

May 20, 2015

Last week we devoted some space to the president's failure to get the leadership of the Gulf Arabs to attend his summit. Another of his failures took place closer to home as the Dems in congress snubbed his trade authorization bill. Along with this defeat, he went on to display the famous presidential petulance those of us on the right have seen for the last six years. It was fun to see it turned on the Democrats. [Jonah Goldberg](#) tells the story well.

These are not good times for the Republic (and if you laughed or scratched your head at me calling America a republic, I rest my case). But they are amusing times, at least for those of us capable of extracting some measure of mirth and schadenfreude from the president's predicament. With the sand running out on the Obama presidency, it's finally dawning on the president's friends and fans that he can be a real jerk.

Consider the Washington Post's Dana Milbank. For the last six years, he's spent much of his time rolling his eyes and sneering at Republicans. His subspecialty is heaping ridicule on conservative complaints about, well, everything and anything. If it bothers conservatives, it must be irrational, partisan, churchy, fake, hypocritical — or all of the above. Meanwhile, poor Barack Obama, while not always without fault in Milbank's eyes, is the grown-up, the good guy trying to do good things amidst a mob of malcontents and ideologues.

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"Let's suppose you are trying to bring a friend around to your point of view," Milbank [writes](#). "Would you tell her she's emotional, illogical, outdated, and not very smart? Would you complain that he's being dishonest, fabricating falsehoods and denying reality with his knee-jerk response?"

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[Bill McGurn](#) has more on President Arrogant.

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To put it another way, what we had here was a "conversation" stacked in favor of liberals, moderated by a liberal, and taking place before a liberal crowd at a liberal university.

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Mona Charen calls it his "third class temperament."

Like cult members who awake to find their leader swigging gin and squirreling money into a Swiss bank account, liberals are rubbing their eyes in disbelief at President Obama's behavior. The figure they worshipped so fervently and for so long is now revealed to be a “sexist” – at least according to National Organization for Women president Terry O'Neill.

Her view is seconded by Senator Sherrod Brown (D., Ohio). They are upset about the president's derisive treatment of Senator Elizabeth Warren (D., Mass.), who committed a sin to which the president does not take kindly: She disagreed with him. For differing about the merits of the TPP trade deal, she got what everyone should already recognize as the Obama treatment — her views were caricatured and her motives were questioned. “The truth of the matter is that Elizabeth is, you know, a politician like everybody else.” Senator Brown thought the president's use of Warren's first name betokened sexism.

No, Senator Brown, that's not sexism, that's all-purpose disrespect. The president has been displaying the same condescension to world leaders, Senate majority leaders, House speakers, and everyone else since first taking office. It was always “John” and “Harry” and “Hillary” — never Speaker Boehner, Leader Reid, or Secretary Clinton. It was “Angela” and “David,” not Chancellor Merkel and Prime Minister Cameron. Can't wait to see whether, when the Pope visits in September, the president refers to him as “Jorge.” There was one exception to this rule — Obama was at pains to refer to Iran's Ali Khamenei, who has never been elected to anything, as “Supreme Leader.”

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So who is judging whom when it comes to the poor?

Enough of DC idiots. Here's a story about California idiots? You know, the state that's running out of water. **The WSJ Weekend Interview** is with a man who wanted to build a desalinization plant near San Diego. It took six years to get the permits.

... Poseidon does have a \$1 billion desalination plant slated to open this fall in Carlsbad, north of San Diego. Upon completion it will be the largest in North America, capable of producing 54 million gallons of water each day. Construction began in 2013, but first Poseidon spent six years battling 14 environmental lawsuits.

For instance, the Surfrider Foundation charged that the plant's open-ocean intakes might harm marine life, though a judge ruled that Poseidon had reasonably mitigated the threat. Mr. Riva says the intakes "entrain two to three fish eggs or larvae" for every thousand gallons of water sucked in. "Not to make value judgments about fish, but these aren't from any protected species," Mr. Riva says. "They're anchovies and things like that." He adds that environmentalists believe that "all fish life is precious, and you have to do everything to save it."

Obtaining the dozen or so permits required to build the plant was vexing as well, since regulatory authority over water in California is spread among state, federal and local agencies—the Bureau of Reclamation, the State Water Resource Control Board and the California Coastal Commission, to name a few.

"Because there are multiple agencies," says Mr. Riva, there are "multiple opportunities for intervenors to delay." The CEO is careful in his choice of words to avoid giving offense. However, what he appears to mean is that environmental obstructionists waged war on numerous fronts. Not totally without success, either: To obtain final approval from the Coastal Commission, Poseidon had to agree to restore 66 acres of wetlands and buy renewable energy credits—green indulgences.

Urged on by the Surfriders, the Coastal Commission is now gumming up Poseidon's plans to build a second plant, which has been in the planning stages for 15 years, south of Los Angeles in Huntington Beach. ...

Back to Stephe. Turns out ABC has reason to be upset. They agreed to pay him \$105 million for the next seven years. [Emily Smith](#) at NYPost Page Six has the story.

... Sources have said ABC News execs were blindsided by Stephanopoulos' largesse, and one TV insider noted Monday that "ABC really has all their money on Stephanopoulos."

"ABC was desperate to lock him down after Josh Elliott left," the source said.

"But network execs didn't announce the figure because they didn't want George to get the kind of backlash that Matt Lauer got over his huge NBC contract," which pays him \$20 million a year to host the "Today" show.

"If [Stephanopoulos] stumbles, so does the network," the source added.

When Stephanopoulos signed his contract extension in April 2014, an ABC spokesman said, "George is vital to the success of the news division and will continue to be a leader here at ABC News. We expect him to remain with us for many, many years."

Republicans have already said that Stephanopoulos' donations disqualified him from moderating a GOP primary debate, and a spokesman for one candidate, US Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), went even further on Monday. ...

Howard Kurtz writes on the sinking reputation of the press.

By failing to disclose his donations to the Clinton Foundation, George Stephanopoulos has damaged his credibility and tarnished his network.

But you know something? He's got plenty of company.

What an awful couple of years it's been for the news business, even by our already-tattered standards.

While ABC's chief anchor has landed himself in a heap of trouble, this comes at a time when NBC's chief anchor, Brian Williams, is serving a six-month suspension for fabricating an Iraq war tale and possibly embellishing other reporting exploits. And it comes weeks after Rolling Stone had to retract its horrifyingly irresponsible tale of a gang rape at the University of Virginia.

When these episodes erupt, critics carp about how this or that organization has suffered a grievous blow. What's often missed is that all of us who practice journalism suffer as well, that it reinforces public doubts about whether the business is riddled with bias and conflicts of interest.

...

National Review

Democrats Get a Taste of Obama's Arrogance

by Jonah Goldberg

These are not good times for the Republic (and if you laughed or scratched your head at me calling America a republic, I rest my case). But they are amusing times, at least for those of us capable of extracting some measure of mirth and schadenfreude from the president's predicament. With the sand running out on the Obama presidency, it's finally dawning on the president's friends and fans that he can be a real jerk.

Consider the *Washington Post's* Dana Milbank. For the last six years, he's spent much of his time rolling his eyes and sneering at Republicans. His subspecialty is heaping ridicule on conservative complaints about, well, everything and anything. If it bothers conservatives, it must be irrational, partisan, churchy, fake, hypocritical — or all of the above. Meanwhile, poor Barack Obama, while not always without fault in Milbank's eyes, is the grown-up, the good guy trying to do good things amidst a mob of malcontents and ideologues.

That is, until this month. President Obama wants to get a trade deal passed. He needs Democrats to do it. But, Milbank laments, Obama's blowing it.

"Let's suppose you are trying to bring a friend around to your point of view," Milbank writes. "Would you tell her she's emotional, illogical, outdated, and not very smart? Would you complain that he's being dishonest, fabricating falsehoods and denying reality with his knee-jerk response?"

“Such a method of a persuasion is likelier to get you a black eye than a convert,” Milbank notes. “Yet this is how President Obama treats his fellow Democrats on trade . . .”

Yes, well, true enough. But lost on Milbank is the fact that this is precisely how Obama treats everyone who disagrees with him. When Obama — who ran for office touting his ability to work with Republicans and vowing to cure the partisan dysfunction in Washington — treated Republicans in a far ruder and shabbier way, Milbank celebrated.

Of course, he was hardly alone.

Republicans, in Obama’s view, are always dishonest, fabricating falsehoods and denying reality with their knee-jerk responses.

To pick just one of countless examples, there was a White House summit on health care in 2010. The president invited members of Congress to discuss the issue in good faith. He then proceeded to treat every concern, objection, and argument from Republicans as dumb, dishonest, or emotional. They were, according to a [column](#) by Milbank, “stepping into Prof. Obama’s classroom.” Milbank marveled at how the “teacher” treated them all “like his undisciplined pupils.” Whenever someone said anything politically inconvenient, the president replied that those were just partisan “talking points.”

When Senator John McCain, his opponent in the previous election, noted that Obama had broken numerous promises and that the 2,400-page bill was a feeding trough for special interests, Obama eye-rolled. “Let me just make this point, John,” Obama said. “We’re not campaigning anymore. The election’s over.”

He responded to Senator Lamar Alexander — he called him “Lamar” — “this is an example of where we’ve got to get our facts straight.” When it was Representative John Boehner’s turn to speak, Obama reprimanded “John” for trotting out “the standard talking points” and, in the words of a palpably impressed Milbank, forced Boehner to “wear the dunce cap.”

Again, this was all quintessential Obama then, and it’s quintessential Obama now. All that has changed is that he’s doing the exact same thing to Democrats, and it’s making them sad. Specifically, he’s accused Senator Elizabeth Warren of not having her facts straight. He says she’s just a politician following her partisan self-interest.

But here’s the hilarious part: Liberals can’t take it. The president of NOW, Terry O’Neill, accused Obama of being sexist. O’Neill sniped that Obama’s “clear subtext is that the little lady just doesn’t know what she’s talking about.” She added, “I think it was disrespectful.” Both O’Neill and Senator Sherrod Brown also sniff sexism in the fact that Obama referred to Warren as “Elizabeth.”

“I think referring to her as first name, when he might not have done that for a male senator, perhaps?” Brown mused with his typical syntactical ineptness.

Of course, in that White House health-care summit and in nearly every other public meeting with Republican senators and congressmen, he referred to them all by their first names.

The great irony is that when Republicans complain about Obama’s haughtiness and arrogance, liberals accuse them of being racist. I hope I don’t miss that phase of this spat while I’m off making the popcorn.

WSJ

The Poverty Preening of Professor Obama

The president once again suggests the moral inferiority of those who disagree with him.

by William McGurn

So this is what the president means by having a “conversation.”

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To put it another way, what we had here was a “conversation” stacked in favor of liberals, moderated by a liberal, and taking place before a liberal crowd at a liberal university.

As if to underscore the point, the president and the moderator squeezed off three boorish references to House Speaker [John Boehner](#) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell—all rooted in the idea that it would take a “miracle” to get GOP leaders to care about the poor.

In its news report, the New York Times parroted the party line about a conversation: “Obama Urges Liberals and Conservatives to Unite on Poverty.” Politico captured it more honestly: “Obama calls out financiers, conservatives and churches on poverty.”

Nor were these the only ones called out. While paying lip service to the notion that those who disagree with him might in fact have hearts, Mr. Obama—rather than engage with Mr. Brooks—used the occasion to review his enemies list. It included the Republican Congress (their budgets prove they don’t care), hedge-fund managers (they take money that belongs to kindergarten teachers), the churches (they’re not committed to helping the poor because they worry too much about abortion and marriage), Fox News (it vilifies the poor) and, for good measure, parents who send their children to private schools (they are withdrawing from the “commons”).

The unifying progressive contention here is the assertion that America isn’t “investing” enough in the poor—by which is meant the government isn’t spending enough. Though President Obama did acknowledge the importance of family by defending his past criticisms of absent fathers, he went on to declare it will be next to impossible to find “common ground” on poverty until his critics accept his spending argument.

Likewise for Mr. Putnam. Though his research underscores the devastating consequences of broken families, he too focused mostly on too little government spending.

Now, leave aside the argument of whether poverty owes more to a lack of government spending or to family structure and other social breakdowns. Truth is, it’s simply false to say that Republicans won’t make the public “investments” needed to help the poor.

In New York in the 1990s, for example, Republican Mayor Rudy Giuliani not only invested in the police but sent them into the areas where they were most needed—primarily poor and minority

neighborhoods. In too many other Democratic cities, by contrast, mayors in effect cede whole neighborhoods to the thugs and gangs.

Republicans are also willing to spend on education. What they are *not* willing to do is dump ever more dollars down the same rathole of big-city public school systems that function more as jobs programs for city bureaucrats and members of the teachers unions.

While we're on the subject, note that it is the president who has tried to kill the Opportunity Scholarship program that gives poor parents in the District of Columbia the opportunity to send their children to schools such as the one where he and Michelle Obama send their own kids, the exclusive private school Sidwell Friends. Meanwhile, it is Republican John Boehner who has kept the program and public funding in place for those children who need it.

Mr. Brooks gamely tried to push back on the progressive pieties, arguing that antipoverty programs need to get past treating the poor as liabilities to be managed and start looking at poor men and women as untapped human capital. He further noted how it is the poor who suffer most when we measure programs by intentions rather than results. It would have been instructive to hear the president and Mr. Putnam explain if there is any metric they might embrace in place of what seems to be the one-size-fits-all liberal answer to any failed government anti-poverty program: increase spending.

On the flip side, it would similarly be good for Republicans to address the hard implications of their own message. If, for example, broken families are indeed driving modern American poverty, is the only answer despair—or praying for some miracle? And if you believe the government can't help but bungle something as basic as food stamps, shouldn't you bring this same skepticism to a "conservative" program that enlists the government to, say, discourage divorce or promote chastity?

Of course, this would require a genuine conversation, not a stacked stage for the president to once again parade his moral superiority as the answer to his critics.

National Review

[A Third-Class Temperament](#)

The president can scarcely manage to show respect for anyone who disagrees with him.

by Mona Charen

Like cult members who awake to find their leader swigging gin and squirreling money into a Swiss bank account, liberals are rubbing their eyes in disbelief at President Obama's behavior. The figure they worshipped so fervently and for so long is now revealed to be a "sexist" – at least according to National Organization for Women president Terry O'Neill.

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So welcome to our world, liberals. Now that your eyes are opened, take a look at the completely unjust, snide, and dishonest way Obama talked about Republicans at the Georgetown University panel on poverty a few days ago.

The most fair-mindedness Obama could muster was to say that he believes Republicans care about the poor. But this acknowledgment was quickly vitiated by his insistence that if Republicans don’t agree with him about increasing the tax on hedge-fund managers, they are insincere. If the tax rate on “carried interest” were raised, the president declared, “I” could fund universal preschool.

Um, no. The left-leaning Center for American Progress estimates that raising taxes on hedge-fund managers could bring in \$21 billion over 10 years, or a little over \$2 billion per year. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, universal preschool for all three- and four-year-olds would clock in at \$70 billion per year (not counting what we spend on existing pre-K programs). Now, I don’t give a fig about hedge-fund managers, but here’s a thought: How much would increasing their taxes *really* raise? Probably nothing. As John Carney of CNBC showed, they could take their income a different way and avoid the tax.

And really, considering what a great job the government is doing in education, why would anyone believe that universal pre-K would be successful? National Review’s Jim Geraghty notes that Baltimore’s schools spend more per pupil than those of suburban Fairfax County, Virginia, with much worse results.

It’s possible that some of those hedge-fund millionaires and billionaires might contribute money to school-choice scholarship funds and other reforms, as Ted Forstmann, Jim Barksdale, Eli Broad, Michael Dell, David Packard, the Walton family, Donald Fisher, and many others have done.

Mr. Obama flays the rich the way a compass points north, often bizarrely unaware of how he’s embarrassing himself. Regarding the bifurcation of society, he lamented that “those who are doing better and better — more skilled, more educated, luckier, having greater advantages — are withdrawing from sort of the commons — kids start going to private schools; kids start working out at private clubs instead of the public parks.” This, from a graduate of the Punahou School who sends his daughters to Sidwell Friends.

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WSJ

Slaking California's Thirst—if Politics Allows

Israel solved its water woes in five years by desalination. A CEO explains why it took him 10 years to build a single plant near San Diego.

by Allysia Finley

Israel has made the desert bloom, but the task hasn't always been an easy one. For decades, the country suffered chronic water shortages brought on by intermittent droughts amid rapid population growth—a problem only partly ameliorated by aggressive water pricing and conservation. In 2009, after five consecutive dry winters, the government water authority restricted outdoor gardening and agricultural irrigation.

By the end of this year, Israel will have completed three massive desalination plants in Ashdod, Hadera and Sorek that combined are capable of producing 100 billion gallons of potable water each year from the sea. More such projects are in the works. Next year desalination will provide about half of Israel's water—not including the roughly 80% of recycled wastewater that goes mainly to agriculture—up from zero in 2004 and about 10% in 2009. The drought ended in 2012, and Israel doesn't need to worry much about the next one. In a mere five years, desalination has turned a scarce resource into a commodity that may soon be exportable.

On the far side of the world, in another state often portrayed as a promised land of milk and honey, Californians are suffering perhaps the worst drought in a millennium. Desalination to the rescue? Carlos Riva, the CEO of Boston-based Poseidon Water, hopes so. But the same political and regulatory forces that have already exacerbated the state's water shortage are standing in the way. Mr. Riva's diplomatic way of putting it: "Water is a simple molecule, but a complex commodity."

Most of the bureaucratic effort in California is going into cutting consumption. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has turned off the spigot of water trickling from the Sierra Nevadas to farmers in the Central Valley. Gov. Jerry Brown last month ordered urban water agencies to cut usage by 6% to 36% (based on per capita consumption) and threatened \$10,000 fines against noncompliant residents and businesses. All this while the untapped Pacific Ocean glitters nearby.

Desalination technology that is "mainstream outside the U.S.," Mr. Riva says, is proving exasperatingly difficult to bring to thirsty California.

"The water industry is probably one of the last industries that is still held in traditional municipal hands," Mr. Riva notes. As a result, the "market is ultraconservative because there's nobody in the municipalities that has any motivation to take the risk with new technology."

Poseidon does have a \$1 billion desalination plant slated to open this fall in Carlsbad, north of San Diego. Upon completion it will be the largest in North America, capable of producing 54 million gallons of water each day. Construction began in 2013, but first Poseidon spent six years battling 14 environmental lawsuits.

For instance, the Surfrider Foundation charged that the plant's open-ocean intakes might harm marine life, though a judge ruled that Poseidon had reasonably mitigated the threat. Mr. Riva says the intakes "entrain two to three fish eggs or larvae" for every thousand gallons of water sucked in. "Not to make value judgments about fish, but these aren't from any protected species," Mr. Riva says. "They're anchovies and things like that." He adds that environmentalists believe that "all fish life is precious, and you have to do everything to save it."

Obtaining the dozen or so permits required to build the plant was vexing as well, since regulatory authority over water in California is spread among state, federal and local agencies—the Bureau of Reclamation, the State Water Resource Control Board and the California Coastal Commission, to name a few.

"Because there are multiple agencies," says Mr. Riva, there are "multiple opportunities for intervenors to delay." The CEO is careful in his choice of words to avoid giving offense. However, what he appears to mean is that environmental obstructionists waged war on numerous fronts. Not totally without success, either: To obtain final approval from the Coastal Commission, Poseidon had to agree to restore 66 acres of wetlands and buy renewable energy credits—green indulgences.

Urged on by the Surfriders, the Coastal Commission is now gumming up Poseidon's plans to build a second plant, which has been in the planning stages for 15 years, south of Los Angeles in Huntington Beach. Though Poseidon had obtained almost all required government permits by 2012, Mr. Riva says, the commission's approval is pending the results of an independent panel convened to study alternatives to open intakes that would better protect fish eggs and larvae. Poseidon has proposed adding one-millimeter screens, which seems to be the simplest and most cost-effective strategy.

The panel concluded after its first phase, Mr. Riva says, that the only other option is what's called a seabed infiltration gallery, built about 1,000 feet offshore. He explains: "You build these coffer dams, then excavate the seabed, put in these drains and pipes, and put other filters on top of that, and then pipe the water back to shore." While technically feasible, it's a complicated engineering feat, so now the panel is examining the environmental impact and economic practicability.

Building an infiltration gallery, Mr. Riva says, would take five to seven years and cost multiple times the price of the rest of the facility—so he expects the review will show it isn't doable. But could the commission be using this process to deal the Huntington Beach project death by regulatory review? "If people just don't want it, put us out of misery," he quips.

Environmentalists are also howling that desalination is too energy-intensive. Mr. Riva thinks these complaints are bogus: "We use less energy than one of the data centers that are being built, and nobody claims that they are somehow immoral." Plus, as he points out, the only reason anybody is even discussing desalination in California now is because it is becoming so much more efficient, thanks to technological breakthroughs like energy-recovery systems, which conserve energy the way hybrid cars do. The Carlsbad plant will use less than half as much electricity per unit of water produced as desalination plants did in the 1980s.

Such improvements are fueled by the free market. “The operators are driven to find ways to reduce the energy because that increases the profitability of these projects,” Mr. Riva says, adding that Poseidon has a profit motive to implement more-efficient filters, pumps and control systems that will reduce the cost of water—an incentive the government doesn’t have.

Mr. Riva, who used to run a biofuels company, says he considers himself an environmentalist. “But I think the concept of environmentalism has been hijacked by extreme views,” he says. “We’re bending over backwards to protect the environment here.”

Meantime, local residents and politicians in San Diego and Orange County have voiced ostensibly more justifiable concerns about desalination’s high costs. Poseidon is a closely held private company but specializes in public-private partnerships. As Mr. Riva explains, “our model is to say: We will take on the risk of development, financing, building and operation, and in exchange you take the market risk of buying our water.” This isn’t too different from how public utilities contract for electric generation.

Under the terms of the purchase agreement, the desalinated water will cost San Diegans between \$2,014 and \$2,257 per acre foot (roughly 0.6 to 0.7 cents per gallon), or about twice as much as importing water from, say, the Sierra Nevadas. “We have a 30-year contract,” Mr. Riva rejoins. “Depending on escalation rates of the imported water and CPI [consumer-price index], then the expectation is that sometime in the middle of the first decade, our water will be less expensive. There will be a crossover point.”

Even so, desalinated water from Carlsbad will cost more than twice as much per unit as it does in Israel. There are multiple reasons for this. Electricity is more expensive in California than in Israel and most of the rest of the U.S. because of a state mandate requiring that pricey renewables make up a third of electric generation by 2020. Labor is more expensive in California, too. Cumbersome regulatory requirements jack up construction costs. Israel’s Sorek plant will produce about three times as much water as the Carlsbad facility yet cost half as much to build. Both plants were designed by the same company: Israel Desalination Enterprises (IDE) Technologies.

Poseidon’s Carlsbad desalination plant will augment the San Diego region’s water supply by about 7% while increasing customers’ bills by \$5 to \$7 a month. Although residents will have to pay for the additional supply even when they don’t need it, Mr. Riva asserts that the “reliability justifies a premium.” That is, many San Diegans may consider it worth paying a bit more per month to keep their verdant yards during droughts—or have a backup water supply if an earthquake destroys canals or aqueducts that import water from the north.

“We’re talking about one of the only things that is really necessary for life. Your kids may think their phone is, but it’s not,” he says. “This is an absolute necessity in San Diego, which is a desert for life.”

The same is true of California as a whole. More than a dozen desalination projects have been proposed along the coast, but prospective developers are waiting for Poseidon to run the regulatory gantlet before moving ahead. Meanwhile, Mr. Riva says Poseidon is considering developing projects in Texas where water is also scarce—and, one presumes, where the governmental burden is lighter and environmentalists are fewer. If Poseidon can make desalination work in California, it can work anywhere.

Ms. Finley is an editorial writer for the Journal.

NY Post

[ABC's 'secret' \\$105M gamble on Stephanopoulos](#)

by Emily Smith

ABC has [plenty of reasons to be freaking out](#) over the [George Stephanopoulos](#) scandal — 105million, to be exact.

The “Good Morning America” and “This Week” anchor renewed his contract last year for \$105 million, TV industry sources told The Post Monday.

The seven-year deal — which dwarfs the five-year, \$50 million contract scored by since-suspended NBC rival [Brian Williams](#) — was supposed to keep Stephanopoulos in front of ABC's cameras through 2021.

But now his [credibility, and future, have been called into question](#) since he admitted Friday that he had [donated \\$75,000 to the Clinton Foundation since 2011](#), just as the presidential race gears up with [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) the leading Democrat.

In a mea culpa delivered Sunday on “This Week,” Stephanopoulos, who was also a top aide in President [Bill Clinton](#)'s White House, said the gifts “were a matter of public record, but I should have made additional disclosures on air when we covered the foundation.”

It was his second on-air apology in less than a week.

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“But network execs didn't announce the figure because they didn't want George to get the kind of backlash that Matt Lauer got over his huge NBC contract,” which pays him \$20million a year to host the “Today” show.

“If [Stephanopoulos] stumbles, so does the network,” the source added.

When Stephanopoulos signed his contract extension in April 2014, an ABC spokesman said, “George is vital to the success of the news division and will continue to be a leader here at ABC News. We expect him to remain with us for many, many years.”

Republicans have already said that Stephanopoulos' donations disqualified him from moderating a GOP primary debate, and a spokesman for one candidate, US Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), went even further on Monday.

“Senator Paul believes that Stephanopoulos' ties to the Clintons makes it impossible for him to be a fair reporter,” spokesman Sergio Gor said.

“He has avoided being on his program for over a year and will continue to do so.”

Democrats, meanwhile, were going easy on the hobbled host and his cash connections to Hillary Clinton.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who is Hillary Clinton's only declared primary opponent, told CNN that Stephanopoulos "should have made [his donations] public," but added that the scandal wasn't "the biggest deal in the world."

A spokeswoman for former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley, who is flirting with a presidential run, said, "We've always found him to be fair."

Fox News

George Stephanopoulos, Brian Williams and the media's sinking reputation

by Howard Kurtz

By failing to disclose his donations to the Clinton Foundation, George Stephanopoulos has damaged his credibility and tarnished his network.

But you know something? He's got plenty of company.

What an awful couple of years it's been for the news business, even by our already-tattered standards.

While ABC's chief anchor has landed himself in a heap of trouble, this comes at a time when NBC's chief anchor, Brian Williams, is serving a six-month suspension for fabricating an Iraq war tale and possibly embellishing other reporting exploits. And it comes weeks after Rolling Stone had to retract its horrifyingly irresponsible tale of a gang rape at the University of Virginia.

When these episodes erupt, critics carp about how this or that organization has suffered a grievous blow. What's often missed is that all of us who practice journalism suffer as well, that it reinforces public doubts about whether the business is riddled with bias and conflicts of interest.

This was true back when Janet Cooke committed her fraud at the Washington Post. It was true when Stephen Glass was making up a bunch of articles at the New Republic. It was true when I exposed the serial fabrications of Jayson Blair at the New York Times and Jack Kelley at USA Today. It was true when CBS had to retract Lara Logan's "60 Minutes" story on Benghazi. And it's true every time there's a new instance of plagiarism.

We all make mistakes, myself included, and how you handle those mistakes is crucial. Stephanopoulos didn't realize he couldn't be giving money to the family foundation of the guy he used to work for, whose wife is running for president, especially when he was covering the uproar over its tangled finances. But he also misjudged the negative reaction, and his initial statement apologized only for the lack of disclosure. A day later, he realized he had to apologize on camera, and for making the \$75,000 donations as well. The former White House official also bowed out of ABC's Republican presidential debate (although his hand may have been forced by GOP demands to yank the debate from the network).

When Williams was found to have invented the story of being shot at in a helicopter over Iraq, he issued a botched apology and said he'd be taking a few days off. Only later did NBC launch an investigation and remove him from "Nightly News" for six months.

Some of this gets caught up in the ideological wars, as liberals would surely include Mother Jones' account of exaggerated talk about reporting by Bill O'Reilly, who has vehemently denied the allegations and denounced the accusers.

The crux of Stephanopoulos' problem is that he's never fully been able to shake his partisan past as a Clinton Democrat—and deepened that wound by giving money to the one charity that should have been off-limits to him.

Of course, the cable networks have hired plenty of political operatives (David Axelrod, Robert Gibbs, Jay Carney, Karl Rove), but they're in the commentary business. And of course some people have made the transition from politics to straight news.

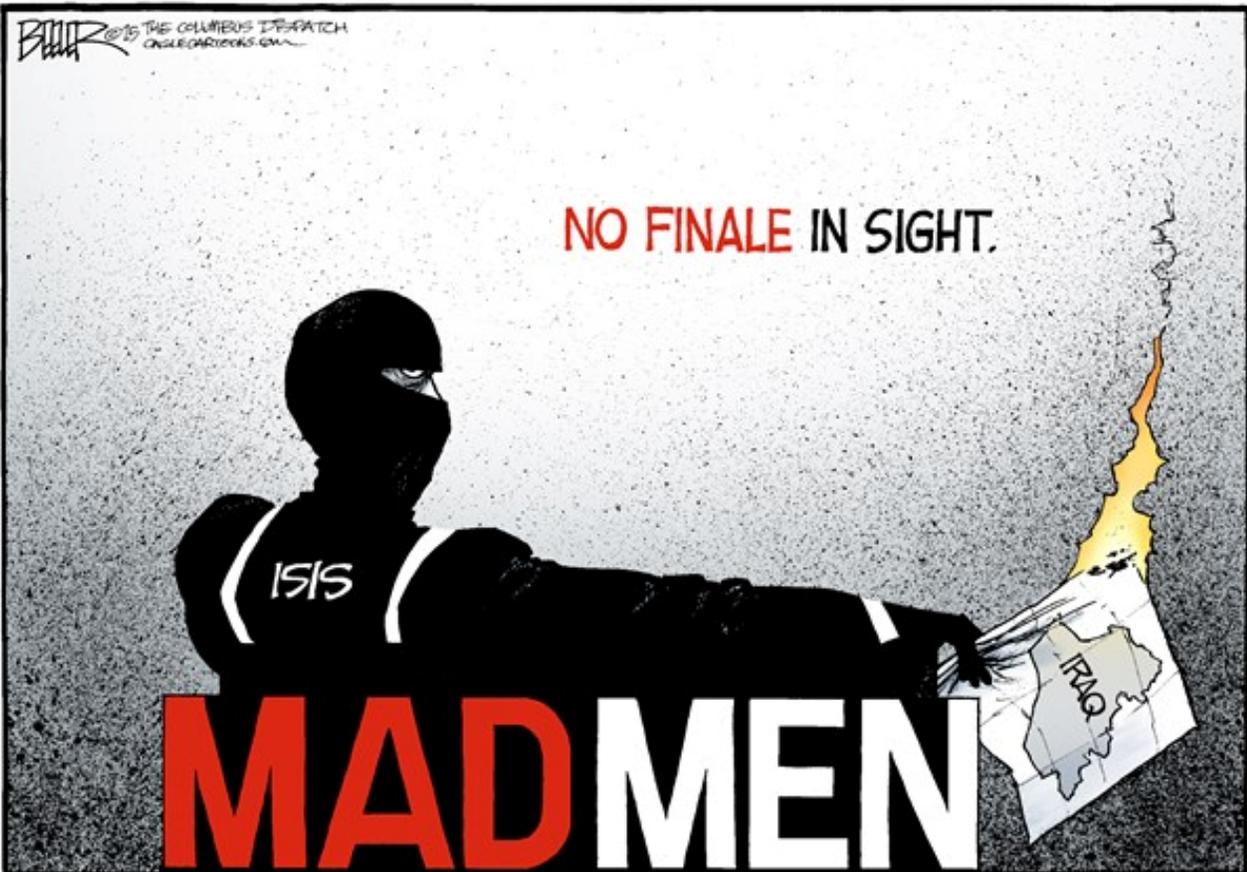
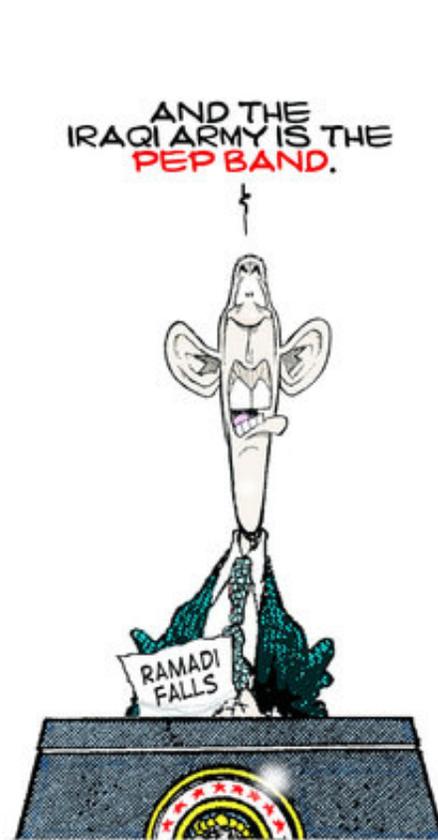
Tim Russert, who worked for Mario Cuomo and Pat Moynihan, did it, but he was an NBC executive before taking over "Meet the Press" and was famously tough on both sides. Tony Snow had been a speechwriter for George H.W. Bush before eventually taking over "Fox News Sunday"—and, of course, leaving to become Bush 43's press secretary.

As someone who started interviewing Stephanopoulos in 1992, I can say that it takes a long time for a former political adviser to win the audience's trust as a journalist—and just a short time to lose it. Viewers will have to judge in the future whether George is being as unbiased as possible, but they've already rendered their verdict on the mainstream media.





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