

August 25, 2015

We've had three days of postings without mention of the DC creeps, but now it is time to return to their monkey business. Joshua Muravchik starts us off with his article on the Iran agreement.

How might the United States end up in a boots-on-the-ground shooting war with Iran?

This is the specter that President Obama summons when he warns that congressional rejection of his nuclear agreement with Iran would lead to “some form of war . . . if not tomorrow . . . then soon.” But it is Obama’s deal itself that is more likely to lead to such a regrettable outcome. It is all but guaranteed to make a region that is already convulsed in violence, thanks to Obama’s strategy of reducing America’s presence, that much more violent. ...

... There are other scenarios in which the current violence in the Middle East will redouble thanks to Iran’s imperial appetite being whetted by its new nuclear status. Tehran might stir up Kuwait’s sometimes restive Shiite minority which amounts to one-third of the population. More Sunnis may be impelled to view ISIS and al Qaeda as necessary shock troops against surging Shiite power. The consequent infusions of money and volunteers could bring these fanatics new conquests in Iraq, Syria, Libya, the Sinai, and perhaps elsewhere. Israel might be confronted with its largest war since 1967, pitting it against Hamas and Hezbollah and even Iranian forces. The distraction of mounting Middle Eastern violence might embolden Vladimir Putin to new steps toward his goal of reassembling the USSR, perhaps devouring more of Ukraine or even attempting a go at Latvia or Estonia, using their large Russian minorities as a pretext as in Ukraine.

Any of these scenarios could draw the United States into just the kind of briar patch that President Obama says he wants to avoid. He mocks his critics as warmongers, but it is his ill-conceived policy that is most likely to get us into a war.

Rick Richman is next.

To appreciate the key paragraph in Senator Bob Corker’s Washington Post op-ed opposing the Iran deal, you need to review his extemporaneous remarks at the August 5 hearing of the Senate Banking Committee – addressed to both the witness, Under Secretary Wendy Sherman, and to his Democratic colleagues. Corker was one of the few Republican senators who did not sign Senator Tom Cotton’s letter to Iran, and he worked across the aisle to craft the Congressional review of the deal. On August 5, he spoke first to the Democratic senators sitting there: “I want to say that I think Senator Donnelly, Senator Heitkamp, Senator Warner, Senator Tester, Senator Schumer, Senator Menendez all know that I have been very open to supporting an agreement.” Then he recounted a Saturday phone conversation he had had the previous month with Secretary of State Kerry, when “I actually thought he was listening to what I was saying.” ...

David French writes on the president's misguided view of the world.

... If more than six years of Obama’s foreign policy have taught us anything, it’s that he’s thoroughly adopted the academic Left’s view of America’s international troubles — the view that such troubles are largely America’s own fault. Our Islamic-supremacist enemies, this thinking goes, exist because we and our allies have marginalized the dissenting, “authentic” voices of the Middle East in favor of propping up oppressive, unrepresentative secular dictators in the

region. By switching sides from such “establishment” dictators to the “authentic” voice of the region’s people, we can bring these dissenters into the international community, deprive terrorists of recruits, and usher in a new era of international relations. The truly extreme holdouts — the “tiny few” who are irredeemable terrorists — can then eventually be dealt with by international law enforcement.

Obama’s foreign policy fits this thinking to a tee: In Libya, he and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton helped depose Moammar Qaddafi by transforming allied squadrons into the jihadist militias’ air force. In Egypt, Obama and Clinton quickly threw longtime American ally Hosni Mubarak under the bus and wrapped both arms around the short-lived Muslim Brotherhood government, sending American taxpayer-funded F-16s and M1 Abrams tanks to Egypt even as the Brotherhood violated the Camp David accords and forged closer ties with Hamas. In Gaza, the administration has consistently condemned Israeli acts of self-defense (though Israel uses tactics often more restrained than those dictated by America’s rules of engagement) and presented cease-fire proposals more in line with Hamas’s demands than Israel’s needs. In Syria, the administration came dangerously close to deploying American pilots as al-Qaeda’s air force to help topple the Assad regime. ...

Noah Rothman posts on the effects of the current occupant.

Many of those blinkered political commenters who allowed themselves to be swept up in the diaphanous hysteria that resulted in Barack Obama’s presidency convinced themselves that he was a change agent of divine wisdom. A “lightworker,” as the San Francisco Gate’s Mark Morford called him. They said Obama would restore America’s faith in the United States, in government in general, and even in ourselves. “That campaign restored a faith in politics that most of us thought we had lost,” gushed The Hill’s Niall Stanage. “America has restored the world’s faith in its ideals,” The Guardian averred without evidence. Seven years later, it’s clear that the effects of Obama’s presidency have not been to restore but to sap faith in the American system. We have so little reverence for the order bequeathed to us by the nation’s enlightened founding generation, in fact, that we deface it with adolescent acts of directionless defiance.

The presidency that was allegedly destined to repair the damage Bush did to the credibility of the federal government has only quickened the pace of America’s disaffection with politics. Today, the three co-equal branches of the federal government inspire confidence in only a handful of Americans. The media, organized labor, banks, schools, and big business, too, are no longer trusted. Among government-run enterprises, only the police and the military retain the trust of a majority of American citizens — a dangerous place for any civilian-led republic to find itself. Even on the matter of racial comity, a perpetual sore spot for most Americans, Obama has not lived up to his transcendental promise. In fact, the state of racial tensions in the Obama era makes the Bush presidency look like a utopian epoch characterized by ethnic harmony. The Obama presidency has failed on a variety of fronts, but its most injurious may be the ruinous effect it has had on faith in the republican experiment itself. ...

From a misguided president to a misguided pope. **Michael Rubin** posts on how free markets help the poor; contrary to the opinions of the anti-capitalist pope.

... In contrast, countries like Pope Francis’ birthplace of Argentina, Cuba, and Venezuela increasingly condemn their population to greater poverty as they punish initiative and constrain

economic freedom. These may be extreme examples, but remember that until the 1970s, the North Korean economy was arguably as strong if not stronger than South Korea's, but now has fallen exponentially behind. Poland has emerged from decades of socialist repression to become a growing powerhouse: drive across the border into Belarus, and the juxtaposition could not be greater. Talk of social justice is too often rhetorical crack. It may make proponents feel good and it can be addictive to the self-righteous and those genuinely seeking to do good, but it can be very corrosive to health, happiness, and holistic prosperity.

Will gaps between rich and poor exist? Certainly. And do many persons who consider themselves poor resent those who have more? Absolutely. But recent history shows that those who generate wealth—even if they make far more than the mean—often repair economies and reduce poverty in ways that decades and centuries of well-meaning rhetoric and talk of social justice have not. Pope Francis and his supporters most certainly would not consider themselves as ‘hating’ the poor, but if they did, they could do nothing better than embrace the sort of liberation theology that retarded economic growth in some Latin American countries, as others prospered and grew their middle class. Conversely, if Pope Francis wants to help the poor, let's hope he'll delve more deeply into economics and history to separate fact from fiction, and use his soap box to encourage more capitalist investment and less state intervention. That is the key to poverty reduction, and it deserves holy support.

Weekly Standard

Obama's Nuclear Deal is the Most Likely Path to War

by Joshua Muravchik

How might the United States end up in a boots-on-the-ground shooting war with Iran?

This is the specter that President Obama summons when he warns that congressional rejection of his nuclear agreement with Iran would lead to “some form of war . . . if not tomorrow . . . then soon.” But it is Obama's deal itself that is more likely to lead to such a regrettable outcome. It is all but guaranteed to make a region that is already convulsed in violence, thanks to Obama's strategy of reducing America's presence, that much more violent. The administration virtually acknowledges this by suddenly promising all our regional allies vast new transfers of weapons to allay their anxieties about his Iran deal.

When he warns of “war,” clearly Obama does not mean merely a U.S. air campaign against Iran's nuclear facilities (as I and a few others have openly espoused) for by that token he has embroiled us already in “wars” in Iraq, Syria and Libya. Rather, he means to evoke the image of a protracted, bloody struggle, like what we faced in Iraq last decade. What scenarios could lead to that?

The United States and other democracies have gotten into wars more often by excess dovishness that has tempted expansionist dictators to overreach than by the hawkish “mindset” that Obama cited as having gotten us into Iraq and would somehow do likewise in Iran. The best-known example is the policy of appeasement that paved the way to World War Two. But

something analogous led to World War One, when England's announced aversion to fighting on the European continent emboldened the German military; and to the Korean War which was preceded by U.S. declarations that the Korean peninsula lay outside America's "defense perimeter"; and to the 1990-91 Gulf War when U.S. ambassador April Glaspie told Saddam Hussein: "We have no opinion on your Arab – Arab conflicts."

In today's Middle East the principal expansionist power is Iran. Through Hezbollah it already largely controls Lebanon and as much of Syria as is still ruled by Damascus. It is also the sole backer of the Houthi movement that now dominates Yemen, and it is the most influential outside force in Iraq.

Iran's ambitions go much farther. In a speech in March, Ali Younesi, an advisor to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and a former minister of intelligence, gloated that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had "acknowledged . . . Iran's might and influence" by saying that "Iran has taken over four countries." But, Younesi corrected, "Iran was only trying to help" them. He added that, likewise, Iran would "support all the people living in the Iranian plateau, and we will defend them." He defined this plateau as stretching "from the borders of China and the Indian subcontinent to the north and south Caucasus and the Persian Gulf." (Translation by MEMRI.) If this sounds grandiose, recall that Ayatollah Khomeini viewed the birth of the Islamic Republic of Iran as but the first shot in a worldwide Islamic revolution.

Obama's nuclear agreement will stoke Iran's ambitions in three ways. First, the lifting of sanctions will provide Tehran an infusion of funds, estimated by some experts as \$150 billion although Obama puts the figure at \$56 billion by counting only the sums of Iranian money frozen in foreign banks, not any of the new profits and investments that will be undammed. Whatever the number, it means billions for Iran's Revolutionary Guards and its proxies (as well as the apparatus of domestic repression). Second, the agreement will assure that Iran can make nuclear weapons sooner or later. Even a delay of ten years means little in a region where rulers often hold power for thirty and the sense of historical drama sweeps over millennia in a way that it is hard for us denizens of the new world to understand. Iran's looming nuclear power will begin at once to generate power shifts as well as threats, accommodations and counteractions. Third, Iran and its proxies feel they have won a victory over the West. Iran secured "more than what was imagined," boasted President Rouhani, while the leader of Hezbollah's bloc in Lebanon's parliament exulted that thanks to the nuclear agreement, "Iran is now a superpower" that has "succeeded in humiliating the world's ruling powers."

All this means Iran will grow more daring and aggressive, perhaps leading to more direct conflict with its archrival, Saudi Arabia, whose alarm at the nuclear deal may well equal Israel's although it is expressed less volubly. Already Tehran and Riyadh are at war in Yemen, in part through proxies but also with their own forces. There are numerous imaginable flashpoints at which this could intensify. Iran's Yemeni allies, tutored by Hezbollah, could strike on Saudi territory. Bahrain's restive Shiite majority could rise against their Sunni monarch and Saudi forces would intervene, but now an emboldened Iran, which claims Bahrain as its own territory, might take action on the other side. In Saudi Arabia itself, Iran has in the past stirred revolt among the Shiite minority, ten percent of the population concentrated in the east where the oil is. In short, a more direct and violent Iranian-Saudi confrontation is easily imaginable. The United States, which sent half a million soldiers to rescue Kuwait from Iraq, would do anything in its power to defend Saudi Arabia from Iran.

There are other scenarios in which the current violence in the Middle East will redouble thanks to Iran's imperial appetite being whetted by its new nuclear status. Tehran might stir up Kuwait's sometimes restive Shiite minority which amounts to one-third of the population. More Sunnis

may be impelled to view ISIS and al Qaeda as necessary shock troops against surging Shiite power. The consequent infusions of money and volunteers could bring these fanatics new conquests in Iraq, Syria, Libya, the Sinai, and perhaps elsewhere. Israel might be confronted with its largest war since 1967, pitting it against Hamas and Hezbollah and even Iranian forces. The distraction of mounting Middle Eastern violence might embolden Vladimir Putin to new steps toward his goal of reassembling the USSR, perhaps devouring more of Ukraine or even attempting a go at Latvia or Estonia, using their large Russian minorities as a pretext as in Ukraine.

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Joshua Muravchik is a distinguished fellow at the World Affairs Institute.

Contentions

[Not Just a Bad Deal — A ‘Sheer Fantasy’](#)

by Rick Richman

To appreciate the key paragraph in [Senator Bob Corker’s Washington Post op-ed opposing the Iran deal](#), you need to review his extemporaneous remarks at the [August 5 hearing](#) of the Senate Banking Committee – addressed to both the witness, Under Secretary Wendy Sherman, and to his Democratic colleagues. Corker was one of the few Republican senators who did not sign Senator Tom Cotton’s letter to Iran, and he worked across the aisle to craft the Congressional review of the deal. On August 5, he spoke first to the Democratic senators sitting there: “I want to say that I think Senator Donnelly, Senator Heitkamp, Senator Warner, Senator Tester, Senator Schumer, Senator Menendez all know that I have been very open to supporting an agreement.” Then he recounted a Saturday phone conversation he had had the previous month with Secretary of State Kerry, when “I actually thought he was listening to what I was saying.”

I was standing in my driveway, and I emphasized the importance of these last pieces [of negotiations]. And I’m talking about the inspections. I’m talking about the ... possible military dimensions [PMD]. We all know they’re involved militarily. And how important that was, not just from the standpoint of what it said, but the indication to us — that we were really going to apply these things, that we were really going to be tough and make this agreement stand.

And when I got the documents – and I’ve been through all of them extensively – I have to say my temperature rose very heavily. And then when I saw that we were lifting the conventional ban in five years, the missile ban in eight years, and on the front end, lifting the missile test ban on top of what these agreements said, I was very troubled. ...

I was very discouraged with the final round ... But I worked with Senator Cardin, my friend – I began with Senator Menendez – over an excruciating period of time to make sure that the way this agreement, the Iran Review Act, we got the documents, and we got them in a way that was acceptable to y’all. We spent all weekend with you, the White House, and others on this Iran Review Act, and we were to get all agreements, including the side agreements. Now, the very

entity that we're counting on to do the inspection – we can't even get a copy of the side agreement that lays out how we're gonna deal with Parchin. And I would say to everyone here, if you haven't been down to the Intel area you ought to see what Iran is doing today, while we're sitting here, in Parchin. ...

We can't even see the agreement that relates to how we're gonna deal with the PMD. By the way, all sanctions relief occurs regardless of what they do with the PMD. All the IAEA has to write is a report. But if they "D-Minus" it, meaning they don't tell us much ... sanctions relief still occurs. ... [T]hese issues that we have been so concerned about, we saw they were just punted on, negotiated away, issues that we, with great sincerity, talked with the administration about, and yet they were just punted on.

At that time, Senator Corker had not yet met privately with IAEA Director General Amano, or in executive session with Under Secretary Sherman, where he was promised oral explanations – but no documents – regarding the IAEA agreements with Iran. Corker's statement today contains a revealing conclusion about what senators learned from those sessions:

[T]he inspections process is deeply flawed. Through verbal presentations regarding possible military dimensions, many in Congress are aware of the unorthodox arrangements agreed to by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the administration and our negotiating partners to keep from upsetting Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Those actual agreements remain secret, but we know that at best they are most unusual and speak to the P5+1's low commitment to holding Iran's feet to the fire.

At the same hearing, [Senator Cotton questioned Under Secretary Sherman](#) about why the documents are classified: "This is not a U.S. government document, it's not a covert action, it's not subject to sensitive collection methods of our intelligence community, Iran knows what they agreed to, you know what's in [them] ... [and] U.S. law that was in fact signed in the middle of these negotiations required Congress to receive the text of all agreements, to include agreements to which the United States was not a party." Sherman emphasized how important it is to safeguard confidential IAEA agreements with all countries. But the real reason may have been revealed in this colloquy:

COTTON: How long are these documents?

SHERMAN: Very short.

COTTON: Like the Roadmap itself?

SHERMAN: I'd have to stop and think back, but it's very short.

The "[Road-map For the Clarification of Past and Present Outstanding Issues Regarding Iran's Nuclear Program](#)," with its reference to the two secret "separate arrangements," is set forth on the IAEA website (you can also [watch the smiling Iranians at the signing ceremony](#) on YouTube). So we know exactly how long the Roadmap is: 398 words.

Perhaps what is most noteworthy about the side agreements is not the allegedly confidential nature of them, but the fact that they are scandalously short. At the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on August 4 regarding the Iran deal, there was this colloquy between Ambassador Robert Joseph, who headed the negotiations with Libya in 2003 that dismantled Libya's nuclear program, and Senator Corker:

JOSEPH: [I]n terms of what may or may not be in these secret agreements, my sense is that if these agreements did provide for a real way forward on PMD and on Parchin you'd see them.

CORKER: They'd be on the table.

JOSEPH: You'd see them. Why, you know, after four years of stonewalling on these issues by Iran, we for whatever reason could think that these are going to be resolved by a couple of side agreements and they're going to be resolved by mid-December? My view is that's just sheer fantasy.

Sheer fantasy, but under the Roadmap the fantasy will play out until the IAEA issues its report on December 15 – two months after Congress must vote on the deal.

National Review

The Iran Deal and Obama's Fatally Misguided View of the World

By David French

It's increasingly clear that the key terms of the Iran deal — the terms that deal in any way with verifying Iranian nuclear activity, past and present — are a joke. As the text of a side agreement released released by the AP yesterday confirms, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will actually rely on Iran to inspect itself at the crucial Parchin nuclear site, providing "mutually agreed" upon photos, videos, and environmental samples to IAEA monitors. And the deal's broader monitoring regime eschews "anytime, anywhere" inspections in favor of a process that provides Iran written notice of requested access to suspicious sites, followed by a weeks-long dispute-resolution process that *still* won't guarantee such access is granted.

Put plainly, under the terms of the deal, Iran makes promises that it does not have to keep. In exchange, it receives sanctions relief, access to international arms markets, and the ability to build ballistic missiles. This isn't a nuclear agreement, it's an economic treaty — an economic treaty almost perfectly designed to advance President Obama's very particular worldview.

If more than six years of Obama's foreign policy have taught us anything, it's that he's thoroughly adopted the academic Left's view of America's international troubles — the view that such troubles are largely America's own fault. Our Islamic-supremacist enemies, this thinking goes, exist because we and our allies have marginalized the dissenting, "authentic" voices of the Middle East in favor of propping up oppressive, unrepresentative secular dictators in the region. By switching sides from such "establishment" dictators to the "authentic" voice of the region's people, we can bring these dissenters into the international community, deprive terrorists of recruits, and usher in a new era of international relations. The truly extreme holdouts — the "tiny few" who are irredeemable terrorists — can then eventually be dealt with by international law enforcement.

Obama's foreign policy fits this thinking to a tee: In Libya, he and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton helped depose Moammar Qaddafi by transforming allied squadrons into the jihadist militias' air force. In Egypt, Obama and Clinton quickly threw longtime American ally Hosni Mubarak under the bus and wrapped both arms around the short-lived Muslim Brotherhood government, sending American taxpayer-funded F-16s and M1 Abrams tanks to Egypt even as the Brotherhood violated the Camp David accords and forged closer ties with Hamas. In Gaza,

the administration has consistently condemned Israeli acts of self-defense (though Israel uses tactics often more restrained than those dictated by America's rules of engagement) and presented cease-fire proposals more in line with Hamas's demands than Israel's needs. In Syria, the administration came dangerously close to deploying American pilots as al-Qaeda's air force to help topple the Assad regime.

The pattern keeps repeating itself. When it comes to Mideast unrest, the administration repeatedly backs the more Islamist "street" over the more secular establishment. But what if the Islamic supremacists *are* the establishment? Then, the administration stands with the Islamists. American arms flowed to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood government, but deliveries were frozen for months after the world's largest political protests helped eject the Brotherhood from power, replacing it with a government dedicated to fighting jihadists. Similarly, America stood by as Iran's mullahs crushed the Green Revolution, missing a chance to depose a decades-old enemy regime. Obama believes there can't be peace until the Islamists are mainstreamed.

Yet the president refuses to understand the supremacists. They don't want to *join* the Family of Nations, they want to *be* the Family of Nations. No one claims America's Middle Eastern policy has been perfect. We've made our share of mistakes in the region. But the theology of Islamic supremacy goes back to the founding of Islam, and its list of grievances predates the discovery of the New World, much less American "meddling" abroad.

Obama woos, and the mullahs laugh. In fact, they don't even disguise their hatred of the United States as they chant "Death to America" and vow to continue their policies of terror and aggression. Obama is saving his most desperate gamble — the greatest test of his worldview — for the end of his presidency. He wants to mainstream the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the hopes that they will subsequently mainstream themselves, in essence becoming a religiously devout, Muslim version of the famous "Coexist" bumper sticker.

Thus, Iran's unenforceable promises aren't truly part of the nuclear deal — they're the pretext for normalizing relations, for embracing Iran in the hopes that it will embrace us back. The Islamic Republic of Iran has been ostracized and marginalized. Like any good university leftist, Obama wants to be inclusive. And for a time it just might look like Iran returns our embrace — right until we feel the knife in our back.

Contentions

The Joke's on Us

by Noah Rothman

Many of those blinkered political commenters who allowed themselves to be swept up in the diaphanous hysteria that resulted in Barack Obama's presidency convinced themselves that he was a change agent of divine wisdom. A "lightworker," as [the San Francisco Gate's Mark Morford called him](#). They said Obama would restore America's faith in the United States, in government in general, and even in ourselves. "That campaign restored a faith in politics that most of us thought we had lost," [gushed The Hill's Niall Stanage](#). "America has restored the world's faith in its ideals," [The Guardian averred](#) without evidence. Seven years later, it's clear that the effects of Obama's presidency have not been to restore but to sap faith in the American system. We have so little reverence for the order bequeathed to us by the nation's enlightened founding generation, in fact, that we deface it with adolescent acts of directionless defiance.

The presidency that was allegedly destined to repair the damage Bush did to the credibility of the federal government has only quickened the pace of America's disaffection with politics. Today, the three co-equal branches of the federal government [inspire confidence](#) in only a handful of Americans. The media, organized labor, banks, schools, and big business, too, are no longer trusted. Among government-run enterprises, only the police and the military retain the trust of a majority of American citizens – a dangerous place for any civilian-led republic to find itself. Even on the matter of racial comity, a perpetual sore spot for most Americans, Obama has not lived up to his [transcendental promise](#). In fact, the state of racial tensions in the Obama era makes the Bush presidency look [like a utopian epoch characterized by ethnic harmony](#). The Obama presidency has failed on a variety of fronts, but its most injurious may be the ruinous effect it has had on faith in the republican experiment itself.

Americans' disregard for the value of the governing institutions that serve as the country's foundational structures is evident in how the voting public has approached the coming presidential election. Thus far, the process has been a joke, and the public has treated it like one.

On the Republican side of the ledger, the most accomplished and electable field of presidential candidates in living memory has been overshadowed by the all-consuming umbra that is Donald Trump. The celebrity candidate's act — and it is an act — has thus far centered on offering only the vaguest of policy prescriptions, touting his own supreme awesomeness, and [insulting anyone](#) who dares to criticize him. Trump has said that Jeb Bush “has to like the Mexican illegals because of his wife,” who happens to be Hispanic. He has accused George W. Bush of milking veterans groups and of delivering “boring” speeches. He has called Lindsey Graham an unemployable “stiff,” John Kerry a “baby,” Jonah Goldberg a “dummy,” and Charles Krauthammer a “clown.” Trump's insult comic routine rivaling that of Robert Smigel's slight-slipping puppet, Triumph, has found a substantial and devoted audience of Republican primary voters. If politics and the presidency is a joke, this wounded group of conservatives reason, why not exalt a clown?

Republicans are not the only jaded types who are eagerly abandoning reason amid a summer of discontent. The Democratic Party's prohibitive presidential nominee and the anointed successor to Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, is embroiled in a controversy that would have scuttled the political prospects of a lesser deity. When confronted with the fact that the FBI, which recently seized the illicit and vulnerable server on which she housed “Top Secret” documents, discovered that much of that information was intentionally scrubbed in order to shield it from investigators, Clinton tried to turn the whole affair into a jest.

On Tuesday, Fox News correspondent Ed Henry asked Clinton if she had any knowledge of why her server was wiped of data, to which Clinton flippantly [replied](#), “What? Like with a cloth or something?” It wasn't the first time she had insulted the nation's intelligence by dismissing the investigation into her careless stewardship of American national security secrets in service to the “convenience” and privileges to which she was accustomed. “You may have seen that I recently launched a Snapchat account,” Clinton told a roomful of supporters this week. “I love it. Those messages disappear all by themselves.” Quite the knee-slapper — at least, for those who regard this kind of overt and unapologetic contempt for the public trust humorous.

Even America's polling firms are getting in on the gag. The Democratic pollster Public Policy Polling has apparently embraced [its image as an intentionally proactive](#) source of fodder for standup comics rather than a scientific research outlet. That firm was spectacularly successful in that endeavor recently after it began survey testing the vulgarly named fictitious candidate “Deez Nuts.” They were perhaps surprised to learn that they successfully tricked [9 percent of](#)

[North Carolina voters](#) into supporting the make-believe independent candidate in a recent poll. The jest sparked the composition of hundreds of giddy headlines in which prurient journalists, titillated by the naughtily named candidate, reveled in their unearned sense of superiority over the misled survey respondents and mocked the uninformed voter who has yet to tune into the political process.

All of this cynicism is both trite and toxic. It is a tedious sort of juvenile rebelliousness that sees no value in the most resilient and vibrant political system man ever devised. We're not talking about satire here – even if any of it were clever. We're talking about stakeholders – candidates, pollsters, and political parties that have skin in the game – making light of the American system in order to capture the prevalent mood of alienation and apathy. But that dark and self-destructive mood is not one that deserves to be captured; it should be repudiated and dispelled, not incubated. It's a republic only so long as we can keep it, and there is a vocal minority who appears increasingly indifferent to its longevity. What's worse, there is an influential set in positions of authority who apparently feel the same way.

Contentions

[Opposition to Capitalism, Even From a Pope, Hurts the Poor](#)

by Michael Rubin

While Pope Francis' upcoming visit to the United States will be seized upon as an opportunity to critique capitalism, it would be far better if it were used to show how opposition to economic freedom does the poor great harm.

Emphases vary from pope to pope. Pope John XXIII (r. 1958-1963) wrote the [Pacem in Terris](#), an encyclical seeking nuclear non-proliferation. Pope Paul VI (r. 1963-1978) is perhaps best known for his condemnation of “artificial” [birth control](#). And Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) is known best for his [subtle role](#) in eroding the grip of communism and totalitarianism in the Eastern Bloc.

Pope Francis, the first pope born outside of Europe since the eight century, has made [rectifying poverty](#) and the fight against climate change his two major issues. Let's put climate change aside for the time being, and focus on poverty eradication.

Francis seems to believe that the cause of poverty and inequity is capitalism. As Kevin Clarke, a senior editor and chief correspondent at *America* magazine [wrote](#) in the *Washington Post*:

Those whose hearts beat a little faster during bedtime stories of 19th century laissez faire capitalism should buckle up when Francis comes to Washington. “An unfettered pursuit of money rules,” he said in Bolivia, leading to a benighted planet, poisoned with the “dung of the devil.” Not exactly subtle. But sometimes Pope Francis has to play prophet and say the hard things that might awaken first world consciences... He has come not to profess socialism, but to proclaim a social moral principle: that a just economic order—one well within our reach—is one that serves people and protects the earth, not one that exhausts people and creation as disposable economic inputs.

And here is *The New Yorker* on the pope's economic philosophy:

...[He] has a vision of the Church as an institution that acts for, and on behalf of, the dispossessed—a vision that owes a lot to Saint Francis of Assisi, the thirteenth-century Italian who renounced his inheritance to tend to the poor. In Buenos Aires, Bergoglio's latest biographer, Paul Vallely, reminds us in his new book about the Pope, he was known as "Bishop of the Slums." On taking Francis's name and entering the Vatican, he said he wanted "a poor Church, and for the poor." Of course, the poor have long been with us, and Catholic priests and lay workers the world over have long made great exertions on their behalf. All too often, though, this charitable work has coexisted with a Church hierarchy that studiously avoided critiquing the political and economic system that generates poverty and inequality. And when such a critique did emerge from within the Church, during the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies, in the form of "liberation theology"—a doctrine that placed helping the poor and oppressed front and center—the Vatican stamped down on it, with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who eventually became Pope Benedict XVI, playing a prominent role. Pope Francis seems intent on revisiting this debate. In the part of the exhortation devoted to economic matters, which runs to about twenty pages, he resurrects, and appears to endorse, many of the themes of liberation theology.

When the pope appears to exhort governments reduce poverty by increasing safety nets and other big-government solutions, what he actually proposes might be hemlock for poverty reduction. After all, wealth—across the board—has increased tremendously in proportion to free market reforms. Between 2001 and 2011, upwards of 700 million people [escaped deep poverty](#), most of which live in Africa. Indeed, nine of the world's 20 [fastest growing economies](#) are in sub-Saharan Africa. If the time period considered is increased by a decade, than capitalism has empowered well over a billion, as China and other countries in East Asia rode a capitalist wave to relative prosperity.

In contrast, countries like Pope Francis' birthplace of Argentina, Cuba, and Venezuela increasingly condemn their population to greater poverty as they punish initiative and constrain economic freedom. These may be extreme examples, but remember that until the 1970s, the North Korean economy was arguably as strong if not stronger than South Korea's, but now has fallen exponentially behind. Poland has emerged from decades of socialist repression to become a growing powerhouse: drive across the border into Belarus, and the juxtaposition could not be greater. Talk of social justice is too often rhetorical crack. It may make proponents feel good and it can be addictive to the self-righteous and those genuinely seeking to do good, but it can be very corrosive to health, happiness, and holistic prosperity.

Will gaps between rich and poor exist? Certainly. And do many persons who consider themselves poor resent those who have more? Absolutely. But recent history shows that those who generate wealth—even if they make far more than the mean—often repair economies and reduce poverty in ways that decades and centuries of well-meaning rhetoric and talk of social justice have not. Pope Francis and his supporters most certainly would not consider themselves as 'hating' the poor, but if they did, they could do nothing better than embrace the sort of liberation theology that retarded economic growth in some Latin American countries, as others prospered and grew their middle class. Conversely, if Pope Francis wants to help the poor, let's hope he'll delve more deeply into economics and history to separate fact from fiction, and use his soap box to encourage more capitalist investment and less state intervention. That is the key to poverty reduction, and it deserves holy support.



The Self-Inspection Process

EYE ON THE PRIZE



If I had a cat



**he would look
like Cecil**

ARMY 19/2015 THE STATE UUGLICK-DEE

AH-CHOO!

