in the ruins, Qaddafi's arms and fighters have fanned out across North Africa and the Middle East, and arguably more Libyans have died as the result of the intervention than would have perished had we stayed home. On top of this, there are credible allegations that the U.S. had guaranteed Qaddafi's safety when he gave up his WMD program. Did our intervention in Libya break a pledge, or did it reduce our ability to persuade other countries to abstain from WMD programs? Did the decision to intervene in Libya also mean that the U.S. was less ready and able to respond appropriately to the much greater humanitarian and strategic crisis that holds Syria in its grip?

Benghazi was one consequence of a much larger and more serious policy failure, and the costs of that failure are still mounting up. By focusing narrowly on Benghazi, Congress missed the bigger question and the more consequential failure. Again, the question is less one of partisan politics than of the national interest: what can we learn from policies that go awry so that in future we can make better choices?

A review of our policy failure in Libya (or earlier ones in Iraq and elsewhere) isn't just about second guessing and assigning blame. It is about making sure that the nation's foreign policy infrastructure is up to the tasks that our turbulent century has set for us.

This is the investigation we needed after the Libya fiasco. Unfortunately, unless something changes we are unlikely to get it.

What we need to do at this point is begin to rethink the role of the Congress in American foreign policy. If there is one thing that has become clear since the end of the Cold War, it is that the United States needs to raise its game in foreign policy. ...

Seth Mandel posts on Susan Rice's part in Hagel's failure.

Chuck Hagel's unceremonious dismissal as secretary of defense has refocused attention, once again, on the insularity of President Obama's inner circle, its suspicion of outside voices, and its distaste for dissent. But it has changed in one way: this time, the concerns about secrecy, enforced groupthink, and high school clique behavior don't center on Valerie Jarrett. Instead, the name that keeps surfacing is that of National Security Advisor Susan Rice.

It's true that this isn't the first time we're hearing of the toxic atmosphere and mismanagement at Rice's National Security Council. But it's striking how clearly the battle lines appear to be drawn in the steady stream of bitter leaks aimed at Hagel, designed to kick him while he's down. The cruelty with which the Obama insiders are behaving right now is unsettling, to be sure. But more relevant to the formation of national-security policy is the question of whether Susan Rice's incompetence and pride are playing a role in the constant stream of Obama foreign-policy failures. ...

Debra Saunders has more on Hagel.

... In one sense, Hagel's forced exit is reminiscent of President George W. Bush's firing of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld after the disastrous 2006 midterm elections. Except the difference here, Hoover Institution fellow Kori Schake pointed out, is that in terminating Rumsfeld, Bush "was announcing a change in approach. Obama fired Hagel while insisting there would be no change in approach."

"They needed a dead body in the hallway," Schake continued, and "Hagel was the most expendable" because he was not part of the president's very tightknit and very like-minded inner circle.

If that wasn't clear, look who was sitting in the front row during Hagel's 15-minute goodbye: national security adviser Susan Rice. In October, Hagel sent Rice a two-page memo about his concerns that the administration's Syrian strategy might strengthen the hand of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Now Hagel, the administration critic, is gone, and Rice, the administration enforcer, remains in power.

Schake was no fan of Hagel's leadership at the Pentagon. She can't get over the fact that in heat of the wars in Afghanistan and Syria, Hagel actually proposed the idea of banning smoking in the military. ("Really? That's where you're going to put your effort?") Still, Schake believes that the president threw Hagel under the bus for something Hagel did right -- his warning that military strategy in Syria needs to change. ...

It was not widely reported, but FOX beat everybody, even the networks, in the election coverage. David Zuriwak of the Baltimore Sun has the story.

... But there are three ratings stories the last two weeks that taken together show Fox News rising to a new and remarkable level of dominance - and they have been underreported in the mainstream media.

First, Fox News beat not just CNN and MSNBC, but also ABC, NBC and CBS on Nov. 4, the night of the mid-term elections. It did so in both total viewers and the key news demographic: viewers 25 to 54 years of age. Fox more than tripled the audiences of MSNBC and CNN in total viewers, while beating ABC, NBC and CBS by more than 3 million, 2 million and 1 million viewers respectively. (See figures at end of post.)

On a watershed political night, more Americans tuned to Fox for information about the vote than anywhere else.

I have been covering media long enough to remember when CBS, NBC or ABC was the big story on election night in the 1970s and '80s.

And, as a critic, as late as 2008, I was thinking no channel mattered more than CNN. This year, for all the reporters it had on the ground election night, CNN barely did better than the we-lost-our-credibility-in-our-slavish-devotion-to-Obama MSNBC. That's pathetic. Second, buoyed by its election-night juggernaut, Fox was the highest-rated cable channel of the week of Nov. 3, beating such ratings engines as Nickelodeon and ESPN. That's not the highest-rated cable news channel,

the universe it used to live in. That's highest-rated period – beating all the entertainment channels like AMC and TNT. ...

In keeping with their devotion to this president, NBC and ABC have yet to report on GruberGate. Ricochet post suggests the RNC stop allowing those networks to be part of the election campaign.

... The GOP cannot control who NBC, ABC and CBS put into executive news editorial positions or the stories they choose to report, or not report. However, they can choose if they participate any longer with conglomerates whose clear goal is to protect an unpopular President and elevate a future Presidential candidate in Hillary Clinton. It is time to stop complaining about media bias and do something about it. Something bold.

ABC and NBC have instituted a three-week blackout — on network broadcasts, websites and social media pages — of the devastating admissions of MIT economist Jonathan Gruber. The ACA architect repeatedly boasted of deceiving the American public about legislation that cost six million people their family doctor. This should be the final straw in any relationship the GOP and RNC leadership has with these networks, period. No more debates, no more appearances on “Meet The Press,” “Morning Joe,” or “This Week” on ABC.

Boycott both NBC and ABC over failing to report on Gruber's revelations and put CBS on final notice over the revelations that they coordinated with the Obama administration to tank Sharyl Attkisson's Benghazi reporting. ...

Noemie Emery reminds us what a lot of fools like, Chris Buckley and David Brooks said about the man who proved to be an awful president.

... “Having a first class temperament and a first-class intellect, President Obama ... has in him the potential to be a good, perhaps even a great leader,” said Christopher Buckley.

“What struck me is how incredibly even ... and how reassuring he is,” David Brooks told us. “Obama is just the mountain. He's there. He's always the same. ... His steadiness, his temperament has been the dramatic theme of this ... campaign.”

Reagan appointee Kenneth Adelman slammed John McCain (and Sarah Palin) while praising the Democrat's judgment and temperament.

Former Reagan chief of Staff Kenneth Duberstein followed suit, saying the Palin pick (like Obama, she had served only a part of her first term in state office) “had very much undermined the whole question of John McCain's judgment.” His endorsement came a few days after those of his friend Colin Powell, whose career had been made by the Reagans and Bushes.

What these brains helped to give us was the worst presidential temperament since Richard M. Nixon, an under-experienced brittle narcissist, lacking in all the political skills save those of campaigning, whose main legacies will be an unworkable healthcare “reform” and a wholly avoidable Middle Eastern crisis. Obama's lack of political sense has gotten him into many disasters, which his lack of political temperament only makes worse.

A story from [The Hill](#) shows there is nothing the president won't lie about. Billy Joel kicked the cigarette habit until recently when The One invited him out to the North Portico for a smoke.

... Joel had received the Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song earlier that evening at a star-studded gala at DAR Constitution Hall. With “no entourage” around, our source — who counts themselves among Joel’s “biggest fans” — struck up a conversation with the “Scenes From an Italian Restaurant” singer.

Joel described the day’s events, mentioning that he went over to Capitol Hill to Rep. John Boehner’s (R-Ohio) office. Our tipster says that Joel recalled the Speaker, well-known for his nicotine habit, opened up a drawer, then “pulled out a pack of cigarettes and offered me one. And I said, ‘No thanks, I quit.’”

A photo posted on Boehner’s Instagram page Wednesday shows the pair chatting in the lawmaker’s office at the Capitol.

Then, Joel remembered another tobacco offer from a high-profile politician. According to our tipster, the 65-year-old entertainer said, “I was at the White House recently, and President Obama did the same thing. He said, ‘I’m going out on the North Portico to have a smoke. Do you want to come with me?’”

Joel said he replied, “Well, I haven’t smoked in a long time,” but indicated that he ultimately couldn’t turn down a cigarette offer from the president. ...

Is there nothing statins can't do? [Scientific American](#) says they may protect people from air pollution.

One of the most widely prescribed drugs in the United States may have an extra benefit: protecting people from air pollution.

Statins, prescribed to lower cholesterol and reduce risks of heart attacks and strokes, seem to diminish inflammation that occurs after people breathe airborne particles.

“Health impacts from spikes in particulates in the air are substantial. Statins seem to protect not only lungs from these impacts but the heart, too,” said Dr. Norman Edelman, the American Lung Association’s senior medical advisor.

About one in four Americans over the age of 45 takes statins, including Lipitor, Zocor and other brand names.

Although drugs cannot be prescribed to protect people from air pollution, several studies show that people who take statins have fewer proteins in their blood that indicate inflammation of tissues, said Dr. Stephan van Eeden, an associate professor at the University of British Columbia who specializes in lung health. This inflammation may aggravate respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

Most recently, a study of 1,923 U.S. women found that those taking statins are less likely to have signs of inflammation, said Bart Ostro, an epidemiologist with California’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment who led the study. ...

American Interest

After Benghazi

The Case for More Congress In American Foreign Policy

by Walter Russell Mead

If there is one thing that has become clear since the end of the Cold War, it is that the United States needs to raise its game in foreign policy. The United States Congress has to be part of the solution.

The long Benghazi investigation by the House Select Permanent Committee on Intelligence has come to an end in a way that doesn't resolve every question but should make anybody who cares about American foreign policy or justice reasonably happy. In the first place, the Committee's finding that political appointees in no way interfered or otherwise behaved inappropriately on the night of the fatal attacks is good news about the character and patriotism of people in government service. In the second place, the willingness of what was clearly a GOP-led investigation to accept the facts and clear the names of those involved says something very positive about the GOP Congress. The MSM should unclench: partisan as some of its members may be, and hot as tempers sometimes get on Capitol Hill, this is not a collection of McCarthyite witch hunters who misuse the Congressional process to smear innocent people for political gain.

There are three basic questions about Benghazi: did the State Department and associated agencies do enough to guarantee the security of U.S. personnel in post-conflict Libya and, especially, at the Benghazi facility on the day of the attack? Did military, intelligence or other government personnel either negligently or maliciously commit errors while the attack was in progress that contributed to the American deaths? Did the White House deliberately mislead the American people about the nature and purpose of the attack in order to bolster President Obama's popularity in the late stages of the 2012 election campaign?

The Committee report answers all three questions with a No. The State Department did not do enough to protect diplomatic personnel. No negligence or malfeasance was committed on the night of the attack. White House spinmeisters may have tweaked the story but neither the boys in the back room nor Susan Rice went off the deep end.

The first "no" will be problematic for the Clinton campaign—to the extent that anybody is still thinking about Benghazi in 2016—and the questions about spin will (and in my judgment should) persist, but overall the report is a win for the White House. That could change. There is one more shoe to drop on Benghazi; in addition to the Intelligence Committee report, a special House Select Committee on Benghazi has a report to produce.

As regular readers of these pages know, I never expected the Benghazi investigation to yield some explosive truth that would blow the administration out of the water. We are, so far, coming out pretty much where I expected: the Benghazi tragedy was an ordinary, garden variety example of poor choices leading to bad consequences in a dangerous and volatile world.

The question that the media has taken up, with its usual anti-Republican twist, is whether there should have been an investigation at all. A lot of taxpayer money went into a big investigation that

got nowhere in the end. Was this really the right thing to do, people are asking, with the usual suspects in the mainstream media snarking in the usual way about clueless Republicans. Also at work is the press's tendency, more marked in liberal Democratic administrations than at other times, but nevertheless always with us, to denigrate the role of the Congress in foreign policy. Unless the question involves stopping a presidential war that the press hates, or putting limits on the intelligence agencies, serious American journalists almost instinctively think of the executive as the home of good statesmanship. Congress is the home of ignorant know nothings and partisan grandstanders.

I am of two minds about the Benghazi investigation. On the one hand, anytime a U.S. ambassador is killed or a U.S. diplomatic facility overrun by hostile forces, we owe it to ourselves and to the people who represent us abroad to look very carefully into the circumstances. This is not, or should not be, primarily for the purpose of scoring political points or even apportioning responsibility. It should be to understand what went wrong so that, as far as possible, we can prevent the recurrence of similar tragedies in the future. This is due diligence, not partisan witch hunting, and if the Congress has reason to believe that CYA politicians or officials inside the executive are trying to sweep anything under the rug, Congress can and should take a look. That may not mean a formal investigation, but one of the reasons the Founders established three branches of government was exactly for the purpose of making sure that the executive branch got some outside oversight. Congress could not ignore Benghazi; a failure this bloody needed an outside review.

At the same time, with our Libyan policy, like the country itself, in ruins, one has the sense that the Benghazi investigation missed the larger point. The United States participated in the overthrow of the Qaddafi government, largely on humanitarian grounds, but we were utterly unprepared for the aftermath. Libya is in chaos today, radical jihadi groups have proliferated in the ruins, Qaddafi's arms and fighters have fanned out across North Africa and the Middle East, and arguably more Libyans have died as the result of the intervention than would have perished had we stayed home. On top of this, there are credible allegations that the U.S. had guaranteed Qaddafi's safety when he gave up his WMD program. Did our intervention in Libya break a pledge, or did it reduce our ability to persuade other countries to abstain from WMD programs? Did the decision to intervene in Libya also mean that the U.S. was less ready and able to respond appropriately to the much greater humanitarian and strategic crisis that holds Syria in its grip?

Benghazi was one consequence of a much larger and more serious policy failure, and the costs of that failure are still mounting up. By focusing narrowly on Benghazi, Congress missed the bigger question and the more consequential failure. Again, the question is less one of partisan politics than of the national interest: what can we learn from policies that go awry so that in future we can make better choices?

A review of our policy failure in Libya (or earlier ones in Iraq and elsewhere) isn't just about second guessing and assigning blame. It is about making sure that the nation's foreign policy infrastructure is up to the tasks that our turbulent century has set for us.

This is the investigation we needed after the Libya fiasco. Unfortunately, unless something changes we are unlikely to get it.

What we need to do at this point is begin to rethink the role of the Congress in American foreign policy. If there is one thing that has become clear since the end of the Cold War, it is that the United States needs to raise its game in foreign policy. The rise of China, the return of Russian revisionism, and the Middle East meltdown all pose complicated challenges. Meanwhile, other issues have not faded away: the future of the international trading system, the impact of WMD

proliferation on world affairs, the transformative impact of the information revolution on both political economy within countries and on the relations between them—these all require American responses, and the signs point to that our government machinery isn't up to the job of managing them well.

The United States Congress has to be part of the solution. The Congress has, for example, the power to review and reform the agencies in the executive branch, and this power may need to be invoked. Is it, for example, a good thing that the National Security Council in the White House has accreted so much power? If the President's closest adviser on foreign policy is no longer the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense, what degree of Congressional oversight is required in the NSC? Should its officials be subject to senatorial confirmation? If not, should the President accept limits on the NSC staff and the role of its chief?

But to really live up to its potential and to carry out its constitutional role in foreign policy, the Congress is going to have to raise its sights. It's time to rethink what oversight means and how it should work. In particular, the Congress is the place where the country's most serious public conversations and deliberations about foreign policy should be held. As it is, this country's most important foreign policy debates are held on cable television and other news programs. That isn't good either for American foreign policy or for the long term health of American democracy.

Since the 1940s, Congress has ceded much of its power in the field of foreign policy to the executive branch. Some of that is necessary and wise given the need for quick decisions and, sometimes, operational security in the hair-trigger world in which we live. And from Dean Acheson onward, secretaries of state and other "wise men" whose careers have mostly involved appointed positions in the executive branch have deplored the grandstanding and ignorance they associate with most congressional oversight.

Well, true enough. Not all senators and representatives are the equals of Metternich and Talleyrand. But then again, not many of our executive appointees are either as wise or as all-seeing as they may think they are: witness the Libya mess. From the side of the Congress, what's needed is a serious personal commitment from a critical mass of members to master the knowledge required to play a role in American foreign policy commensurate with the needs of the hour and the importance of Congress's constitutional role—combined with efforts to upgrade the processes and institutions through which the Congress carries out its mission.

A smarter Congress that provides an open and deliberative forum where the nation's business can be debated and reviewed, and where big strategic questions are aired and, when and as appropriate, the executive gets guidance and instruction will help American foreign policy achieve the upgrade it so urgently needs in our difficult times. Getting this right is much more important than any number of targeted investigations.

Contentions

[How Big of a Problem Is Susan Rice?](#)

by Seth Mandel

Chuck Hagel's unceremonious dismissal as secretary of defense has refocused attention, once again, on the insularity of President Obama's inner circle, its suspicion of outside voices, and its distaste for dissent. But it has changed in one way: this time, the concerns about secrecy, enforced

groupthink, and high school clique behavior don't center on Valerie Jarrett. Instead, the name that keeps surfacing is that of National Security Advisor Susan Rice.

It's true that this isn't the first time we're hearing of the toxic atmosphere and mismanagement at Rice's National Security Council. But it's striking how clearly the battle lines appear to be drawn in the steady stream of bitter leaks aimed at Hagel, designed to kick him while he's down. The cruelty with which the Obama insiders are behaving right now is unsettling, to be sure. But more relevant to the formation of national-security policy is the question of whether Susan Rice's incompetence and pride are playing a role in the constant stream of Obama foreign-policy failures.

About two weeks ago, *Foreign Policy* magazine CEO David Rothkopf, a former Clinton administration official, previewed his new book on American foreign policy in the age of Obama by sitting for an [interview](#) with Jeffrey Goldberg. Rothkopf has written a book on the history of the NSC, so Goldberg asked him about the NSC under Susan Rice. His opinion was pretty brutal.

Goldberg and Rothkopf discussed the mixed record of national security advisors over the last few decades, and Rothkopf summed it up this way: "If there are lessons to be drawn from this track record, they include the fact that it's harder to be the first national security advisor of a president with little foreign-policy experience and, in the end, more broadly, the national security advisor is really only ever as good as his or her president enables him or her to be."

That sounded like he was letting Rice off the hook a bit, but he returned to the topic to dispel any such impression. In fact, Obama and Rice seemed to reinforce each other's weaknesses:

If Obama had any material management or foreign-policy experience prior to coming in to office or if he had the character of our stronger leaders on these issues—notably a more strategic than tactical orientation, more trust in his team, less risk aversion, etc.—she would be better off, as would we all. But his flaws are compounded by a system that lets him pick and empower those around him. So, if he chooses to surround himself with a small team of "true believers" who won't challenge him as all leaders need to be challenged, if he picks campaign staffers that maintain campaign mode, if he over-empowers political advisors at the expense of those with national-security experience, that takes his weaknesses and multiplies them by those of the team around him.

And whatever Susan Rice's many strengths are, she is ill-suited for the job she has. She is not seen as an honest broker. She has big gaps in her international experience and understanding—Asia. She is needlessly combative and has alienated key members of her staff, the cabinet, and overseas leaders. She is also not strategic and is reactive like her boss. So whereas the system does have the capability of offsetting the weaknesses of a president, if he is surrounded by strong advisors to whom he listens and who he empowers to do their jobs, it can also reinforce and exacerbate those weaknesses—as it is doing now.

And indeed, while Hagel was no superstar, Rice crops up in each account of his ouster. Politico [reports](#) that "Hagel's main gripe, according to people close to him, was what he viewed as a disorganized National Security Council run by Rice—a criticism shared by [White House chief of staff Denis] McDonough, according to a senior administration official." Politico also points out that in this respect, Hagel was no outlier; his predecessors, Bob Gates and Leon Panetta, shared this concern.

And [according to the New York Times](#): "White House officials also expressed annoyance over a sharply critical two-page memo that Mr. Hagel sent to Ms. Rice last month, in which he warned that the administration's Syria policy was in danger of unraveling because of its failure to clarify its

intentions toward President Bashar al-Assad. Senior officials complained that Mr. Hagel had never made such a case in internal debates, suggesting that he was trying to position himself for history on a crucial issue as he was talking to Mr. Obama about leaving his job.”

It's debatable what the worst part of that is. That the White House was bothered enough by one critical memo for it to appear in a story on the secretary of defense's dismissal? That the secretary of defense and the national security advisor are communicating this through memos? That White House officials thought Hagel put his thoughts in writing out of borderline-disloyalty and the hope of abandoning a sinking ship?

I was among those singing Rice's praises as a whipsmart advisor and a tough-as-nails negotiator, at least in the context of her candidacy to be secretary of state. Yet it's become clear she feeds on conflict. It's possible that instinct would be more beneficial were she at State and dealing with those shoving John Kerry around on the world stage. But Chuck Hagel is not Sergei Lavrov, and Rice's conflation of all adversaries, personal and political, is tearing the White House's national-security team apart.

San Francisco Chronicle **Hagel's Out, but Inner Circle Remains**

by Debra Saunders

When President Barack Obama chose former Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel to serve as his third secretary of defense, most Republicans were not amused. Obama was able to claim that his pick was an example of his reaching across the aisle, when in fact, most Beltway Repubs viewed Hagel with distrust.

Yes, Hagel is a Vietnam vet, a volunteer who was the first veteran of enlisted rank to head the Pentagon. Yes, he voted for the invasion of Iraq in 2002. But Hagel also turned against the Iraq War -- and went so far as to assert that "of course" it was about oil. Hagel traveled to Afghanistan and Iraq with Obama during the 2008 campaign -- a slap at his old friend and GOP nominee John McCain. Thus, Hagel was the perfect Obama pick; on paper, Hagel seemed to offer bipartisan appeal, but in reality, Hagel enraged the right. Only four GOP senators voted to confirm him.

On Monday, Hagel announced his resignation in a White House ritual humiliation exit ceremony. After devastating midterms, presidents often clean house.

In one sense, Hagel's forced exit is reminiscent of President George W. Bush's firing of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld after the disastrous 2006 midterm elections. Except the difference here, Hoover Institution fellow Kori Schake pointed out, is that in terminating Rumsfeld, Bush "was announcing a change in approach. Obama fired Hagel while insisting there would be no change in approach."

"They needed a dead body in the hallway," Schake continued, and "Hagel was the most expendable" because he was not part of the president's very tightknit and very like-minded inner circle.

If that wasn't clear, look who was sitting in the front row during Hagel's 15-minute goodbye: national security adviser Susan Rice. In October, Hagel sent Rice a two-page memo about his

concerns that the administration's Syrian strategy might strengthen the hand of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Now Hagel, the administration critic, is gone, and Rice, the administration enforcer, remains in power.

Schake was no fan of Hagel's leadership at the Pentagon. She can't get over the fact that in heat of the wars in Afghanistan and Syria, Hagel actually proposed the idea of banning smoking in the military. ("Really? That's where you're going to put your effort?") Still, Schake believes that the president threw Hagel under the bus for something Hagel did right -- his warning that military strategy in Syria needs to change.

Democrat Ellen Tauscher, a former member of the House and a former undersecretary of state for arms control and international security affairs in the Obama administration, had nothing but positive things to say about Hagel, whom she called "an American patriot."

"I think it's unfortunate that the country lost his service and his advice to the president," Tauscher told me. "Interneccine fights about who gets to be close to the president are not serving anybody well."

In November, when voters returned the Senate to the GOP and sent even more Republicans to the House, they were sending the White House a message. You can be sure that this president did not hear it. What Obama heard was that there was a Cabinet member who did not agree with him all the way. Thus, Hagel had to go.

Baltimore Sun

[New level of Fox News dominance demands analysis, not dismissal](#)

by David Zuriwak

Any day now, I am expecting to turn on the tube and see an ad that says, "More Americans get their TV news from Fox than anywhere else."

Whether that pleases or horrifies you, it's time to think seriously about what that says about Fox, CNN, MSNBC, the state of network news today and the role TV plays or doesn't play in providing us with reliable, trustworthy information. Much of the media establishment seems bent on ignoring the incredible ratings success of Fox News. Or, maybe it's just that Fox has pounded CNN and MSNBC in the ratings for so long that another victory doesn't seem like "news" – especially with MSNBC imploding and CNN committing to any genre but news in an effort to find new audiences.

But there are three ratings stories the last two weeks that taken together show Fox News rising to a new and remarkable level of dominance - and they have been underreported in the mainstream media.

First, Fox News beat not just CNN and MSNBC, but also ABC, NBC and CBS on Nov. 4, the night of the mid-term elections. It did so in both total viewers and the key news demographic: viewers 25 to 54 years of age. Fox more than tripled the audiences of MSNBC and CNN in total viewers, while beating ABC, NBC and CBS by more than 3 million, 2 million and 1 million viewers respectively. (See figures at end of post.)

On a watershed political night, more Americans tuned to Fox for information about the vote than anywhere else.

I have been covering media long enough to remember when CBS, NBC or ABC was the big story on election night in the 1970s and '80s.

And, as a critic, as late as 2008, I was thinking no channel mattered more than CNN. This year, for all the reporters it had on the ground election night, CNN barely did better than the we-lost-our-credibility-in-our-slavish-devotion-to-Obama MSNBC. That's pathetic. Second, buoyed by its election-night juggernaut, Fox was the highest-rated cable channel of the week of Nov. 3, beating such ratings engines as Nickelodeon and ESPN. That's not the highest-rated cable news channel, the universe it used to live in. That's highest-rated period – beating all the entertainment channels like AMC and TNT.

And finally, last week, Fox News aired a documentary, "The Man Who Killed Usama Bin Laden," and it drew more than 3 million viewers. Part Two, which drew 3.37 million viewers, was the highest-rated documentary in Fox News history. For some perspective, consider how crazy CNN went when it drew 1.36 million viewers for the premiere of "Blackfish," a documentary about a captive killer whale, in 2013. President Jeff Zucker committed to a full slate of documentaries and hailed it as the next big thing for CNN.

For Fox, it's just another night at the office running up record ratings.

Step One in assessing this sea change is for the media establishment to admit the dominance of Fox News today. Ignoring its success doesn't make it any less real.

And then, we need to start seriously trying to figure out how and why it has come to pass that Bret Baier and Megyn Kelly matter more to Americans on election night than Brian Williams, Scott Pelley, George Stephanopoulos, Anderson Cooper or Wolf Blitzer – way more than the latter two. I think one of the reasons for this latest evolution of ratings dominance might be that Fox was a far better watchdog on the Obama White House than any other TV news organization. It took the heat and the blowback from an administration that showed an enmity for the press not seen on Pennsylvania Avenue since the dark days of Richard Nixon, but it stayed the course. And now with viewers seeing the contempt this administration had for them and the truth, they respect what Fox did the last six years.

Or maybe, it's what some critics of Fox say: That those who watch the channel only want to hear one side of the story, and that's all that Fox gives them. The implication here is that Fox viewers are stupid, to borrow an offensive term that Jonathan Gruber, the administration's \$400,000 adviser on Obamacare, used to describe American voters.

You tell me.

The answers matter. And we shouldn't let our biases blind us to the serious media criticism that demands to be done.

Ratings at 10 p.m. Election Night for Cable and Networks:

Fox News: 6.6 million overall (1.8 million 25 to 54)

CBS: 5.4 million (1.5 million)

NBC: 4.2 million (1.5 million)

ABC: 3.1 million (1.1 million)

CNN: 1.9 million (912,000)

MSNBC: 1.6 million (566,000)

Ricochet

[Memo To Reince: Enough is Enough. Boycott NBC and ABC.](#)

by Richard Miller

During a 2012 Republican primary debate, George Stephanopoulos asked Mitt Romney an obviously slanted if not altogether planted question about banning birth control. This mystified Romney since he had never even considered the issue as part of his platform. No major Republican had. But Stephanopoulos raised the issue and because of it, the GOP was forced to fight a two-year-long, imaginary “war on women.”

This talking point was later used by David Gregory on “Meet the Press” against Todd Akin whom handled it less articulately than Romney. But the fault in that did not lie with Stephanopoulos; it rested solely at the feet of the RNC for approving a former Clinton White House operative and still loyal Clinton acolyte to moderate a GOP debate.

Whomever was in charge and agreed to that decision should be exiled to somewhere very far and very cold where only Sarah Palin can see them from her house.

The GOP cannot control who NBC, ABC and CBS put into executive news editorial positions or the stories they choose to report, or not report. However, they can choose if they participate any longer with conglomerates whose clear goal is to protect an unpopular President and elevate a future Presidential candidate in Hillary Clinton. It is time to stop complaining about media bias and do something about it. Something bold.

ABC and NBC have instituted a three-week blackout — on network broadcasts, websites and social media pages — of the devastating admissions of MIT economist Jonathan Gruber. The ACA architect repeatedly boasted of deceiving the American public about legislation that cost six million people their family doctor. This should be the final straw in any relationship the GOP and RNC leadership has with these networks, period. No more debates, no more appearances on “Meet The Press,” “Morning Joe,” or “This Week” on ABC.

Boycott both NBC and ABC over failing to report on Gruber’s revelations and put CBS on final notice over the revelations that they coordinated with the Obama administration to tank Sharyl

Attkisson's Benghazi reporting. Network news is a dying religion becoming more ideologically rigid, forgoing any attempt to stay relevant in a media landscape that no longer needs them. Leave them behind. We've already shown that it works. Marginalize them and label them progressive news outlets and make them live by it. MSNBC came out of the progressive closet fully earlier this year and their ratings and web traffic got worse. Air America is no more and Current TV is now an unloved stepchild Al Gore gave away for oil money.

Reince Priebus threatened to boycott NBC and CNN over Hillary movies and documentaries aimed at paving the way toward her eventual coronation in 2016. It was a bold and refreshing action that loudly stated *enough was enough*. Both networks pulled their Hillary projects.

On the web, name reporters from both networks have chosen a blackout or ridicule approach. NBC News' crack team of political reporters led by Mark Murray and Chuck Todd have covered their eyes and ears. ABC political director Rick Klein can't be bothered either. However, John Harwood took a more direct approach:

[John Harwood](#) ✓ [@JohnJHarwood Follow](#)

I listened to/get what Gruber said, & get why it makes people mad about ACA madder. but that is only significance

Six million healthcare plans lost on an admitted and oft-repeated lie, and [this isn't news to them](#). Enough is enough.

They have chosen, like [most scandals involving the Obama Administration](#), to report on the Republican reaction and "overreach" instead of on the story of itself. Gruber, to whom the administration deferred on dozens of occasions to speak for them, admitted the only way ACA could be passed was to lie to stupid American voters. American voters have figured out the lie, as demonstrated by the results of the 2014 midterm elections. But the only group left defending the Obamacare catastrophe is the media by now ignoring Gruber.

This isn't bias. This is malfeasance and corruption.

The media went all-in for Obama to be President, so their credibility is directly tied to his. NBC and ABC ignore the Gruber story not because it makes Barack Obama look bad but because they were his dutiful messengers.

NBC hides behind a peacock-shaped shield, trying to convince everyone they're still the network of "Friends" and "Cheers." "NBC Sunday Night Football" falls behind "The Walking Dead" and it's not because of Peyton Manning's seemingly week-to-week record-breaking performances. The condescension emanating from Bob Costas' sermons on racism and gun control is chasing away viewers.

What's becoming evident, especially with a younger and deeper Republican bench going into 2016, is that network news will depend on the RNC much much more than the RNC will need them. It's time for them to start acting like it. Priebus, *et al.*, hold all the cards here.

Network media no longer drives the news cycle. "Meet the Press" ratings are back to dead last after putting in a new quarterback. More people have their heads buried in their fantasy football teams on Sunday mornings than are listening to Stephanopoulos or Donna Brazile. They have become a relic using Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert as iron lungs to stay alive.

The party leadership needs to make inroads on college campuses. This audience doesn't take a study break to watch Brian Williams or Matt Lauer. Viral media has taken over and every effort on network news relevance has failed.

YouTube, Netflix, Hulu, Facebook and Twitter are all far more viable options for primary debates and even a presidential debate, with wider and younger audiences. No one is asking for Sean Hannity or Mark Levin to host primary or presidential debates, but networks have clearly demonstrated they are not interested in balance. (Candy Crowley, anyone?) The conservative argument in media is to have a level playing field. Network media knows they can't do that because on a level playing field of ideas, conservatives win.

If NBC wishes to roll out the red carpet for Jon Stewart, they are welcome to it. If Jimmy Fallon's band wants to play "Crazy Eyed (expletive)" when a Republican woman walks out, they are welcome to it. But it's time to grab the stick they've been beating candidates and party members over the head with and use it against them.

This is not the same network media that broke the Kennedy assassination or the moon landing. It isn't. Let NBC and ABC cater to Grandma Hillary and the gaggle of Democrat senior citizens vying for the nomination. No one wants to hear Chuck Todd have to repeat questions because none of the candidates can hear him.

But it's time RNC leadership realizes that if network news outlets only want to shield their omnipotent President and crack Sarah Palin jokes five years after the fact, they can do it without our help.

Enough is enough.

Examiner

Temperamentally yours

by Noemie Emery

In their public lives, presidents have to hone their skills at facing disaster — see “midterm elections, 1994, 2006” — but the coping skills developed by President Obama are, one may say, unique.

Piqued by the results of the midterm elections, he denies that they happened, as the feelings of the millions who voted against him and his party matter much less than those who skipped voting completely. He believes (or assumes) that they all prefer him. He may be unaware he is opening a large can of worms for future elections, as every loser can now add the numbers of stay-at-homes to his own totals and then make the claim that he won. (On these lines, Mr. President, Mitt Romney has added the stay-at-homes to his 2012 numbers, and would like you to vacate his house.)

“Obama's Forging His Own Reality,” the National Journal said of this theory, adding that he has projected this “win” into a mandate to unilaterally rewrite the immigration codes of the country in a way that he himself once had said was unconstitutional as well as unwise. In his defense, his press secretary said that “the president is leader of a coalition of people who voted when he was on the ballot” — not mentioning that he was last on the ballot before Obamacare went into effect and the Islamic State exploded, leading many members of this coalition to throw down their rifles and run

Obama's coalition exists only in memory. The glory days of 2008 and mass adoration are gone, and he seems unable to face this development. His main tactic now is to appear before small crowds of loyal supporters who roar when he unloads upon his tormentors. He seems now to believe those voting against him have let him down in his own expectations, and he seems determined to make them all pay.

Needless to say, this is not what was promised in those brave days of 2008. In October that year, there was a stream of defections from those connected by blood or by service to the Republican Party who threw in their lot with the bright new aspirant, using the idea of “temperament” to explain it away.

“Having a first class temperament and a first-class intellect, President Obama ... has in him the potential to be a good, perhaps even a great leader,” [said Christopher Buckley](#).

“What struck me is how incredibly even ... and how reassuring he is,” David Brooks told us. “Obama is just the mountain. He’s there. He’s always the same. ... His steadiness, his temperament has been the dramatic theme of this ... campaign.”

Reagan appointee Kenneth Adelman slammed John McCain (and Sarah Palin) while praising the Democrat’s judgment and temperament.

Former Reagan chief of Staff Kenneth Duberstein followed suit, saying the Palin pick (like Obama, she had served only a part of her first term in state office) “had very much undermined the whole question of John McCain’s judgment.” His endorsement came a few days after those of his friend Colin Powell, whose career had been made by the Reagans and Bushes.

What these brains helped to give us was the worst presidential temperament since Richard M. Nixon, an under-experienced brittle narcissist, lacking in all the political skills save those of campaigning, whose main legacies will be an unworkable healthcare “reform” and a wholly avoidable Middle Eastern crisis. Obama's lack of political sense has gotten him into many disasters, which his lack of political temperament only makes worse.

The Hill

[Source: Billy Joel says Obama invited him for a smoke at White House](#)

by Judy Kurtz

President Obama, who said in 2009 that he had mostly kicked his cigarette habit, invited Billy Joel to have a smoke at the White House during a recent visit.

An ITK spy was sitting down at the bar at The Jefferson Hotel in downtown Washington last week when in walked The Piano Man himself.

Joel had received the Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song earlier that evening at a star-studded gala at DAR Constitution Hall. With “no entourage” around, our source — who counts themselves among Joel’s “biggest fans” — struck up a conversation with the “Scenes From an Italian Restaurant” singer.

Joel described the day's events, mentioning that [he went over to Capitol Hill](#) to Rep. John Boehner's (R-Ohio) office. Our tipster says that Joel recalled the Speaker, well-known for his nicotine habit, opened up a drawer, then "pulled out a pack of cigarettes and offered me one. And I said, 'No thanks, I quit.' "

A photo posted on Boehner's Instagram page Wednesday shows the pair chatting in the lawmaker's office at the Capitol.

Then, Joel remembered another tobacco offer from a high-profile politician. According to our tipster, the 65-year-old entertainer said, "I was at the White House recently, and President Obama did the same thing. He said, 'I'm going out on the North Portico to have a smoke. Do you want to come with me?'"

Joel said he replied, "Well, I haven't smoked in a long time," but indicated that he ultimately couldn't turn down a cigarette offer from the president.

ITK checked the official White House visitor records, which show a "William Joel" paid a visit to the executive mansion last December, the same date as the Kennedy Center Honors. Joel was one of last year's honorees.

Neither the White House nor Joel's representative responded to requests for comment.

The commander in chief was heard on an open mic telling an official at an event last year that it was Michelle Obama who "scared" him into quitting smoking. A smiling Obama said at the time, "I haven't had a cigarette in six years ... that's because I'm scared of my wife."

Obama said in 2009 that he "constantly" struggles with cigarettes. "Have I fallen off the wagon sometimes? Yes. Am I a daily smoker, a constant smoker? No," he said at the news conference five years ago. "I would say that I am 95 percent cured," Obama said, "But there are times where ... There are times where I mess up."

Scientific American

[Statins May Protect People from Air Pollution](#)

Statins, prescribed to lower cholesterol and reduce risks of heart attacks and strokes, seem to diminish inflammation that occurs after people breathe airborne particles.

by Brian Bienkowski



One of the most widely prescribed drugs in the United States may have an extra benefit: protecting people from air pollution.

Statins, prescribed to lower cholesterol and reduce risks of heart attacks and strokes, seem to diminish inflammation that occurs after people breathe airborne particles.

“Health impacts from spikes in particulates in the air are substantial. Statins seem to protect not only lungs from these impacts but the heart, too,” said Dr. Norman Edelman, the American Lung Association's senior medical advisor.

About one in four Americans over the age of 45 takes statins, including Lipitor, Zocor and other brand names.

Although drugs cannot be prescribed to protect people from air pollution, several studies show that people who take statins have fewer proteins in their blood that indicate inflammation of tissues, said Dr. Stephan van Eeden, an associate professor at the University of British Columbia who specializes in lung health. This inflammation may aggravate respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

Most recently, a [study of 1,923 U.S. women](#) found that those taking statins are less likely to have signs of inflammation, said Bart Ostro, an epidemiologist with California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment who led the study.

“There are some specific groups [such as diabetics] that seem to have higher levels of inflammation after long-term exposure,” Ostro said. “On the converse side, we found that people on statins seem to be protected from the inflammatory effects of PM2.5.”

In the women taking statins, there was no association between PM2.5 – the tiny particles emitted mostly by burning diesel and other fossil fuels – and the proteins indicating inflammation, while for most of the other groups the links were quite strong.

It's not the first time researchers have noticed this link: University of Michigan researchers found decreased blood indicators of inflammation in people who took statins [in a study](#) of 92 people in Boston. A [national study](#) of 5,778 people also reported that statins canceled out the presence of signs of inflammation from PM2.5, carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide.

Scientists believe that inflammation is a key factor in heart disease.

“The older thinking was that plaque in coronary arteries caused heart attacks,” Edelman said. “Now the thinking is that it's also due to some living tissue under plaque that gets inflamed and that disrupts the plaque. We already knew statins ameliorate heart disease, and always thought it was through lipids, but here's a new pathway.”

Around the world, studies have shown that whenever particulates increase, deaths from heart attacks and respiratory disease rise, too. [Experts estimate](#) that fine particles are linked to about 800,000 deaths annually worldwide.

Particulate pollution has been on a steady decline in the United States: The national average for PM2.5 decreased 34 percent from 2000 to 2013, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. However, high concentrations of the pollution still persist in some cities with heavy traffic and industry, such as Los Angeles and Chicago.

When van Eeden and colleagues [gave statins to rabbits](#) before exposing them to particulate matter they had decreased lung inflammation. In a [second study](#) of rabbits, statins seemed to help clear large particles from the lungs by promoting the movement of white blood cells to nearby lymph nodes, which protects the lungs against pending inflammation.

“It’s clear that if the animals are treated for about a month with statins before they’re exposed to particles, you can significantly lower the amount of particles generated in the lungs and decrease the blood vessel inflammatory process,” van Eeden said.

It’s not clear how statins may cause fewer particles in the lungs, but van Eeden said statin-treated rabbits have more particles in lymph nodes, suggesting the drugs stimulate particles to move to the nodes.

In [another animal test](#) mice given Zocor prior to oil fly ash or particulate exposure did not experience lung injuries and inflammation like their non-treated counterparts did, according to a 2011 study in Argentina.

Van Eeden and colleagues are now trying to figure out if the animal findings hold true for human lungs. So far, their work looks “very promising,” he said.

His lab is examining lung tissue from people who had part of a lung removed. Many were smokers and had a lot of particles in their lungs. They haven’t finished the study but so far they’re seeing that “it’s quite clear that people who used statins had less particles in their lungs,” van Eeden said.

“Once again it suggests anti-inflammatory properties and seems to clear the particles,” van Eeden said. “And these were people chronically exposed to air pollution or cigarette smoke.”

However, it’s too early for doctors to prescribe statins for people exposed to air pollution, said Dr. Martha Daviglius, a cardiovascular epidemiologist at Northwestern University and University of Illinois.

“We need more evidence. We already have a lot of people taking statins for cholesterol, and we don’t fully know the effect of taking the drugs for years and years, and decades yet,” Daviglius said.

The number of people taking the drugs is already [expected to rise](#) as the American Heart Association last year advocated for increased statin use to combat high cholesterol.

It remains unclear if people would have to take statins immediately prior to breathing air pollution, and, if so, for how long, in order for the drugs to help.

“It seems they have some good effects with regards to air pollution, but we need to conduct clinical trials with people living near roads or high-emitting facilities,” Daviglius said.

Ostro said it would be “somewhat of a leap” to prescribe statins to mitigate air pollution impacts, given some of their known side effects, such as liver problems.

Food and Drug Administration spokesman Kristofer Baumgartner said that any new claims about additional benefits for a drug have to be reviewed by a team of scientists, and the benefit would have to outweigh any risks.

Two pharmaceutical giants who sell statins, Pfizer and AstraZeneca, would not comment on the air pollution studies.

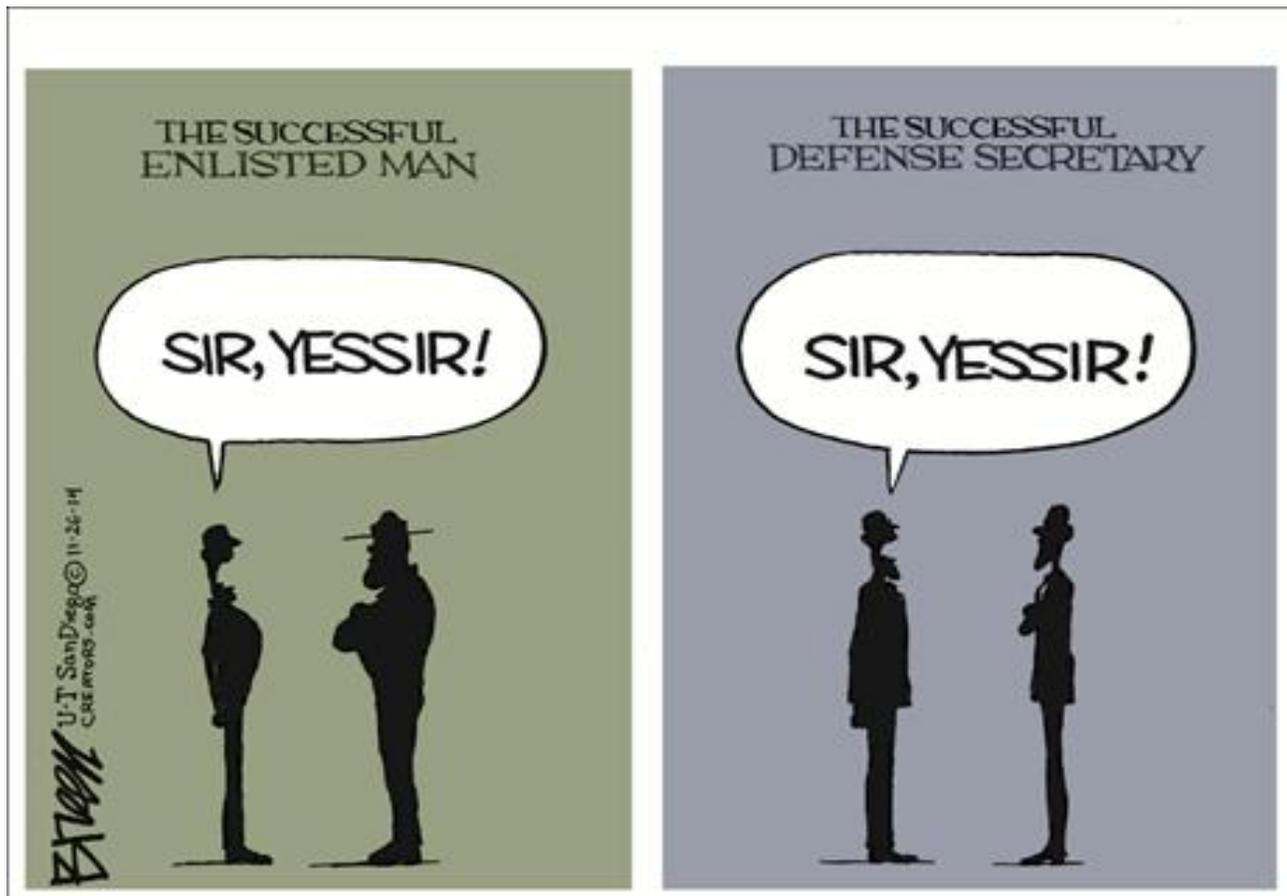
There is no research on whether other anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen, would also protect people from air pollution.

Van Eeden sees potential for statins to play a role in reducing effects of air pollution, possibly in the near future. One possible group could be those suffering from asthma, which causes inflamed and constricted air passages.

"If this human study confirms what we found in rabbits, then if there is an episode of air pollution, maybe people at high risk can get a short course of statins for that period until the air pollution clears," he said. He is currently seeking funding to test statins on firefighters to see if they reduce lung inflammation caused by smoke.

Edelman said the answer to protecting people is still cleaning the air.

"We don't want people to start thinking now we have a drug to control effects of air pollution so we don't have to worry about air pollution," he said. "It's still a large threat."





The GOP are RACIST...



The GOP HATE WOMEN...



The GOP want to POLLUTE the EARTH...



The GOP HATE POOR PEOPLE...



The GOP will DESTROY OUR COUNTRY!!!



LET'S WORK TOGETHER!





