

February 19, 2015

The Examiner's Tim Carney posts on a New Yorker article on Libya's chaos.

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*For some reason, Obama's Libya war has received scant attention, both from his critics and from media commentators assessing his presidency. The people of Libya and surrounding countries, however, don't have the luxury of ignoring the consequences.*

The left media can no longer ignore the administration's foreign policy failures and follies. Even The New Yorker can't continue to look away. Tim Carney's above article posted on a New Yorker piece. Here that is. It is organized around the story of Gen. Khalifa Haftar who left his 20 year home in Northern Virginia to lead one of the factions fighting in Libya. This is 7,000 words. Sorry about that, but at least this is the last posting for the week.

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*flexible sense of personal allegiance. In the Green Mountains, the country's traditional hideout for rebels and insurgents, he established a military headquarters, inside an old airbase surrounded by red-earth farmland and groves of hazelnut and olive trees. Haftar's force, which he calls the Libyan National Army, has taken much of the eastern half of the country, in an offensive known as Operation Dignity. Most of the remainder, including the capital city of Tripoli, is held by Libya Dawn, a loose coalition of militias, many of them working in a tactical alliance with Islamist extremists. Much as General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has boasted of doing in Egypt, General Haftar proposes to destroy the Islamist forces and bring peace and stability—enforced by his own army. ...*

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*... Libyans gradually learned to navigate the violence. A young Tripoli businessman who asked to be called Mohamed told me of getting a call last July, telling him that two militias were fighting on the road to the airport. "The morning it started, my partner tried to drive to our office and got turned back," he said. Mohamed headed to the office anyway; their employees' payroll money was held in a safe there, and he wanted to retrieve it before it was destroyed or looted. "There were literally bullets flying right overhead," he said. He managed to get the money and leave the city, negotiating the militia roadblocks using a credential that a highly placed friend had given him. "All along the airport road, there were no-go zones, with separate battles going on, and both sides ransacking people's houses."*

*With the fighting in Tripoli, two opposing armies took shape. The group aligned against Haftar, Libya Dawn, is an uneasy coalition; it includes former Al Qaeda jihadists who fought against Qaddafi in the nineties, Berber ethnic militias, members of Libya's branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, and a network of conservative merchants from Misrata, whose fighters make up the largest block of Libya Dawn's forces. Haftar's army is composed mainly of Qaddafi-era soldiers and federalists seeking greater autonomy for the eastern region of Cyrenaica, mixed with tribal fighters from the west and the south. ...*

*... The regional implications of Libya's breakdown are vast. The southern desert offers unguarded crossings into Algeria, Niger, Chad, and Sudan, where armed bands—including human traffickers and jihadists from Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb—roam freely in four-wheel-drive convoys. Huge numbers of migrants, mostly Africans but also some Middle Easterners, are being smuggled through Libya. At the Mediterranean coast, they are placed in overcrowded boats and pointed toward Italy, where the fortunate ones are picked up by the coast guard or by passing cargo ships. Last year, the number of migrants reaching Italy in this fashion rose to a hundred and seventy thousand; more than three thousand are believed to have drowned at sea. In early February, another three hundred died.*

*Libya has long been an isolated and constricted place, and the revolution has done little to change that. Since July, Tripoli's only functioning airport has been Mitiga, a former U.S. airbase that Qaddafi took over in 1970. Then Haftar's bombers struck Mitiga, and for a time there were no flights there, either.*

*Many of the young Libyans I met during the revolution are now in Tunisia, Egypt, Bulgaria, London—anywhere but Libya. The exiles who came back to build a new country have largely left.*

*The people who have remained are those who can't get out, and they mostly stay close to home. In any case, there's little to do. Many shops are closed during the day, opening for a few hours after evening prayers; there are no women to be seen on the streets. There are sporadic bursts of gunfire and explosions, and it is impossible to tell whether someone is being shot or someone is cleaning a gun on a rooftop. Nobody asks; Libyans have become inured to war, and, in any case, decades of secret-police surveillance have conditioned them not to inquire into the causes of violence. ...*

*... Benjamin Rhodes, the deputy national-security adviser and a close confidant of Obama's, acknowledged that Libya's situation was grim. "Getting the technocrats and the guys with the guns on the same page has been very difficult," he said. "The first task is to get them in conversation where they can receive help from us. We're doing this through a U.N. initiative, plus some quiet diplomacy behind the scenes." He noted that there has also been occasional military action. Last June, Delta Force operatives abducted Ahmed Abu Khattala, an Ansar member who is suspected of leading the attack that killed Ambassador Stevens. Khattala is now awaiting trial in the U.S. "The trick is for us to help people get back to the point where the Libyans can achieve what their revolution was about in the first place," Rhodes said. "But it's probably not going to happen on Washington's timeline."*

*Rhodes was one of the aides who, along with Clinton, Susan Rice, and Samantha Power, helped persuade Obama to join the intervention. In spite of the chaos that followed, he stands by that decision. "We saved a lot of lives in Benghazi and the rest of the country," he said. "If Qaddafi had gone into Benghazi, I think Libya would look more like Syria today." He added, "What did we do wrong? Even the President would acknowledge that it's been extremely difficult to fill the vacuum in Libya. We were keen for the Libyans to take the lead. Everyone knows the dangers of a completely U.S.-owned postwar environment. We might have used a heavier hand, but there's no guarantee it would have made a difference." ...*

First the New Yorker, and from [Power Line](#) we learn the Brookings Institution can't avoid the trainwreck.

*... The center-liberal Brookings Institution reported last week on the range of surveys of presidential experts (mostly liberals one can safely assume) who rank Obama as no more than middling. But Brookings decided to do their own survey of academic political scientists, and some of it is rather brutal for The One:*

*"First, President Obama ranks 18th overall, but beneath the surface of the aggregate figures lurks evidence of significant ambivalence. For example, those who view Obama as one of the worst American presidents outnumber those who view him as one of the best by nearly a 3-1 margin. Similarly, nearly twice as many respondents view Obama as over-rated than do those who consider him under-rated. One area where there is significant expert consensus about the president, however, concerns how polarizing he is viewed as being – only George W. Bush was viewed as more a more polarizing president.*

*Next, Obama does not perform well on more specific dimensions of presidential greatness, often viewed as average or worse. For example, he is the midpoint in terms of both personal integrity and military skill (e.g., 10th of 19 in both categories), but falls to 11th when it comes to diplomatic skill and 13th with respect to legislative skill. . .*

*What can we take away from this? First, it is easy to infer that scholars and the public alike expected greatness from Obama early on and awarded it to him prematurely. . .*

*Second, scholars seem to hold Barack Obama in high regard personally, but view his skills and performance as mediocre to poor. Few think of Obama as an excellent president, while many more rate his presidency quite low. . .*

*It could be worse for Obama. Barring unforeseen scandal, he's unlikely to become significantly less popular. ."*

*That closer is a real vote of confidence. ...*

**Andrew Malcolm** with late night humor.

*Meyers: A Tennessee lawmaker is pushing to make the Bible the official state book. It would replace Tennessee's current state book, the menu at Cracker Barrel.*

*Conan: A Glasgow man was attacked in a movie theater by three rowdy women during "Fifty Shades of Grey." The police handcuffed the women, so their plan worked perfectly.*

*Fallon: Congress is considering a law to allow commuters to bring their dogs and cats on Amtrak trains. It's all part of its plan to make Amtrak smell BETTER.*

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## **Examiner**

### **Libya's chaos is Obama's shame**

by Timothy P. Carney

President Obama attacked Libya in 2011 without congressional authority, and then shirked any responsibility to help stabilize the country after deposing its dictator.

By 2013, Libya had become a chaotic hellhole mired in a permanent war. Today it is a new beachhead and recruiting ground for the Islamic State.

Obama's illegal, ill-considered, and immoral drive-by war in Libya ought to be a permanent stain on his presidency. The recent video of masked ISIS killers beheading 21 Egyptian Christians in Libya deserves to be the emblem of this president's rash foreign policy.

"There is no overstating the chaos of post-Qaddafi Libya," writes veteran war journalist Jon Lee Anderson in the New Yorker. "Two competing governments claim legitimacy. Armed militias roam the streets. The electricity is frequently out of service, and most business is at a standstill...."

Wars in Libya in the past year alone have taken about as many lives as 9/11 did. Those who can get out flee. Anderson reports that "nearly a third of the country's population has fled across the border to Tunisia."

The militants of the Islamic State are actually late arrivals to the “scumbag Woodstock” Libya has become, in the words a military contractor quoted by Daily Beast reporter Eli Lake. Ansar al-Sharia, a terrorist group connected to the deadly 2012 attacks in Benghazi, is already a staple there, along with at least three Al Qaeda affiliates, Lake reported last year.

Qaddafi was evil. But the lawless power vacuum he left may already be worse.

As we behold the horror of Libya, including this new Islamic State video, we need to remember the flippancy, deceit, and fecklessness with which the Obama administration helped lead the charge to regime change.

Only Congress has the authority to declare war. Federal law allows the president to conduct limited military actions in emergencies, and to continue them if he receives congressional authority. Candidate Obama stated in 2007, “The president does not have power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation.”

President Obama in 2011 never sought and never received congressional authority. His war was illegal by his own reckoning.

Deception was the norm in the early days of the attack. “The exit strategy will be executed this week,” Obama said in March 2011. We continued bombing for weeks. “We did not lead this,” Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said. But a U.S. General and an admiral commanded the international effort.

Obama also never sought public approval. Unlike President George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq, the Obama administration never made a public case for war. He probably understood that Americans had little appetite for another war in the Arab world — and one with very little conceivable American interest at stake.

That knowledge may have also motivated Obama’s decision to make Libya a drive-by war. “What I didn’t want,” Obama told reporter Michael Lewis, “is a month later a call from our allies saying, ‘It’s not working — you need to do more.’ So the question is: How can I cabin our commitment in a way that is useful?”

In other words, the only thing Obama learned from Iraq and Afghanistan seemed to be that nation-building is costly, difficult, and lengthy. He must have missed the lesson that the removal of one evil can open the door to greater ones.

Libyans tell CNN reporter Jomana Karadsheh that they feel America and our allies “did not really do enough to try and build a military, build a state.” We didn’t really “try and demobilize and disarm the militias in the aftermath of the revolution,” as Karadsheh put it.

At every stage, though, the administration behaved shamefully. Obama never tried to persuade Americans his war was just. He never sought the congressional action that would have made his war — sorry, his “kinetic military action” — legal. At one point, administration officials even floated the idea that they could frustrate the intent of the 1973 War Powers Resolution and its 60-day limit on unauthorized wars by momentarily stopping and then immediately restarting U.S. involvement. Obama never told the truth, perhaps for fear it would make his war more unpopular. And he never made the commitment to staying and rebuilding that could have made his war a success.

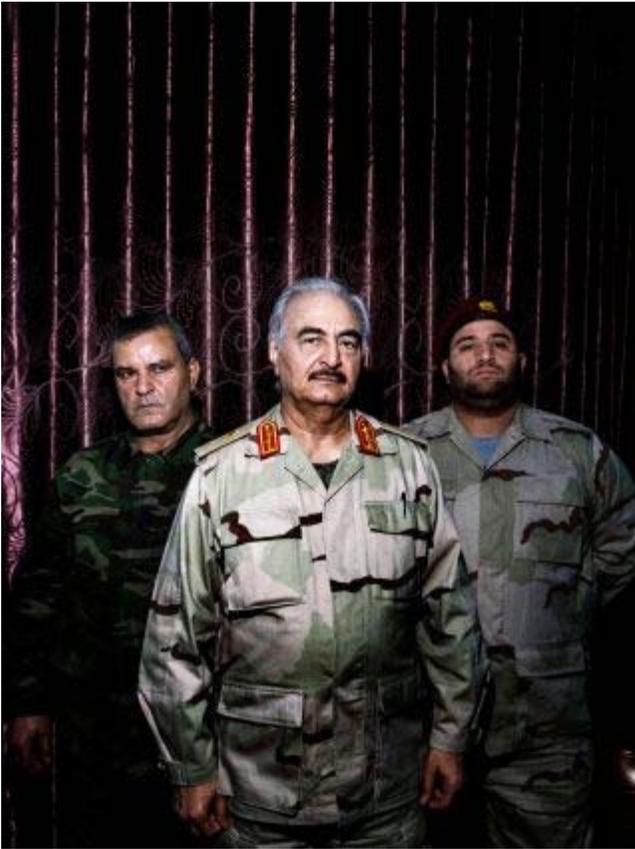
For some reason, Obama's Libya war has received scant attention, both from his critics and from media commentators assessing his presidency. The people of Libya and surrounding countries, however, don't have the luxury of ignoring the consequences.

**The New Yorker**

**The Unravelling**

***In a failing state, an anti-Islamist general mounts a divisive campaign.***

By Jon Lee Anderson



*Khalifa Haftar's army now controls much of the eastern half of the country.*

Early last year, General Khalifa Haftar left his home in northern Virginia—where he had spent most of the previous two decades, at least some of that time working with the Central Intelligence Agency—and returned to Tripoli to fight his latest war for control of Libya. Haftar, who is a mild-looking man in his early seventies, has fought with and against nearly every significant faction in the country's conflicts, leading to a reputation for unrivalled military experience and for a highly flexible sense of personal allegiance. In the Green Mountains, the country's traditional hideout for rebels and insurgents, he established a military headquarters, inside an old airbase surrounded by red-earth farmland and groves of hazelnut and olive trees. Haftar's force, which he calls the Libyan National Army, has taken much of the eastern half of the country, in an offensive known as Operation Dignity. Most of the remainder, including the capital city of Tripoli, is held by Libya Dawn, a loose coalition of militias, many of them working in a tactical alliance with Islamist extremists. Much as General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has boasted of doing in Egypt, General Haftar proposes to destroy the Islamist forces and bring peace and stability—enforced by his own army.

When I visited Haftar's base, earlier this winter, I passed a Russian-made helicopter gunship and was greeted by a group of fighters unloading ammo. The base was in a state of constant alert. Haftar is a top-priority assassination target for Libya Dawn's militias. Last June, a suicide bomber exploded a Jeep outside his home near Benghazi, killing four guards but missing the primary target. Now there is heavy security around Haftar at all times. At his base, soldiers frisk visitors and confiscate weapons. A few months ago, someone reportedly attempted to kill him with an explosive device concealed in a phone, and so his men collect phones, too.

Haftar greeted me in a spotless office with a set of beige sofas and a matching carpet. Wearing an old-fashioned regimental mustache and a crisp khaki uniform, he looks more like a retired schoolteacher than like the American-backed tyrant his enemies describe. In a deliberate voice, he told me why he had gone back to war. After participating in the 2011 uprising against Muammar Qaddafi, he tried to find a place for himself in Libya's new politics. When he didn't succeed, he said, he went home to Virginia for a time, "to enjoy my grandchildren." All the while, he watched as Libya floundered under a succession of weak governments, and the country's militias grew more powerful. Last summer, Islamist extremists moved to seize Benghazi; in a merciless campaign aimed at the remains of civil society, assassins killed some two hundred and seventy lawyers, judges, activists, military officers, and policemen—including some of Haftar's old friends and military colleagues. "There was no justice and no protection," he said. "People no longer left their houses at night. All of this upset me greatly. We had no sooner left behind Qaddafi's rule than we had this?"

Haftar reached out to contacts in what remained of Libya's armed forces, in civil society, in tribal groups, and, finally, in Tripoli. "Everyone told me the same thing," he said. " 'We are looking for a savior. Where are you?' I told them, 'If I have the approval of the people, I will act.' After popular demonstrations took place all over Libya asking me to step in, I knew I was being pushed toward death, but I willingly accepted."

Like many self-appointed saviors, Haftar spoke with a certain self-admiring fatalism. But his history is much more complex than he cares to acknowledge. As an Army cadet in 1969, he participated in Qaddafi's coup against the Libyan monarchy, and eventually became one of his top officers. "He was my son," Qaddafi once told an interviewer, "and I was like his spiritual father."

In 1987, as Libya fought with Chad over a strategic strip of borderland, Qaddafi chose Haftar as his commanding officer. Haftar's base was soon overrun in a Chadian attack—part of a conflict that became known as the Toyota War, for the Land Cruisers that Chad's troops drove into battle. The Chadians killed thousands of Libyan troops, and took Haftar and four hundred of his men prisoner. When Qaddafi publicly disavowed the P.O.W.s, Haftar was enraged, and called for his men to join him in a coup. By 1988, he had aligned himself with the National Front for the Salvation of Libya, a Chad-based opposition group supported by the C.I.A. Soon afterward, he was released from prison.

Haftar's work in Chad did not bring him glory. His enemies like to recall that Chad's government accused the Libyan forces of employing napalm and poison gas during the war. Afterward, two of Haftar's fellow-prisoners reported that those who refused to join his coup were left behind in their jail cells. As military commander of the Salvation Front, he plotted an invasion of Libya—but Qaddafi outflanked him, backing a disruptive coup in Chad. The C.I.A. had to airlift Haftar and three hundred and fifty of his men to Zaire and, eventually, to the United States. Haftar was given citizenship, and remained in the U.S. for the next twenty years.

For a time, Haftar stayed involved with the C.I.A., and with the Salvation Front's abortive efforts to topple Qaddafi, including a plot in which a number of Haftar's fellow-conspirators were captured

and executed. According to Ashur Shamis, a former leader of the Salvation Front, Haftar lived well in Virginia, though no one knew how he made his money. But he did not return to Libya, fearing that he would be executed.

After the U.S. invaded Iraq, in 2003, Qaddafi, who had been among America's most vitriolic enemies, suddenly agreed to give up his nuclear-weapons program and attempt a rapprochement. By then, the C.I.A. had evidently loosened its ties with Haftar, and, when he returned to Libya, in March, 2011, he was on his own. Nevertheless, Haftar's enemies accuse him of being a C.I.A. plant, a traitor, and a vicious killer, and of seeking to install himself as a latter-day Qaddafi.

There is no overstating the chaos of post-Qaddafi Libya. Two competing governments claim legitimacy. Armed militias roam the streets. The electricity is frequently out of service, and most business is at a standstill; revenues from oil, the country's greatest asset, have dwindled by more than ninety per cent. Some three thousand people have been killed by fighting in the past year, and nearly a third of the country's population has fled across the border to Tunisia. What has followed the downfall of a tyrant—a downfall encouraged by NATO air strikes—is the tyranny of a dangerous and pervasive instability.

For Haftar, the east was the obvious place to begin his offensive. "Benghazi was the main stronghold of terrorism in Libya, so we started there," he said. An old Libyan maxim holds that everything of importance happens in Benghazi. In 1937, Benito Mussolini came there to solidify his colonial power. In 1951, the newly crowned King Idris I broadcast a radio address from the city to proclaim Libya independent. When Qaddafi launched his military coup against the monarchy, he was a young officer based in Benghazi. In February, 2011, the uprising against his rule erupted there, and the following month the West intervened there to prevent him from massacring the city's revolutionaries and its civilian population.

The intervention that helped decide the Libyan conflict began tentatively. As Qaddafi moved harshly to put down the rebellion, vowing to "cleanse Libya house by house," President Obama was reluctant to get involved, and his aides argued about the wisdom of forcing Qaddafi from power. But America's allies in Europe, particularly the British and the French, were already convinced. In March, 2011, the well-connected French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy arrived in the city and took it upon himself to make sure that the rebels got aid. In Paris recently, I asked Lévy why he'd adopted the Libyan cause. "Why? I don't know!" he said. "Of course, it was human rights, for a massacre to be prevented, and blah blah blah—but I also wanted them to see a Jew defending the liberators against a dictatorship, to show fraternity. I wanted the Muslims to see that a Frenchman—a Westerner and a Jew—could be on their side."

Lévy said that he returned to Paris and told President Nicolas Sarkozy that humanitarian intervention wasn't enough. "The real objective had to be to topple Qaddafi," he told me. Sarkozy agreed, and Lévy became his emissary. Lévy accompanied a Libyan opposition leader to meet Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, to lobby for U.S. involvement.\* "It was hard to convince the Americans," he said. "Robert Gates was totally opposed. Obama as usual was hesitating. But Hillary got it."

Late that month, as Qaddafi dispatched a convoy to attack the rebels in Benghazi, French warplanes began bombing. The U.K. and the U.S. followed, in an arm's-length operation that the Obama Administration described as "leading from behind." From warships in the Mediterranean, they launched a withering strike of a hundred and twelve Tomahawk missiles, but within days Gates had announced that the French and the British would take the lead. The coalition kept fighting for seven months, with American forces in a lower-profile role. In the end, Lévy was pleased with the intervention. "The NATO mission, as far as I am concerned, was as it had to be."

On September 11, 2012, the country's history again turned in Benghazi: a mob of extremists set fire to the U.S. consular compound and attacked a nearby annex, killing the Ambassador, Christopher Stevens, and three other Americans. In the United States, a rancorous debate began about the circumstances of Stevens's death, with Obama's opponents in Congress assailing him for the lack of security at the compound and accusing him of a coverup. The U.S. wound down its diplomatic presence and essentially abandoned its role in the international efforts to rebuild Libya and foster democracy.

"The killing of Chris Stevens had the effect of helping the terrorists acquire greater power," a senior Administration official told me. "The bad guys were trying to get the West out, and they succeeded. Because of the politicization of that episode in the U.S., the government paused to make sure no one else got hurt, and reduced our geographic scope and presence in the country." A senior government official said that Stevens's death had brought a "broader chill" in efforts to influence events in Libya. "We had a pilot training program, for instance," he said. "Suddenly, we were being accused of supporting terrorism." For Lévy, the West's abandonment of Libya was a dismaying moral failure. "Having done what we have done—France, the U.K., and the U.S.—we have a duty to Libya," he said. "It would be a disaster if Libya does not rebuild itself."

In a sense, Libya's unravelling began even as the country achieved its "liberation." On October 20, 2011, after nine months of fighting, a group of *thumar*—battle-hardened militiamen—from the port city of Misrata found Qaddafi hiding in a drainage pipe and killed him on the spot. Afterward, his mutilated body was taken to a cold-storage room and left there for several days as thousands of people came to view it and take pictures. Another group of Misratan militiamen massacred sixty-six of Qaddafi's last loyalists in the garden of a Sirte hotel, after they videotaped themselves tormenting their captives.

It had been clear from the start that the militias were going to be a deeply troublesome feature of post-Qaddafi Libya. The rebel alliance was hastily thrown together from many disparate groups—some friendly to Western ideals and others driven by Islamist dreams of a new caliphate. Even as Western governments deliberated over whether to support the rebels, jihadists from the eastern city of Derna emerged as a force on the battlefield. In an ugly episode in July, 2011, the rebel coalition's military commander, General Abdel Fattah Younes, was abducted and murdered, likely by Islamists seeking revenge for Younes's persecution of them when he was Qaddafi's interior minister.

As Qaddafi fled Tripoli, in late August, the city was swarmed by two militia forces: one from the western city of Zintan and the other from Misrata. The two groups had been allied in the effort to oust Qaddafi, but as they raced to occupy key positions in Tripoli a rivalry began. The militias ransacked Qaddafi's well-stocked armories, and the Misratans made off with hundreds of Russian-made tanks. The Zintanis took over the international airport. Several other armed Islamist groups also seized positions for themselves.

The profusion of young men with guns alarmed Rory Stewart, a British M.P. who had come to Libya to gather information for Parliament. I was in Libya at the time, and Stewart joined me for a couple of days in Tripoli; after one confrontation with armed men at a roadblock, he asked, "What I want to know is, who is going to disarm these militias?" More important, he wondered, who was going to put Libya back together again, and create jobs for all the armed young men?

Stewart returned in March of 2012, and noted that NATO was doing little to help. "There was a single British policeman assigned to the Ministry of the Interior—and that was the U.K.'s disarmament-and-demobilization program!" he said. "There were those in the Libyan parliament who were asking, 'Where's the post-intervention plan?,' but my own instinct at the time was that

we'd been burned very badly by nation-building in Iraq." The Western powers seemed to be placing their hopes in a less committed program. Stewart told me, "You get a U.N. resolution for humanitarian intervention, you get rid of Qaddafi, you don't put boots on the ground, you get regional players like Turkey and Qatar to sign generous checks, and you step back. You imagine that it'll be tricky, but no one could imagine it would be this bad."

As the country tried to rebuild itself, there were some reasons for hope. In July, 2012, Libyans voted for the first time in six decades, electing a national assembly called the General National Congress. A loose consortium of liberal and centrist parties outpolled candidates affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which had surged after Qaddafi was deposed; the new Prime Minister, Ali Zeidan, was a human-rights lawyer. But the elections did little to diminish the influence of the militias. Indeed, Libya's tens of thousands of *thumar* became increasingly powerful: rather than finding the fighters jobs and forcing them to disarm, the government put them on the state payroll. Frederic Wehrey, a Libya analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told me, "Probably only about a third of the militiamen actually fought in the war. The problem is that when the government started funding them it created more and more of them. No records were ever kept, so people were double- and triple-dipping." Westerners started to come under attack with troubling frequency. In January, 2013, gunmen in Benghazi fired on an Italian diplomat's car, but he emerged unharmed. In April, a car bomb, claimed by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, severely damaged the French Embassy in Tripoli.

Although the Islamists had lost at the polls, they found a way to assert political power. In May, they urged the G.N.C. to pass a law banning virtually everyone who had participated in Qaddafi's government from holding public office. During the vote, armed militiamen stormed government ministries to demand the law's passage. The immediate effect was to neutralize several of the Islamists' key rivals, mostly political moderates and technocrats who had served at the end of Qaddafi's reign. The speaker of the G.N.C. was obliged to resign. In December, 2013, the G.N.C. endorsed Sharia law as the source of all legislation and voted to extend its mandate for an additional year.

Haftar watched the country's decline with growing anger. On February 14th, he appeared on television to announce the unilateral dissolution of parliament and the creation of a "Presidential committee" and cabinet, which would govern until new elections could be held. His move had the hallmarks of a coup, yet Haftar had no apparent way to enforce it, and he was publicly taunted for his hubris. Prime Minister Zeidan called the attempt "ridiculous." But Haftar had a strategy. He had embarked on a series of "town hall" meetings around the country, while he secretly built an army, with the support of old comrades from the military. In May, he launched Operation Dignity, with attacks against Islamist militias in Benghazi, which he said were intended to "eliminate extremist terrorist groups" in Libya. Not long afterward, his forces occupied the parliament building in Tripoli.

Haftar's offensive resonated with many Libyans, who had grown frustrated with the G.N.C. and the violence that had flourished during its rule. At around the same time, the G.N.C. agreed to convene a new legislative body, the House of Representatives. The Islamists performed poorly in the elections, in June, but, before the new parliament could take office, the Islamists, strengthened by militiamen from Misrata, attacked Tripoli's international airport, in an attempt to seize it from Haftar. The airport, including one and a half billion dollars' worth of aircraft, was destroyed, and about a hundred fighters were killed. With Tripoli a battlefield, the U.S. pulled out of Libya entirely, moving its Embassy to Malta, separated from the besieged capital by two hundred miles of water.

Libyans gradually learned to navigate the violence. A young Tripoli businessman who asked to be called Mohamed told me of getting a call last July, telling him that two militias were fighting on the road to the airport. "The morning it started, my partner tried to drive to our office and got turned

back,” he said. Mohamed headed to the office anyway; their employees’ payroll money was held in a safe there, and he wanted to retrieve it before it was destroyed or looted. “There were literally bullets flying right overhead,” he said. He managed to get the money and leave the city, negotiating the militia roadblocks using a credential that a highly placed friend had given him. “All along the airport road, there were no-go zones, with separate battles going on, and both sides ransacking people’s houses.”

With the fighting in Tripoli, two opposing armies took shape. The group aligned against Haftar, Libya Dawn, is an uneasy coalition; it includes former Al Qaeda jihadists who fought against Qaddafi in the nineties, Berber ethnic militias, members of Libya’s branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, and a network of conservative merchants from Misrata, whose fighters make up the largest block of Libya Dawn’s forces. Haftar’s army is composed mainly of Qaddafi-era soldiers and federalists seeking greater autonomy for the eastern region of Cyrenaica, mixed with tribal fighters from the west and the south.

Last August, Libya Dawn took control of Tripoli, effectively dividing the country into east and west. The Islamists who had lost power in the newly created House of Representatives insisted that the G.N.C. was the country’s only legitimate government. With the country increasingly unstable, the H.O.R. established itself in the city of Tobruk, eight hundred miles to the east. There the members proclaimed themselves Libya’s “true government”—even as they retreated for a time to a Greek car ferry moored offshore. The U.N. and most of the international community recognize the H.O.R., but Libya’s Supreme Court ruled that the G.N.C. was the national legislature. Effectively, the Libyan state has collapsed, replaced by a series of warring city-states.

As the standoff worsens, regional powers have stepped in. Haftar’s army reportedly receives weapons and financing from Egypt, led by the vehemently anti-Islamist General Sisi; from Saudi Arabia; and from the United Arab Emirates. (The Emiratis and the Egyptians have gone so far as to covertly bomb targets on Haftar’s behalf, eliciting an unusual public rebuke by the U.S. government.) Libya Dawn is backed by Qatar and Turkey, which support the Muslim Brotherhood. Their involvement has given the conflict the dimensions of a proxy war.

The regional implications of Libya’s breakdown are vast. The southern desert offers unguarded crossings into Algeria, Niger, Chad, and Sudan, where armed bands—including human traffickers and jihadists from Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb—roam freely in four-wheel-drive convoys. Huge numbers of migrants, mostly Africans but also some Middle Easterners, are being smuggled through Libya. At the Mediterranean coast, they are placed in overcrowded boats and pointed toward Italy, where the fortunate ones are picked up by the coast guard or by passing cargo ships. Last year, the number of migrants reaching Italy in this fashion rose to a hundred and seventy thousand; more than three thousand are believed to have drowned at sea. In early February, another three hundred died.

Libya has long been an isolated and constricted place, and the revolution has done little to change that. Since July, Tripoli’s only functioning airport has been Mitiga, a former U.S. airbase that Qaddafi took over in 1970. Then Haftar’s bombers struck Mitiga, and for a time there were no flights there, either.

Many of the young Libyans I met during the revolution are now in Tunisia, Egypt, Bulgaria, London—anywhere but Libya. The exiles who came back to build a new country have largely left. The people who have remained are those who can’t get out, and they mostly stay close to home. In any case, there’s little to do. Many shops are closed during the day, opening for a few hours after evening prayers; there are no women to be seen on the streets. There are sporadic bursts of gunfire and explosions, and it is impossible to tell whether someone is being shot or someone is

cleaning a gun on a rooftop. Nobody asks; Libyans have become inured to war, and, in any case, decades of secret-police surveillance have conditioned them not to inquire into the causes of violence.

Despite Qaddafi's taste for grandiose gestures, modern Libya has never valued aesthetic beauty. New homes are built out of cement block and left unpainted; trash is dumped in the streets. The revolutionaries bulldozed Qaddafi's palace and smashed many icons of his regime, and extremists are despoiling the rest. In Tripoli, there was a statue of a bare-breasted woman nuzzling a gazelle; extremists blew a hole through her belly and hauled the statue away. At the Greco-Roman ruins of Cyrene, almost all the statues of gods have been disfigured. Under a line of vandalized bas-reliefs, I saw a spray-painted message in Arabic script: "Destroy the stone idols, no to restoration."

The Muslim Brotherhood and the Misratan leaders have spoken out against jihadist atrocities, but a significant and growing extremist element remains active on the battlefield. In Benghazi, where Haftar's soldiers have been fighting Islamist groups for control, the combat has caused widespread destruction and a steady stream of casualties. Haftar claims to hold most of the city, though he says that snipers have slowed his advance. The main enemy is Ansar al-Sharia, the group implicated in Stevens's death and widely suspected of leading the assassination campaign that devastated civil society in Benghazi. In late January, Mohamed al-Zahawi, the leader of Ansar, died from wounds suffered in battle, but his forces have kept fighting.

After Qaddafi's overthrow, hundreds of fighters from Derna, a city long associated with Islamist extremism, travelled to Syria to join the war against President Bashar al-Assad. Many fought alongside Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian affiliate of Al Qaeda, and some joined ISIS. In recent months, a sizable number have reportedly returned home in order to fight against Haftar's forces. In October, a Derna-based jihadist group declared its allegiance to ISIS, and, a few months later, another ISIS unit claimed responsibility for the execution of a dozen Libyan soldiers. In an audacious daylight assault in late January, a third group of ISIS gunmen raided the Corinthia, a five-star hotel in downtown Tripoli, killing at least eight people. A few weeks later, ISIS took over a village near the coastal town of Bin Jawad.

Haftar says that he intends to take on Derna's extremists once he has conquered Benghazi. "We will use all the means at our disposal to exterminate them," he assured me. Haftar possesses a small air force—an advantage he holds over Libya Dawn, which has only one or two aircraft—and every few days his fleet of vintage MIGs carries out bombing sorties over Benghazi, or, farther afield, in Ajdabiya, Misrata, Sirte, and Tripoli.

Haftar said that he planned to bring the war to Tripoli, and to Misrata, but dismissed the possibility of widespread carnage. "Tripoli will be overrun quickly, because the people will rise up, and we have forces inside the city," he said.

"What about dialogue?" I asked.

"There will be no dialogue with terrorism," Haftar replied. "The only thing to say about terrorism is that we will fight it until it's defeated, and we have purified the country."

In Washington, Haftar's absolutist tactics have caused discomfort. The senior Administration official told me emphatically, "The U.S. government has nothing to do with General Khalifa Haftar. Haftar is killing people, and he says he is targeting terrorists, but his definition is way too broad. Haftar is a vigilante. And the predictable result of his vigilantism is to unite the others"—giving common cause to extremists and non-extremists within Libya Dawn. "It is almost as if one part of

Libya were controlled by White Russians—that's Haftar—and another part were controlled by Bolsheviks.”

Benjamin Rhodes, the deputy national-security adviser and a close confidant of Obama's, acknowledged that Libya's situation was grim. “Getting the technocrats and the guys with the guns on the same page has been very difficult,” he said. “The first task is to get them in conversation where they can receive help from us. We're doing this through a U.N. initiative, plus some quiet diplomacy behind the scenes.” He noted that there has also been occasional military action. Last June, Delta Force operatives abducted Ahmed Abu Khattala, an Ansar member who is suspected of leading the attack that killed Ambassador Stevens. Khattala is now awaiting trial in the U.S. “The trick is for us to help people get back to the point where the Libyans can achieve what their revolution was about in the first place,” Rhodes said. “But it's probably not going to happen on Washington's timeline.”

Rhodes was one of the aides who, along with Clinton, Susan Rice, and Samantha Power, helped persuade Obama to join the intervention. In spite of the chaos that followed, he stands by that decision. “We saved a lot of lives in Benghazi and the rest of the country,” he said. “If Qaddafi had gone into Benghazi, I think Libya would look more like Syria today.” He added, “What did we do wrong? Even the President would acknowledge that it's been extremely difficult to fill the vacuum in Libya. We were keen for the Libyans to take the lead. Everyone knows the dangers of a completely U.S.-owned postwar environment. We might have used a heavier hand, but there's no guarantee it would have made a difference.”

Other officials were more blunt about the limits of the intervention. The senior Administration official believed that three failures had led to the fiasco in Libya: “The lack of a single national-security apparatus, replaced by militias; a real terrorist problem, which was small but has gotten much worse; and a proliferation of arms. How does the world respond to all this? The U.N. gets a mandate, goes there, and finds out there's no one to work with—the ministries are Potemkin. The I.M.F. goes in, says what's wrong, and doesn't do much about it. The World Bank hardly does anything. Vast numbers of people came to Libya to look for contracts, but nobody got any money, so they went away. NATO tried to design a national-defense system, but the Libyans failed to engage with them. The French were going to train three thousand police. Instead, they trained thirty. Then some cadets were sent to Jordan for training, but the Jordanians kicked them out after they burned down a sports facility, because they were angry about a flight delay.” In November, the official noted, three hundred Libyan soldiers being trained in the U.K. were expelled after half a dozen of them ran amok in an English village, sexually assaulting several women and raping a man. “The Libyans defeated everyone,” he said. “It didn't matter whether you were Gandhi or Stalin. It didn't matter how hard we tried, they defeated us all.”

When I asked the official to explain the current U.S. policy toward Libya, he said, “It's a sensible one: a ceasefire, an inclusive government, no way forward but political.” He detailed the way a ceasefire might play out. “Will this work?” he asked. “Maybe, maybe not. But what I am telling you is that it is the best policy the U.S. and other Western powers can come up with.”

I spent two weeks in Libya, crossing it from east to west, and the only other Westerners I encountered were a few British security consultants and two German journalists. Everywhere I went, Libyans stared at me. Occasionally, young men asked where I was from. When I said that I was American, some joked about jihadists and the possibility of my being abducted and beheaded. At the entrance to the town of Sousa, near Derna, officials admonished my Libyan companions for bringing a Westerner there, asking, “What if something happens to him?”

Unlike many other cities and towns in Libya, Tripoli presented an image of normality. Traffic flowed, and groups of young men wearing Italian sportswear hung out drinking coffee from paper cups. Here and there, at government ministry compounds, I saw groups of bearded men with guns, but none of the tanks and battlewagons that had traversed the capital after Qaddafi's fall. Yet Tripoli's air of calm belied an underlying tension that was evident as soon as I came into contact with the men who were running things.

Just as Haftar insists, improbably, that all his opponents are terrorists, the leaders of Libya Dawn insist that there isn't a single extremist in their ranks. Jamal Zubia, the director of the foreign-media department, assured me that, until Haftar began attacking, Ansar al-Sharia was closer to a mutual-aid society than to a terrorist organization. A large, white-bearded man who returned to Libya after sixteen years in England, Zubia speaks excellent English, with a Manchester accent. "If you ask the people of Benghazi about Ansar al-Sharia, they will tell you it always does charity, it secures the hospitals, the roads," he said. "If they want a place to be secure, they will ask Ansar al-Sharia to be there."

Zubia compared the allegations that Ansar had committed terrorist acts with the Algerian military's efforts to prevent Islamists from coming to power in the early nineteen-nineties. The Algerian intelligence services had framed the Islamists, he said: "They imported a container of beards to put on and go kill people and then said they were Islamists." He added, "This is true. You can't deny it. It's on YouTube."

Zubia said, "If Haftar says he wants to fight terrorism, logic says he should go to Derna, not Benghazi. In Benghazi, they have never belonged to Al Qaeda, while in Derna, anyway, there are fifty people who say they are with ISIS." Zubia wore a derisory expression. "As for the hundreds of people Haftar says were killed in Benghazi, where is the proof? You will find that Haftar is responsible for all those killings."

Until 2005, he claimed, Haftar's family had received an annual stipend of two hundred thousand dollars from Qaddafi—"You can go on YouTube." (Haftar has acknowledged that, as a former P.O.W., he got a stipend from Qaddafi, but says that it ended in 1993.) More recently, Zubia said, Haftar had "come to Tripoli and tried to form a militia, but failed." And, he added, one of Haftar's sons had been wounded trying to rob a bank. (In fact, Haftar's son Saddam was shot by Zintani militiamen outside a bank.) Zubia described Haftar and his family as a kind of criminal enterprise. "I ask you to use your intelligence," he said.

Indisputable information is difficult to come by in Libya. Everyone feverishly monitors Web sites where pictures are posted and things proclaimed and discussed, but most of what passes for news is political propaganda, pure and simple. Dignity has a TV station, which broadcasts footage of Haftar on inspection tours of the Benghazi battlefield, set to martial music, along with gruesome clips showing the victims of the other side's violence. Libya Dawn has a similar channel, presenting the opposite view of the conflict. Each side discounts the other's reporting, and, in the absence of news, outrageous gossip is quickly accepted as fact. In a meeting near Benghazi, an economist soberly relayed to me the preposterous claim that Bernard-Henri Lévy had been paid forty million dollars to lobby for the Muslim Brotherhood's interests in Libya.

Many of Haftar's supporters in eastern Libya believe that the Muslim Brotherhood is engaged in an international conspiracy, backed by the U.S., to take over the Middle East; when I asked for evidence, the answers tended to start with Obama's June, 2009, speech in Cairo, in which he announced a "new beginning" for relations between America and the Muslim world. Haftar, in his office, speculated that this was the real reason that the U.S. was not supporting him. "Maybe it's

because of the Muslim Brotherhood,” he said. “They have a lot of clout, and a factory for producing lies.”

Perhaps the only point of agreement between Dignity and Libya Dawn is the primacy of oil in the country’s future. As the two sides have struggled for control of oil fields, production has plunged, from 1.6 million barrels per day to barely three hundred thousand. A couple of days before I met Haftar, his jets had bombed an armored column from Misrata as it advanced on facilities held by his proxies, and he described the advance as a kind of moral affront. “You will hear of our response in a few days,” he promised. Two weeks later, his MIGs carried out air strikes against Misrata’s airport. Of the Misratans, he added, “If they do anything more than they have already done, they will pay a heavy price.”

At a press conference in Tripoli, General Obeidi, Libya Dawn’s chief of staff, spoke of his troops’ efforts to “recover the oil fields” from Haftar’s forces. “We are the state,” he said. “It’s our duty to retake the fields from these bandits.” Afterward, I spoke with General Mohamed al-Ashtar, a high-ranking Libya Dawn commander, who told me that his men were advancing on the oil terminal of Ras Lanuf when they were hit by Haftar’s jets. In order to avoid damage to the facilities, he claimed, he had ordered his troops to withdraw, but now they had Haftar’s men surrounded. “We are waiting for them to answer our conditions so they can withdraw and hand over the facilities,” he said.

In the following weeks, according to the analyst Frederic Wehrey, the fight devolved into a stalemate: “fixed lines of static warfare, with both sides lobbing rockets.” As the fighting goes on, the country’s remaining oil money flows through the central bank, where it is disbursed without discrimination to militias and criminal gangs on both sides.

When I asked Ashtar how Libya’s conflict would end, he suggested that there was no choice but total victory. “There is no chance the country will split,” he said. “The country is one.”

“What about Haftar?” I asked.

“He will suffer the same fate as Qaddafi.”

Ashtar smiled, and so did his men.

Libya’s best hope of a bipartisan political solution is its constitutional assembly, in the provincial capital of Beyda, a small city of Qaddafi-era apartment blocks—unpainted concrete structures surrounded by uncollected trash. The assembly building provides an exception to Beyda’s ugliness; built in 1964, for Libya’s parliament, it is a modest domed edifice surrounded by lawns and trees. Since April, a group of assemblymen have been working there to draft a constitution; among the fifty-six members are both Dignity and Libya Dawn supporters. The president of the assembly, Ali Tarhouni, is one of the country’s most respected public figures. It is Tarhouni’s job to keep the assembly on task, and to make sure that the conflict stays outside the building.

A floppy-haired economics professor in his early sixties, Tarhouni returned to Libya from Seattle, where his family lives, in early 2011. He had not been home since 1973, when he fled Libya for the U.S. The year before he returned, he told his son, “I knew that I’d never see Libya again, and would die without returning.” But when the uprising against Qaddafi began Tarhouni agreed to join the National Transitional Council, which had been formed to steer the revolution. I met him in a safe house in Benghazi, as the first French air strikes were hitting Qaddafi’s armored column outside the city. Tarhouni spoke matter-of-factly about the events that were reshaping the country, but he smiled rapturously as he told of visiting his home town of Marj, not far from Haftar’s base.

He had forgotten how green it was, he said. When Tripoli fell, Tarhouni, who went on to serve as finance minister, exultantly told a crowd in Martyrs' Square that they were "free."

When I visited Tarhouni at his Beyda apartment one evening, he chain-smoked Marlboro Lights and reflected on what had happened in Libya. "I still can't figure out what brought us to this," he said. "We thought with the revolution we had brought about new green spring shoots, but what we came up with is thorns." Like Haftar, Tarhouni wanted most to go back to the U.S. and spend time with his family. But, when things started falling apart, he felt that he "had to do something," and agreed to head the constitutional assembly. Although he remained committed to his job, he was not optimistic that the assembly would achieve much. "To keep this group of people safe and away from the national split is a daily struggle. And, even if we come up with a constitution, what can you do with a constitution in a situation like this?" He looked dismayed. "Qaddafi was around for forty-two years—that's a really long time. One of his legacies was to show that things are settled only by force. It was the one policy he had that was constant. This created a culture of 'with or against,' and that is a problem."

Since September, a U.N. diplomat named Bernardino León, flying in a small plane from a base in Tunisia, has been shuttling between the warring factions. León told me he knew that he was running a precarious initiative, "with only one chance of success, compared with many paths to disaster." So far, he has had little luck. After early talks in Libya stalled, he announced a round in Geneva, but neither Haftar nor his foes agreed to take part. At the House of Representatives, Abubakr Buera, a senior parliamentarian, ticked off a list of unacceptable interlocutors: the Tripoli government, the G.N.C., and anyone from Libya Dawn. "If any of them come, we won't go," he said. "We don't want the international community to intervene," he added. "Now is not the right time to stop fighting. It's the solution." Even the levelheaded Ali Tarhouni reluctantly favored a resolution through combat. "A lot of people are waiting for Haftar," he said. "The only moderates in this country are the ones who are forced to be. The military situation has to mature more before the conditions are ripe for a dialogue."

In early February, representatives of the G.N.C. and the H.O.R. began new talks in Libya, but Haftar and his military opponents didn't join them. Many of Haftar's men welcome the chance for more fighting. I spoke to Colonel Abdul Raziq al-Nadori, Haftar's rough-hewn chief of staff, at a sprawling base outside Tobruk. "Dignity started because our soldiers were being slaughtered and beheaded," he said. "We had no intention of fighting our brother revolutionaries, but they joined those terrorists, so we had no choice." Like Haftar, Nadori believed that the war would have to be won in Tripoli, but he hoped that civilian casualties could be kept to a minimum, if people fled the city. He regretted the reticence in Washington. "We want good relations with the U.S. It was Qaddafi, may God not rest his soul, who prevented us from having those relations. But the U.S. sees the Muslim Brotherhood as a moderate force. We see them as snakes with smooth skin." Nadori had been trying, without success, to schedule a meeting with David Rodriguez, the head of the U.S. Army's Africa command. "There are ISIS training camps here in Libya—Rodriguez himself has said so," he told me. "So what are you waiting for? We're not asking you to bomb them. We'll do it. Just give us the military equipment and backup support we need to do the job, like you're doing in Iraq."

After Qaddafi fell, Obama appeared in the Rose Garden to congratulate the Libyan people on an "opportunity to determine their own destiny in a new and democratic Libya." Then he added an ominous disclaimer: "We are under no illusions. Libya will travel a long and winding road to full democracy." Haftar is not fighting for democracy; he is a military man at heart. But, in a country full of militias and increasingly hospitable to Islamist extremists, his offensive may yet provide a small hope for stability. If military pressure can persuade the moderate members of Libya Dawn to break with the extremists in their ranks, it might help to create two mainstream factions that are at least

willing to agree on the terms of negotiations. But, many Libyans told me, if Haftar does not prevail over the jihadists in Benghazi and Derna, the country will lurch closer to being what the British special envoy Jonathan Powell described to me as a “Somalia on the Mediterranean.”

On January 22nd, Haftar’s men made a sudden advance in Benghazi, taking over the city’s central-bank branch and most of the port. When I saw Haftar at his base, he had spoken confidently about his plan to “purify the country.” But there was more fighting ahead, and he lamented the lack of help from the United States. The aid from Egypt and the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia had been modest, and, as his army grew, its demands were outstripping supplies. “We are a very rich country,” he reminded me. “We want our people to have good homes, good schools. We had hoped for Libya to be God’s heaven on earth. But we need infrastructure, new buildings, factories. We have oil, gold, uranium, and seas of sand. We need a superpower to help us develop these things. It is impossible for Libya to stay on this planet alone.” He added, pointedly, “There are great benefits to those who stand by us in our time of need.”

When I asked about his personal ambitions, he said, “My ambitions are the people’s needs.”

“Once you’ve purified the country and it’s at peace, if the people asked you to run for President would you agree?”

“I would have no problem with that,” Haftar said, and smiled.

## Power Line

### [“It Could Be Worse for Obama. . .”](#)

by Steve Hayward

Of perhaps you can file this post under “If you’ve lost the Brookings Institution. . .”

The center-liberal Brookings Institution [reported last week](#) on the range of surveys of presidential experts (mostly liberals one can safely assume) who rank Obama as no more than middling. But Brookings decided to do their own survey of academic political scientists, and some of it is rather brutal for The One:

First, President Obama ranks 18th overall, but beneath the surface of the aggregate figures lurks evidence of significant ambivalence. For example, those who view Obama as one of the worst American presidents outnumber those who view him as one of the best by nearly a 3-1 margin. Similarly, nearly twice as many respondents view Obama as over-rated than do those who consider him under-rated. One area where there is significant *expert* consensus about the president, however, concerns how polarizing he is viewed as being – only George W. Bush was viewed as more a more polarizing president.

Next, Obama does not perform well on more specific dimensions of presidential greatness, often viewed as average or worse. For example, he is the midpoint in terms of both personal integrity and military skill (e.g., 10th of 19 in both categories), but falls to 11th when it comes to diplomatic skill and 13th with respect to legislative skill. . .

What can we take away from this? First, it is easy to infer that scholars and the public alike expected greatness from Obama early on and awarded it to him prematurely. . .

Second, scholars seem to hold Barack Obama in high regard personally, but view his skills and performance as mediocre to poor. Few think of Obama as an excellent president, while many more rate his presidency quite low. . .

It could be worse for Obama. Barring unforeseen scandal, he's unlikely to become significantly less popular. .

That closer is a real vote of confidence.

When you correct the raw data, like a climate scientist might do with a temperature reading (heh), taking into account that the surveyed academics lean decidedly to the Left, you arrive at the correct ranking, which is at the bottom of the bottom, next to James Buchanan and Jimmy Carter.

**IBD**

**Late Night**

by Andy Malcolm

Conan: Rumors that the San Diego Chargers might move to LA. The Chargers could be here for the 2016 season, or the 2017 season depending on traffic.

Meyers: A Tennessee lawmaker is pushing to make the Bible the official state book. It would replace Tennessee's current state book, the menu at Cracker Barrel.

Conan: A Glasgow man was attacked in a movie theater by three rowdy women during "Fifty Shades of Grey." The police handcuffed the women, so their plan worked perfectly.

Fallon: Congress is considering a law to allow commuters to bring their dogs and cats on Amtrak trains. It's all part of its plan to make Amtrak smell *BETTER*.

Conan: NBC suspended Brian Williams for six months without pay. But Williams is not worried. He says his veteran's benefits kick in soon.

Meyers: A Florida man was charged with possession of marijuana after police noticed a "green leafy substance" all over his sweater. But then they realized it was kale and they shot him.

Conan: Hardware stores have stocked up on rope and duct tape for the "Fifty Shades of Grey" movie. Apparently, tying up your boyfriend is the only way to get him to go.

Meyers: Harper Lee is releasing a sequel to her "To Kill a Mockingbird" 55 years later. The new book is called "Atticus Finch and the Goblet of Fire."

Conan: A new report says Colorado collected -- *get this* -- \$44 million in marijuana taxes. Unfortunately, they can't remember where they put it.

Meyers: The Northeast is being hit with another winter storm. We're being told to expect up to six voice-mails from my mom.

Conan: Charles Manson broke off the engagement to his 27-year-old fiancée. Asked why, Manson said, "Her mother is a total psycho."

Meyers: As you've heard, the "Fifty Shades of Grey" movie is out. According to online ticket seller Fandango, it beat the record for fastest selling R-rated movie in history. Well, first it tied the record, then it beat it.

Meyers: A worldwide poll of over 10,000 people finds only 1-in-10 people are OK with sex on the first date. And only one in a thousand people are okay *AT* sex on a first date.

Meyers: Obama and Biden met with Congressional black leaders. Before they went in, Obama told Biden, "Now, remember, Joe, just regular handshakes."

Meyers: The Grammys were on recently. It's the one night of the year when fans, both young and old, gather around their TV's to say, "Who is *that?*"

Fallon: Chinese Pres Xi Jinping makes his first state visit to the U.S. this fall. I'm worried it'll be awkward when he visits a school: "This factory is *TERRIBLE!*"

Meyers: Forecasters predict even more snow will hit the Northeast Thursday. So, I think we all know what we have to do: We have to kill that groundhog.

Conan: The Village People are in court battling over who wrote some of their big hits like "YMCA." It's the landmark case of "Cop versus Indian Chief."

Conan: Despite the Brian Williams lying scandal, the NBC Nightly News led in the ratings that week. Although I should note, those figures were reported by Brian Williams.

Conan: It's being reported that Samsung's new Smart TVs could be listening to your conversations. The televisions are only listening to us because they too are getting bored with "Downton Abbey."

Meyers: A woman was arrested this week after using gasoline to set on fire the car of her ex-boyfriend's new girlfriend. She faces five years in prison and up to three Country Music Awards.

Letterman: We haven't had a murder in New York City in 12 days. The ground is just too cold to dig shallow graves.

# EMPLOYMENT Agency



The STATE DEPARTMENT CLAIMS 'LACK of JOBS' BEHIND the RISE of ISIS...

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# FIFTY SHADES OF GOP



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H. Payne

"AW, TEEZ. ANOTHER GLOBAL WARMING DENIER."