

March 24, 2016 - PRESIDENT DILETTANTE

We haven't visited with President Dilettante for a few weeks. We'll start with [Kate Banlon's](#) post on how he screwed up Egypt policy. Featured here is an interview with Robert Gates, former Secretary of Defense, who claims the president went against the advice of the "entire national security team" during the Egyptian coup that ousted Hosni Mubarak. Once this administration is out of power we can expect more of this in a coming "year of the long knives" as we will learn much more about this administration's foreign policy mistakes.

In a preview clip of a Fox News special called "Rising Threats — Shrinking Military," former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told Bret Baier that the president went against the advice of the "entire national security team" during the Egyptian coup that ousted the country's president, Hosni Mubarak, in 2013.

According to Gates, Obama called for Mubarak's immediate removal despite his national security team urging him to be cautious.

"Literally, the entire national security team recommended unanimously handling Mubarak differently than we did," Gates said. "And the president took the advice of three junior backbenchers in terms of how to treat Mubarak. ..."

Along this line, we have a [USA Today](#) article about a Bill Clinton speech knocking Obama's "awful legacy."

Former President Bill Clinton, stumping on behalf of his wife in Washington state on Monday, urged people to vote for Hillary Clinton "if you believe we've finally come to the point where we can put the awful legacy of the last eight years behind us."

It was not initially clear if it was an unintended gaffe or something he meant to say, but it didn't take long for Republicans to seize on it and post the clip to YouTube. Here's the full quote: ...

How does he always manage to get it wrong? [Matthew Continetti](#) has an answer. *Russia announces the withdrawal of its forces from Syria. The decision is a surprise—President Obama is shocked. This is a feeling he experiences often.*

He was astonished when Vladimir Putin intervened in the Syrian conflict in 2015. He was startled when ISIS conquered a fair portion of Mesopotamia in 2014. He was jarred when Putin invaded Crimea, and launched a proxy war in eastern Ukraine that same year. Rogue states pursue policies contrary to what Obama the Wise sees as their self-interest, and the presidential response never varies. He is stunned. He is saddened. He is sanguine.

Bewilderment happens when reality dispels illusions. I used to think President Obama's illusions were simply the product of his ideology, of his faith in the universality of human reason, in the idea of historical progress, of his ambivalence toward American power. But after reading Jeffrey Goldberg's epic, absorbing, revealing interview with the president in The Atlantic, I have come to a different conclusion. It's not just ideology that drives Obama's cluelessness. It's narcissism. ...

... His international background, son of a Kenyan and a Kansan, who spent time in Indonesia and Pakistan, is why Obama declared himself a “citizen of the world” in his 2008 Berlin speech. And his personal familiarity with Islam inspired him to deliver the Cairo speech in 2009, when as Goldberg puts it, “he spoke about Muslims in his own family, and his childhood years in Indonesia, and confessed America’s sins even as he criticized those in the Muslim world who demonized the U.S.”

Seven years later, the Greater Middle East that Obama sought to reshape by his mere appearance and oratory is a dumpster fire. *State collapse, sectarian war, slavery, crucifixion, beheadings, chemical warfare, genocide characterize the region. The foreign leader who has most consistently outwitted him, Vladimir Putin, enjoys free rein in Eastern Europe and Syria. And the region of the world to which Obama hoped to “pivot”—here too for partly biographical reasons—is engulfed in a deepening territorial dispute between China and the nations it bullies.*

Confidence is one thing. But Obama is more than confident. He’s narcissistic. He looks at the world and sees nothing but his reflection: rational, cool, unmoved, and always right. When reality surprises him, it’s not because he’s in error. It’s because Putin or Assad or the mullahs have failed to live up to the standards he’s set for them. Forget about them being true to themselves. They’re not being true to Barack Obama. And Barack Obama, lest we forget, is all that matters.

More like that from [Caroline Glick](#) of the Jerusalem Post as she reviews all his disasters.

... As an intelligent man, as the consequences of these four policy lines began smacking him in the face, Obama could have been expected to change course. George W. Bush for instance changed his foreign policy stance from one of sparing internationalism before September 11 to democratic interventionism in its aftermath. And when his democratic interventionism failed in Iraq, he abandoned it in favor of a more traditional realist approach.

Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter were also quick to change their policies when they were faced with evidence they had failed. Ronald Reagan changed his policy for bringing down the Soviet Union from one of confrontation to one based on cooperation when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power.

In other words, unlike his recent predecessors Obama has never shifted gears. He has never found fault with his judgment. He has never revisited a decision.

It is easy to chalk this up to arrogance. Obama is certainly one of the most arrogant leaders the US has ever had – if not the most arrogant president in US history. But given his intelligence, it is hard to escape the impression that Obama’s epic arrogance, which makes it impossible for him to admit failure, is just as much of a style preference as a character trait. That is, arrogance, like coolness and “Spockian” rationalism, is an attitude that he has adopted on purpose.

What that purpose may be is indicated by the consistent strands of his foreign policy. Obama’s belief in America’s moral turpitude, his eagerness to trample US credibility, reject traditional US policy goals; his refusal to see the dangers inherent in his radical policies or acknowledge their failures let alone accept responsibility for their failures, and his trampling of US allies while appeasing its enemies all point to Obama’s true doctrine.

Disasters cling to him everywhere. [Babalu Blog](#) reports on 200 Cuban dissidents rounded up the day before his visit.

Cuba's apartheid Castro dictatorship continues to enjoy the empowerment and impunity that Obama's Hope and Change Cuba policy has so generously bestowed upon them. Lacking any concern or fear of reprisals from the White House, Cuban State Security hunted down and arrested more than 200 peaceful dissidents on the day before Obama's arrival to the island.

In a normal world with a normal American president, vile and heinous actions such as these would bring serious consequences to Cuba's repressive regime. But this is neither a normal world nor do we have a normal president. Obama will continue with his "fun" trip to apartheid Cuba, comply with the demands of his dictatorial hosts, and the best anyone can hope for is a vague reference to human rights conveyed in a few mumbled and incoherent words that no doubt will also be delivered with a qualifier that the U.S. has a human rights problem as well. ...

Then we learn from the [Weekly Standard](#) he thinks he has the world's largest carbon footprint. Someone will have to tell President Narcissist it is the American presidency that has the large footprint. He just happens to be the current occupant.

*President Obama once "ruefully" admitted to staff that he personally is the planet's largest source of carbon emissions, according to an anecdote published in *The Atlantic*.*

The brief aside was mentioned by author Jeffrey Goldberg in a passage about the burden of Obama's worldwide travel arrangements. ...

Not to be outdone in imperial trappings, [Free Beacon](#) reports one Joe Biden night in Mexico City for him and his staff ran up hotel bills of \$538,528.

Vice President Joe Biden's hotel tab for his recent one-night stay in Mexico City cost taxpayers more than \$500,000.

Biden, who attended an annual economic summit with Mexican leaders, stayed at the luxury Intercontinental Presidente Hotel. Biden led a delegation attending the summit that included Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker, Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, and Interior Secretary Sally Jewell.

The trip called for 260 hotel rooms and meeting spaces, according to a State Department contract. The total hotel tab was \$538,528.65. ...

Turning our attention to the president's Mid-East debacles, [Glenn Reynolds](#), law prof, has a powerful prescient perceptive post on the failures of President Che's Iraq bugout. Prescient because it proceeded by one day ISIS attacks in Belgium. Follow the link to be treated to Joe Biden claiming Iraq to be one of the great successes of this administration and a whole series of Democrats claiming Saddam Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction.

Without much fanfare, Obama has dramatically reversed his Iraq policy — sending thousands of troops back in the country after he declared the war over, engaging in ground combat despite initially promising that his strategy “will not involve American combat troops fighting on foreign soil.” Well, they’re on foreign soil, and they’re fighting.

It would have been easier — and would have cost far fewer lives — if we had just stayed. But Obama had to have a campaign issue.

And I suppose I should repeat my Iraq War history lesson: Things were going so well as late as 2010 that the Obama Administration was bragging about Iraq as one of its big foreign policy successes. ...

When the Tea Party showed up lots of people were critical and dismissive. People like Obama cheerleader David Brooks. Glenn Reynolds, in his USA Today column says Brooks is getting the Trump he deserves.

.. In San Francisco, too, tea party protesters met pro-Obama activists and picked up their trash. "John," author of The City Square blog wrote: “As Obama supporters moved along in the line to get into the fundraiser, they left behind an impressive amount of trash ... Tea Partiers shouted ‘pick up your garbage’ and ‘this is San Francisco, what about recycling?’ There was no response. They chanted ‘Obama leaves a mess.’ Still no response. Eventually, a tea partier (wearing the black cowboy hat) crosses over and starts to pick up the trash on his own. Other tea partiers join him. Another manages to find a trash bag. Soon the trash is being collected.”

Yet the tea party movement was smeared as racist, denounced as fascist, harassed with impunity by the IRS and generally treated with contempt by the political establishment — and by pundits like Brooks, who declared “I’m not a fan of this movement.” After handing the GOP big legislative victories in 2010 and 2014, it was largely betrayed by the Republicans in Congress, who broke their promises to shrink government and block Obama’s initiatives.

So now we have Trump instead, who tells people to punch counterprotesters instead of picking up their trash.

When politeness and orderliness are met with contempt and betrayal, do not be surprised if the response is something less polite, and less orderly. Brooks closes his Trump column with Psalm 73, but a more appropriate verse is Hosea 8:7 “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.” Trump’s ascendance is a symptom of a colossal failure among America’s political leaders, of which Brooks’ mean-spirited insularity is only a tiny part. ...

Charles Krauthammer compares and contrasts Belgium and Cuba in a NewsBusters post.

*Fox News contributor, frequent Special Report panelist, and syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer was given his own segment on Tuesday night’s Fox News Channel (FNC) show in light of the Islamic terror attacks in Brussels and he used his airtime to berate President Obama for his “**ideological holiday trip**” to communist Cuba “**while the world burns.**”*

Further, he chalked the President's Cuba trip in light of the Brussels attacks to the latest illustration of the disconnect between **"the real world"** and Obama's **"fantasy world he inhabits where Cuba is of some geopolitical significance."**

Host Bret Baier brought Krauthammer on just after the 6:14 p.m. Eastern mark and he first mentioned that the President devoted only **"51 seconds of his speech today in Havana"** to the horrifying events hours later across the Atlantic.

During that speech, Krauthammer opined that **"the whole story of his presidency and its foreign policy was seen in the split-screen"** with **"video footage of the attack in Belgium"** that marked **"the real world"** on one end with **"Obama in the fantasy world he inhabits where Cuba is of some geopolitical significance"** at the other. ...

Rich Lowry writes on the president's Che moment.

President Barack Obama inadvertently found the perfect photo-op for his Cuba visit at a wreath-laying ceremony at the Jose Marti Memorial in Havana.

A news photo at Revolution Square caught Obama standing together with American and Cuban officials, with an enormous mural of the iconic revolutionary Che Guevara looming over his shoulder on the adjacent Ministry of the Interior building.

Che is, of course, ubiquitous on dorm-room walls and T-shirts in the United States, and a hero of the Cuban revolution. He also was a coldblooded killer who set up the Cuban gulag and presided over summary executions of political prisoners (trials were, per Che, "an archaic bourgeois detail"). No doubt, he would have been astonished at the Yanqui president coming to Revolution Square to pay his respects -- and exceedingly pleased.

President Obama's trip is self-consciously historic. As the president's introducer at an event at the U.S. Embassy put it, Obama often said, "Yes, we can," and now we can say, "Yes, we did."

But did what? The trip ensures that the first visit to Cuba by an American president in almost 90 years will be part of Obama's legacy, and seeks to make his opening to Cuba, announced in December 2014, irreversible. If that means extending credibility and a financial lifeline to a Castro regime that has no intention of reforming, so be it.

The regime made it clear that it wouldn't bother with maintaining a pretense of relaxing its grip with the arrest of protesters at a march of the dissident group Ladies in White while President Obama was en route to the country. A reporter with a government news outlet told The New York Times that he and colleagues had been warned not even to discuss Obama's visit with friends. ...

The Blaze

[Former Defense Secretary Says Obama Went Against the 'Entire National Security Team' on Egypt Coup](#)

by Kate Scanlon

In a preview clip of a Fox News special called “Rising Threats — Shrinking Military,” former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told Bret Baier that the president went against the advice of the “entire national security team” during the Egyptian coup that ousted the country’s president, Hosni Mubarak, in 2013.

According to Gates, Obama called for Mubarak’s immediate removal despite his national security team urging him to be cautious.

“Literally, the entire national security team recommended unanimously handling Mubarak differently than we did,” Gates said. “And the president took the advice of three junior backbenchers in terms of how to treat Mubarak. One of them saying, ‘Mr. President, you gotta be on the right side of the history.’ And I would be sitting there at the table, and I’d say, ‘Yeah, if we could just figure that out, we’d be a long way ahead.’”

USA Today

[Bill Clinton knocks 'awful legacy' of last 8 years](#)

by Donovan Slack

Former President Bill Clinton, stumping on behalf of his wife in Washington state on Monday, urged people to vote for Hillary Clinton “if you believe we’ve finally come to the point where we can put the awful legacy of the last eight years behind us.”

It was not initially clear if it was an unintended gaffe or something he meant to say, but it didn’t take long for Republicans to seize on it and post the clip to YouTube. Here’s the full quote:

“I literally from the time I met her 45 years ago ‘til we talked yesterday, she is the best change-maker I have ever known. She always finds a way to make something good happen, to make people feel empowered, to buy people into the process, to make democracy work the way the framers intended for it to work.

Now, if you don’t believe we can all grow together again, if you don’t believe we’re ever going to grow again, if you believe it’s more important to re-litigate the past, there may be many reasons that you don’t want to support her.

But if you believe we can all rise together, if you believe we’ve finally come to the point where we can put the awful legacy of the last eight years behind us and the seven years before that when we were practicing trickle-down economics and no regulation in Washington, which is what caused the crash, then you should vote for her because she’s the only person who basically had good ideas will tell you how she’s going to pay for them, can be commander in chief and is a proven change maker with republicans and democrats and independents alike.”

Free Beacon

President Obama Is a Political Narcissist

Ego, not ideology, is why he's always surprised by world events.

by Matthew Continetti

Russia announces the withdrawal of its forces from Syria. The decision is a [surprise](#)—President Obama is shocked. This is a feeling he experiences often.

He was astonished when Vladimir Putin intervened in the Syrian conflict [in 2015](#). He was startled when ISIS conquered a fair portion of Mesopotamia [in 2014](#). He was jarred when Putin invaded Crimea, and launched a proxy war in eastern Ukraine that [same year](#). Rogue states pursue policies contrary to what Obama the Wise sees as their self-interest, and the presidential response never varies. He is stunned. He is saddened. He is sanguine.

Bewilderment happens when reality dispels illusions. I used to think President Obama's illusions were simply the product of his ideology, of his faith in the universality of human reason, in the idea of historical progress, of his ambivalence toward American power. But after reading Jeffrey Goldberg's epic, absorbing, revealing [interview with the president in *The Atlantic*](#), I have come to a different conclusion. It's not just ideology that drives Obama's cluelessness. It's narcissism.

If there is a theme to Goldberg's article, it is this: Barack Obama knows better. He knows better than the "foreign policy establishment" that his team snidely dismisses as controlled by Jewish and Arab money. He knows better than the elected leaders of Great Britain, France, and Israel, and the monarchs of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, of whom he is so contemptuous. (Angela Merkel of Germany, Goldberg reports, is "one of the few foreign leaders Obama respects.") And he knows better than his critics, whose arguments he pores over in obsessive detail, coming up with explanations, rebuttals, and straw men to dismiss them.

Why does Obama know better? Not out of any intense study of or reflection on diplomatic and world history and international relations theory. Not because he served in the military or in the diplomatic corps or held senior posts in government prior to election as president. What graces Obama with superior insight and prudence is the simple fact of his own existence. He is his own proof of his superiority.

Goldberg tells us about one of Benjamin Netanyahu's visits to the states. "The Israeli prime minister launched into something of a lecture about the dangers of the brutal region in which he lives, and Obama felt that Netanyahu was behaving in a condescending fashion, and was also avoiding the subject at hand: peace negotiations." So Obama interrupted him.

"Bibi, you have to understand something," Obama said. "I'm the African-American son of a single mother, and I live here, in this house. I live in the White House. I managed to get elected president of the United States. You think I don't understand what you're talking about, but I do."

Now, Barack Obama is a tremendously accomplished man. He is clearly very intelligent and well read, he graduated from Columbia and Harvard, he is the author of two highly praised books and will no doubt write many more in the years to come, he went from nothing to president of the United States in less than a decade, he has outfoxed his Republican opponents at nearly every turn. But his reply to Netanyahu is a colossal *non sequitur*, a category error of enormous proportions. It makes absolutely no sense.

In what mental universe other than the president's does being raised in Hawaii and Indonesia and spending adulthood rising through the academy and U.S. political institutions grant someone a deep (or even superficial!) understanding of Zionism, of the Holocaust, of four wars for survival over 25 years, of unending terrorist violence directed toward civilians, of hijackings and kidnappings and bombings and stabbings, of SCUD attacks from Iraq, rockets from Lebanon and Gaza, incitement and de-legitimization campaigns from Tehran? Conversely, what in President Obama's life story leads him to comprehend the Palestinians, addicted to enmity and resentment and violence, victims of institutional collapse and official corruption, awash and adrift in the worst movements of the last 100 years from nationalism to socialism to pan-Arabism to Islamic fundamentalism?

Note the reverse snobbery when Obama tells Netanyahu, "*You* think I don't understand what you're talking about, but I do." (My emphasis.) Maybe the elected leader of an American ally was doing nothing more than trying to explain his view of his region and the source of his reluctance to comply with the president's demands. Or does Obama actually believe that buried in every disagreement with him is an assumption of his inferiority, disrespect for his heritage and upbringing? If that were the case, then it would be next to impossible to challenge his authority. One would be acting always in bad faith. Which is exactly what he so often accuses his opponents of doing.

This idea of Barack Obama's existential power, this notion that his very being is what gives him empathy with and moral authority over the world, has gripped the president and his supporters from the beginning. "What does he offer?" asked Andrew Sullivan [in December 2007](#). "First and foremost: his face. Think of it as the most effective potential rebranding of the United States since Reagan." His international background, son of a Kenyan and a Kansan, who spent time in Indonesia and Pakistan, is why Obama declared himself a "[citizen of the world](#)" in his 2008 Berlin speech. And his personal familiarity with Islam inspired him to deliver the Cairo speech in 2009, when as Goldberg puts it, "he spoke about Muslims in his own family, and his childhood years in Indonesia, and confessed America's sins even as he criticized those in the Muslim world who demonized the U.S."

Seven years later, the Greater Middle East that Obama sought to reshape by his mere appearance and oratory is a dumpster fire. State collapse, sectarian war, slavery, crucifixion, beheadings, chemical warfare, genocide characterize the region. The foreign leader who has most consistently outwitted him, Vladimir Putin, enjoys free rein in Eastern Europe and Syria. And the region of the world to which Obama hoped to "pivot"—here too for partly biographical reasons—is engulfed in a deepening territorial dispute between China and the nations it bullies.

Confidence is one thing. But Obama is more than confident. He's narcissistic. He looks at the world and sees nothing but his reflection: rational, cool, unmoved, and always right. When reality surprises him, it's not because he's in error. It's because Putin or Assad or the mullahs have failed to live up to the standards he's set for them. Forget about them being true to themselves. They're not being true to Barack Obama. And Barack Obama, lest we forget, is all that matters.

Jerusalem Post
[The Obama Doctrine, unplugged](#)
by Caroline B. Glick

It was ironic that the day *The Atlantic* monthly published what was supposed to be the definitive work on US President Barack Obama's foreign policy, Russian President Vladimir Putin

announced that he was removing the bulk of his military forces from Syria.

Jeffrey Goldberg's long profile titled, "The Obama Doctrine," sought to define the theoretical underpinning of Obama's foreign policy. Goldberg devoted the bulk of his twenty thousand-word corpus to analyzing Obama's policies in Syria, where, he offered, Obama finally broke free from foreign policy community's constraints, and set out on his own course.

Reading Obama's view of Putin the same day the Russian leader surprised the US in announcing his decision to immediately withdraw Russian forces from Syria was instructive.

Putin, Obama sneered, is "constantly interested in being seen as our peer and working with us, because he's not completely stupid. He understands that Russia's overall position in the world is significantly diminished. And the fact that he invades Crimea or is trying to prop up [Syrian President Bashar] Assad doesn't suddenly make him a player."

Moreover, Obama said, Putin's decision to deploy his forces to Syria would have no impact on Russia's global influence."

"The notion that somehow Russia is in a stronger position now, in Syria or in Ukraine, than they were before they invaded Ukraine or before he had to deploy military forces to Syria is to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of power in foreign affairs, or in the world general. Real power means you can get what you want without having to exert violence."

Although they sound smart, Obama's statements were utter hogwash.

By sending his forces to Syria, Putin not only secured Russia's military bases in Syria for the foreseeable future. Putin vastly improved Russia's international position – and did so at America's expense.

Putin exposed the emptiness of Obama's global leadership in the campaign against ISIS. Among other things, Putin called Obama's bluff by threatening US combat jets with his air defense batteries.

Rather than confront Putin for his refusal to deconflict his forces from US fighter craft, Obama ordered US forces to end manned aircraft sorties in the area around Russia's air defenses and reduced the vaunted US anti-ISIS campaign to drone strikes. In other words, he allowed Russia to create a no-fly zone against the US Air Force.

Obama's readiness to stand back and allow Putin to replace America as the superpower power broker in the Middle East isn't all that surprising. In his conversations with Goldberg, Obama derided the need **(to)** uphold America's commitments.

Obama's first open move to upend America's global credibility – what Goldberg refers to as his "liberation day," came on August 30, 2013. That day, Obama decided not to attack Syrian regime targets in retaliation for Assad's use of chemical weapons gas against Syrian civilians in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta on August 21. Some 1,400 people were reportedly murdered in the strike.

"The moment Obama decided not to enforce his redline and bomb Syria," Goldberg wrote, "he broke with what he calls, derisively, 'the Washington playbook.'" Obama told Goldberg, "I'm very proud of that moment," when he shuffled off the "overwhelming weight of conventional wisdom and the machinery of our national-security apparatus."

Just as the foreign policy establishment – including Obama’s advisers and cabinet secretaries – was mortified by his decision to trample on US credibility that day, so its members remain flummoxed by his refusal to deal seriously with the growing threat that ISIS poses to key US interests.

Goldberg gave voice to that frustration by citing a conversation he had with Secretary of State John Kerry.

Obama stubbornly maintains that unlike his view of climate change, which he believes is a “potential existential threat,” ISIS does not represent “an existential threat to the United States,” Kerry in contrast is certain that ISIS is a first order strategic threat.

ISIS, Kerry intoned, “is a threat to everybody in the world.”

It is “overtly committed to destroying people in the West and in the Middle East.

“Imagine what would happen if we don’t stand and fight them... [Y]ou could have allies and friends of ours fall. You could have a massive migration into Europe that destroys Europe, leads to the pure destruction of Europe, ends the European project, and everyone runs for cover and you’ve got the 1930s all over again, with nationalism and fascism and other things breaking out. Of course we have an interest in this, a huge interest in this.”

Goldberg didn’t mention when Kerry made those remarks, but they are more a description of reality than a warning of things to come. Every month 100,000 Syrians make their way to Europe. Popular opposition to this deluge of Islamic migrants – nearly none of whom has experience with Western liberal culture – is fomenting the rise of nationalist forces in country after country, as the success of Germany’s far right AfD party in Sunday’s regional elections made clear.

But Obama remains unmoved. As he sees it, the threat that racist Americans will respond to the threat of ISIS with racism directed against Muslims is greater than the threat that ISIS poses to the US, its allies and the global order.

And this brings us to the heart of the principles that guide Obama’s foreign policy.

Goldberg, like others who have come in contact with Obama over the years, admires his emotional detachment, his “coolness,” or what Goldberg views as his “Spockian” rationality – after Star Trek’s Mr. Spock.

Obama, in other words, is cool, calm and collected.

He works with this head. He’s smart and calculating.

So why then is his foreign policy so destructive? Why has he allowed – indeed enabled – Russia to return to the Middle East for the first time since the 1970s? Why has he allowed the ISIS cancer to grow? Why has the man who entered office promising to eradicate nuclear weapons paved the way for Iran to acquire them? Why has Obama allowed ISIS and Assad use chemical weapons at will? Why did he overthrow Muammar Gaddafi and then do nothing to prevent ISIS from taking over large swaths of Libya? Why has he alienated and repeatedly undercut every US ally in the Middle East and many US allies in Europe? None of this seems very smart.

To understand what Obama wants, it is important to note the four consistent strands of Obama's foreign policy that appeared throughout Goldberg's article.

First, from the opening days of his presidency, Obama has continuously stressed what he views as America's moral flaws and its unfitness and unworthiness to serve as the world's most powerful nation. Although Goldberg noted that Obama grudgingly came to acknowledge that America is the indispensable nation, he also showed Obama's resentment of that state of affairs and Obama's keen interest in restraining American power.

For instance, Obama told Goldberg, "One of the reasons I am so focused on taking action multilaterally where our direct interests are not at stake is that multilateralism regulates hubris."

Obama, Goldberg explained, "consistently invokes what he understands to be America's past failures overseas as a means of checking American self-righteousness."

"We have history," Obama told him. "We have history in Iran, we have history in Indonesia and Central America. So we have to be mindful of our history when we start talking about intervening, and understand the source of other people's suspicions."

The second consistent aspect of Obama's policies is that he consistently rejects securing the traditional goals of US foreign policy – opposing US enemies, siding with US allies, preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, to US enemies.

Not only does Obama oppose traditional policy goals such as preventing Russia from competing with the US in the Middle East. Obama insists that the US is incompetent to implement them successfully and that US allies are wrong to expect the US to side with them against their common enemies.

Third, Obama has consistently refused to see the dangers of the policies that he has adopted and blames others when the dangers materialize and his policies fail.

For instance, whereas the US intelligence community opposed overthrowing Gaddafi, Obama told Goldberg that the intelligence community failed to tell him how unstable Libyan society was.

While Obama famously referred to ISIS as "the jayvee team," and has refused to take serious steps to destroy the genocidal group, Obama blames the US military for misinforming him about the potency of the ISIS threat.

Finally, Obama has consistently undercut US allies in his attempts to appease US enemies. The obvious example of this is his ill-treatment of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel throughout his tenure in office. But in his conversations with Goldberg, Obama viciously attacked the leaders of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, France and Britain. All of them exhibited varying degrees of unworthiness of his support as he embarked on policy trajectories they viewed as threatening and counterproductive.

As an intelligent man, as the consequences of these four policy lines began smacking him in the face, Obama could have been expected to change course. George W. Bush for instance changed his foreign policy stance from one of sparing internationalism before September 11 to democratic interventionism in its aftermath. And when his democratic interventionism failed in Iraq, he abandoned it in favor of a more traditional realist approach.

Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter were also quick to change their policies when they were faced

with evidence they had failed. Ronald Reagan changed his policy for bringing down the Soviet Union from one of confrontation to one based on cooperation when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power.

In other words, unlike his recent predecessors Obama has never shifted gears. He has never found fault with his judgment. He has never revisited a decision.

It is easy to chalk this up to arrogance. Obama is certainly one of the most arrogant leaders the US has ever had – if not the most arrogant president in US history. But given his intelligence, it is hard to escape the impression that Obama's epic arrogance, which makes it impossible for him to admit failure, is just as much of a style preference as a character trait. That is, arrogance, like coolness and "Spockian" rationalism, is an attitude that he has adopted on purpose.

What that purpose may be is indicated by the consistent strands of his foreign policy. Obama's belief in America's moral turpitude, his eagerness to trample US credibility, reject traditional US policy goals; his refusal to see the dangers inherent in his radical policies or acknowledge their failures let alone accept responsibility for their failures, and his trampling of US allies while appeasing its enemies all point to Obama's true doctrine.

Babalu Blog

[More than 200 dissidents rounded up and arrested in Cuba one day before Obama's arrival](#)

by Alberto de la Cruz

Cuba's apartheid Castro dictatorship continues to enjoy the empowerment and impunity that Obama's *Hope and Change* Cuba policy has so generously bestowed upon them. Lacking any concern or fear of reprisals from the White House, Cuban State Security hunted down and arrested more than 200 peaceful dissidents on the day before Obama's arrival to the island.

In a normal world with a normal American president, vile and heinous actions such as these would bring serious consequences to Cuba's repressive regime. But this is neither a normal world nor do we have a normal president. Obama will continue with his "fun" trip to apartheid Cuba, comply with the demands of his dictatorial hosts, and the best anyone can hope for is a vague reference to human rights conveyed in a few mumbled and incoherent words that no doubt will also be delivered with a qualifier that the U.S. has a human rights problem as well.

[The report via 14yMedio in *Translating Cuba*:](#)

More than 200 Activists Arrested Throughout the Island



Jose Daniel Ferrer, leader of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU)

14ymedio, Havana, 19 March 2016 — The arrests of 209 activists is the final result this Saturday, a day on which several opposition groups demanded the release of political prisoners. The majority of those arrested are members of Unión Patriótica de Cuba (Cuban Patriotic Union, UNPACU), according to a statement to *14yMedio* by its general coordinator, José Daniel Ferrer.

The bulk of the arrests took place in the eastern provinces and in the special municipality of Isla de la Juventud (the Island of Youth, formerly the Island of Pines) when the activists demanded publicly “the release of political prisoners, respect for human rights and the end of repression against the Ladies in White,” stated the activist formerly imprisoned following Cuba’s Black Spring.

Other activists were prevented from leaving their homes during police operations, including Zaqueo Báez, who was arrested on two occasions this past week. A similar situation was denounced by Arcelio Rafael Molina, a member of UNPACU, who has been forbidden to leave his home in the municipality of Playa, in Havana, which is also the headquarters for the western branch of the organization.

The group denounced as well that, this morning, a group of 15 of its members in Havana’s Parque Central (Central Park) was “surrounded by political police agents who threatened them with arrest if they created any demonstration.”

In the eastern part of the country, the bulk of arrests are concentrated in Santiago de Cuba with 147 detained activists, plus 28 in Guantanamo, 16 in Las Tunas and 6 in Holguín.

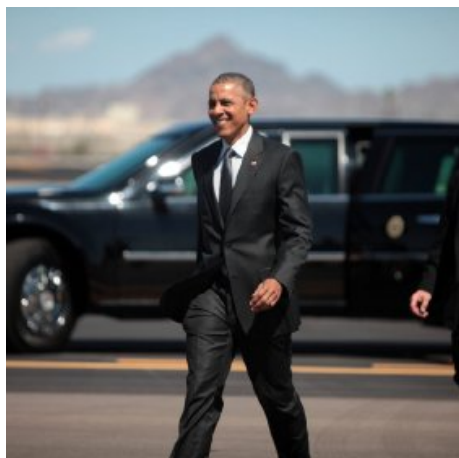
UNPACU is the largest opposition organization in the country, and it has shown public support for the visit of Barack Obama who will arrive on the island this Sunday. In its communiqués UNPACU has also warned about a possible increase in repression during the president’s stay in Cuba.

Translated by Ernesto Ariel Suarez

Weekly Standard

[Obama's Carbon Admission: 'I Have the World's Largest Carbon Footprint'](#)

by Chris Deaton



President Obama once "ruefully" admitted to staff that he personally is the planet's largest source of carbon emissions, according to an anecdote published in *The Atlantic*.

The brief aside was mentioned by author Jeffrey Goldberg in a passage about the burden of Obama's worldwide travel arrangements.

With that, Obama stood up and said, "Okay, gotta go." He headed out of his office and down the stairs, to the red carpet and the honor guard and the cluster of Malaysian officials waiting to greet him, and then to his armored limousine, flown to Kuala Lumpur ahead of him. (Early in his first term, still unaccustomed to the massive military operation it takes to move a president from one place to another, he noted ruefully to aides, "I have the world's largest carbon footprint.")

As of January last year, the president was approaching 450,000 miles of international travel during his administration, [according to numbers compiled by TIME](#). This being his last year in office, he has a full travel schedule in 2016, including a short jaunt to Cuba this month.

Obama helped kick off his foreign policy agenda this year with an Asia summit in Rancho Mirage, Calif. last month. According to a preview of the trip [prepared by U.S. News & World Report](#), "Obama's goals will be to emphasize what he considers his foreign policy achievements, such as a climate change agreement."

Goldberg's full story is [here](#).

Free Beacon

Biden's One-Night Visit to Mexico City Cost \$538,528 for Hotels Alone

VP stayed at luxury Intercontinental Presidente Hotel

by Elizabeth Harrington

Vice President Joe Biden's hotel tab for his recent one-night stay in Mexico City cost taxpayers more than \$500,000.

Biden, who attended an annual economic summit with Mexican leaders, stayed at the luxury Intercontinental Presidente Hotel. Biden led a delegation attending the summit that [included](#) Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker, Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, and Interior Secretary Sally Jewell.

The trip called for 260 hotel rooms and meeting spaces, according to a State Department [contract](#). The total hotel tab was \$538,528.65.

The government said the trip costs were justified due to security concerns and last-minute planning.

"In addition to supporting a large delegation within a short time frame, last minute and frequent changes of itineraries for supporting personnel often result in significant changes in how Posts work with the vendors," the State Department said. "With the exception of a few trips, contracts are not permitted to be signed until the Department of State (Post) has written confirmation from

all supporting agencies, which enables collection of funds from said agencies in the event of cancellation.”

“These unique Senior High-Level USG [U.S. government] VIP travel requirements result in only a single or a very limited number of responsible sources with no other supplies or services capable of satisfying agency requirement,” they added.

Biden spent only one night in Mexico City, according to the White House [schedule](#). He departed Washington on Wednesday, Feb. 24, and was in Mexico on Thursday to attend meetings for the summit. By Friday, he was in Utah for a “roundtable on cancer.”

News reports on what was accomplished at the economic summit are scarce, except for reporting on Biden feeling the need to “[almost](#)” apologize to Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto for some of Donald Trump’s remarks on immigration. No press pool for the Vice President was filed during the trip.

The [Intercontinental Presidente Hotel](#) where Biden stayed is described as a “luxury hotel tower with sweeping city views.”

“Forty-two stories high, this cosmopolitan Mexico City hotel puts the city at your feet,” reads the description of the hotel’s website. “Located in the thriving Polanco district, you’re immersed in a Mexican experience that’s uniquely local yet international.”

The hotel has “world class” rain showers and blackout blinds. Executive rooms and suites are “comfortable and luxurious” and have televisions in the bathroom.

The Intercontinental Presidente also offers numerous spa treatments, including steam bathing, massages, beauty treatments, body scrubs, body wraps, foot reflexology, manicures and pedicures, and waxing.

Instapundit

[NOBEL PEACE PRIZE UPDATE:](#)

[No Doubt About It — We’re Back in a Ground War in Iraq.](#)

by Glenn Reynolds

Without much fanfare, Obama has dramatically reversed his Iraq policy — sending thousands of troops back in the country after he declared the war over, engaging in ground combat despite initially promising that his strategy “will not involve American combat troops fighting on foreign soil.” Well, they’re on foreign soil, and they’re fighting.

It would have been easier — and would have cost far fewer lives — if we had just stayed. But Obama had to have a campaign issue.

And I suppose I should repeat my Iraq War history lesson: Things were going so well as late as 2010 that the Obama Administration was bragging about Iraq as one of its big foreign policy successes.

In the interest of historical accuracy, I think I'll repeat [this post](#) again:

BOB WOODWARD: [Bush Didn't Lie About WMD, And Obama Sure Screwed Up Iraq In 2011.](#)

[Y]ou certainly can make a persuasive argument it was a mistake. But there is a time that line going along that Bush and the other people lied about this. I spent 18 months looking at how Bush decided to invade Iraq. And lots of mistakes, but **it was Bush telling George Tenet, the CIA director, don't let anyone stretch the case on WMD. And he was the one who was skeptical.** And if you try to summarize why we went into Iraq, it was momentum. The war plan kept getting better and easier, and finally at the end, people were saying, hey, look, it will only take a week or two. And early on it looked like it was going to take a year or 18 months. And so Bush pulled the trigger. A mistake certainly can be argued, and there is an abundance of evidence. But **there was no lying** in this that I could find.

Plus:

Woodward was also asked if it was a mistake to withdraw in 2011. Wallace points out that Obama has said that he tried to negotiate a status of forces agreement but did not succeed, but "A lot of people think he really didn't want to keep any troops there." Woodward agrees that Obama didn't want to keep troops there and elaborates:

Look, Obama does not like war. But as you look back on this, the argument from the military was, let's keep 10,000, 15,000 troops there as an insurance policy. And we all know insurance policies make sense. We have 30,000 troops or more in South Korea still 65 years or so after the war. When you are a superpower, you have to buy these insurance policies. And he didn't in this case. I don't think you can say everything is because of that decision, but clearly a factor.

We had some woeful laughs about the insurance policies metaphor. Everyone knows they make sense, but it's still hard to get people to buy them. They want to think things might just work out, so why pay for the insurance? It's the old "young invincibles" problem that underlies Obamacare.

Obama blew it in Iraq, which is in chaos, and in Syria, which is in chaos, and in Libya, which is in chaos. A little history:

As late as 2010, things were going so well in Iraq that [Obama and Biden were bragging](#). Now, after Obama's politically-motivated pullout and disengagement, the whole thing's fallen apart. This is near-criminal neglect and incompetence, and an awful lot of people will pay a steep price for the Obama Administration's fecklessness.

Related: [National Journal: The World Will Blame Obama If Iraq Falls.](#)

Related: [What Kind Of Iraq Did Obama Inherit?](#)

Plus, I'm just going to keep running this video of [what the Democrats, including Harry Reid and Hillary Clinton, were saying on Iraq](#) before the invasion:

Because I expect a lot of revisionist history over the next few months.

Plus: [2008 Flashback: Obama Says Preventing Genocide Not A Reason To Stay In Iraq](#). He was warned. He didn't care.

And who can forget this?

FACT: President Obama kept his promise to end the war in Iraq. Romney called the decision to bring our troops home "tragic."

— Barack Obama (@BarackObama) [October 22, 2012](#)

Yes, I keep repeating this stuff. Because it bears repeating. In Iraq, Obama took a war that we had won at a considerable expense in lives and treasure, and threw it away for the callowest of political reasons. In Syria and Libya, he involved us in wars of choice without Congressional authorization, and proceeded to hand victories to the Islamists. Obama's policy here has been a debacle of the first order, and the press wants to talk about Bush as a way of protecting him. Whenever you see anyone in the media bringing up 2003, you will know that they are serving as palace guard, not as press.

Related: [Obama's Betrayal Of The Iraqis](#).

Plus: [Maybe that Iraq withdrawal was a bad thing in hindsight](#). Obama's actions, if not his words, suggest that even he may think so.

USA Today

[How David Brooks created Donald Trump](#)

Political establishment denounced bourgeois Tea Party. Now, they must face raucous working-class Trumpsters.

by Glenn Harlan Reynolds

Last week, in assessing the rise of Donald Trump, *New York Times* columnist David Brooks engaged in an uncharacteristic bit of self-reflection:

"Trump voters," he [wrote](#), "are a coalition of the dispossessed. They have suffered lost jobs, lost wages, lost dreams. The American system is not working for them, so naturally they are looking for something else. Moreover, many in the media, especially me, did not understand how they would express their alienation. *We expected Trump to fizzle because we were not socially intermingled with his supporters and did not listen carefully enough.* For me, it's a lesson that I have to change the way I do my job if I'm going to report accurately on this country." (Emphasis added.)

Well, it's a lesson for a lot of people in the punditocracy, of whom Brooks — who famously endorsed Barack Obama after viewing his [sharply creased pants](#) — is just one. And if Brooks *et al.* had paid attention, the roots of the Trump phenomenon wouldn't have been so difficult to fathom.

Brooks is, of course, horrified at Trump and his supporters, whom he [finds](#) childish, thuggish and contemptuous of the things that David Brooks likes about today's America. It's clear that he'd like a social/political revolution that was more refined, better-mannered, more focused on the Constitution and, well, more bourgeois as opposed to in-your-face and working class.

The thing is, we had that movement. It was the Tea Party movement. Unlike Brooks, I actually ventured out to "intermingle" with Tea Partiers at various events that I covered for PJTV.com, contributing commentary to the *Wall Street Journal* and the [Washington Examiner](#). As [I reported](#) from one event in Nashville, "Pundits claim the tea partiers are angry — and they are — but the most striking thing about the atmosphere in Nashville was how cheerful everyone seemed to be. I spoke with dozens of people, and the responses were surprisingly similar. Hardly any had ever been involved in politics before. Having gotten started, they were finding it to be not just worthwhile, but actually fun. Laughter rang out frequently, and when new-media mogul Andrew Breitbart held forth on a TV interview, a crowd gathered and broke into spontaneous applause. A year ago, many told me, they were depressed about the future of America. Watching television pundits talk about President Obama's transformative plans for big government, they felt alone, isolated and helpless. That changed when protests, organized by bloggers, met Mr. Obama a year ago in Denver, Colo., Mesa, Ariz., and Seattle, Wash. Then came CNBC talker Rick Santelli's famous on-air rant on Feb. 19, 2009, which gave the tea-party movement its name. Tea partiers are still angry at federal deficits, at Washington's habit of rewarding failure with handouts and punishing success with taxes and regulation, and the general incompetence that has marked the first year of the Obama presidency. But they're no longer depressed."

One of the most famous things about the Tea Partiers was that — as befits a relentlessly bourgeois protest movement — they left things [cleaner than they found them](#). Rich Lowry reported from Washington, DC: "Just as stunning as the tableaux of the massive throngs lining the reflecting pool were the images of the spotless grounds afterward. If someone had told attendees they were expected to mow the grass before they left, surely some of them would have hitched flatbed trailers to their vehicles for the trip to Washington and gladly brought mowers along with them. This was the revolt of the bourgeois, of the responsible, of the orderly, of people profoundly at peace with the traditional mores of American society. The spark that lit the tea-party movement was the rant by CNBC commentator Rick Santelli, who inveighed in early 2009 against an Obama-administration program to subsidize 'the losers' mortgages.' He was speaking for people who hadn't borrowed beyond their means or tried to get rich quick by flipping houses, for the people who, in their thrift and enterprise, 'carry the water instead of drink the water.' The tea party's detractors want to paint it as radical, when at bottom it represents the self-reliant, industrious heart of American life."

In San Francisco, too, tea party protesters met pro-Obama activists and [picked up their trash](#). "John," author of The City Square blog wrote: "As Obama supporters moved along in the line to get into the fundraiser, they left behind an impressive amount of trash ... Tea Partiers shouted 'pick up your garbage' and 'this is San Francisco, what about recycling?' There was no response. They chanted 'Obama leaves a mess.' Still no response. Eventually, a tea partier (wearing the black cowboy hat) crosses over and starts to pick up the trash on his own. Other tea partiers join him. Another manages to find a trash bag. Soon the trash is being collected."

Yet the tea party movement was [smeared as racist](#), [denounced as fascist](#), [harassed with impunity](#) by the IRS and generally treated with contempt by the political establishment — and by pundits like Brooks, who declared "[I'm not a fan](#) of this movement." After handing the GOP big legislative victories in [2010](#) and [2014](#), it was largely betrayed by the Republicans in Congress, who broke their promises to shrink government and block Obama's initiatives.

So now we have Trump instead, who tells people to [punch counterprotesters](#) instead of picking up their trash.

When politeness and orderliness are met with contempt and betrayal, do not be surprised if the response is something less polite, and less orderly. Brooks closes his Trump column with Psalm 73, but a more appropriate verse is [Hosea 8:7](#) "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." Trump's ascendance is a symptom of a colossal failure among America's political leaders, of which Brooks' mean-spirited insularity is only a tiny part. God help us all.

Glenn Harlan Reynolds, a University of Tennessee law professor, is the author of [The New School: How the Information Age Will Save American Education from Itself](#)

NewsBusters

[Krauthammer: Obama Currently on 'Ideological Holiday Trip in Cuba While the World Burns'](#)

by Curtis Houck

Fox News contributor, frequent *Special Report* panelist, and syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer was given his own segment on Tuesday night's Fox News Channel (FNC) show in light of the Islamic terror attacks in Brussels and he used his airtime to berate President Obama for his **"ideological holiday trip"** to communist Cuba **"while the world burns."**

Further, he chalked the President's Cuba trip in light of the Brussels attacks to the latest illustration of the disconnect between **"the real world"** and Obama's **"fantasy world he inhabits where Cuba is of some geopolitical significance."**

Host Bret Baier brought Krauthammer on just after the 6:14 p.m. Eastern mark and he first mentioned that the President devoted only **"51 seconds of his speech today in Havana"** to the horrifying events hours later across the Atlantic.

During that speech, Krauthammer opined that **"the whole story of his presidency and its foreign policy was seen in the split-screen"** with **"video footage of the attack in Belgium"** that marked **"the real world"** on one end with **"Obama in the fantasy world he inhabits where Cuba is of some geopolitical significance"** at the other.

The best-selling author quipped that Cuba could be wiped out **"in a volcanic eruption like Santorini, nobody would notice geopolitically, but Obama had to go cause this is legacy."**

"This is settling the Cold War arguments of the academic left of Obama's Columbia University days. The people who worship the Cuban Revolution, the Sandinistas. Obama had his picture taken in front of a relief of Che Guevara, which sort of stated his worldview of his adolescent days and now he does it as President," he exclaimed.

Referring to the previous block in which Baier spoke to Republican Congressman Mike McCaul (Tex.), Krauthammer described McCaul's statements about the state of the fight against Islamic extremism in Europe as **"hair-raising stuff that the Belgians are completely outmanned."**

Before Baier briefly asked Krauthammer what he thought about the President's decision to still attend a baseball game in Cuba with Cuban President Raul Castro, the conservative pundit concluded:

The Europeans have no way of tracking and that we are completely in the blind. We don't know what we don't know. That's the real world. Obama calls it the JV team. He pretends it's contained and controlled. It is not. Instead he does this sort of ideological holiday trip in Cuba while the world burns.

The relevant portion of the transcript from FNC's *Special Report with Bret Baier* on March 22 can be found below.

FNC's Special Report with Bret Baier

March 22, 2016

6:14 p.m. Eastern

BRET BAIER: Charles, he obviously topped off that speech with a statement about the attacks and how the world needs to be unified. This trip is being overshadowed now by the events in Brussels.

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER: Well, Obama gave the terror bombing 51 seconds of his speech today in Havana. I thought the whole story of his presidency and its foreign policy was seen in the split-screen. On one side, you had the video footage of the attack in Belgium. This is the real world and on the other side was Obama in the fantasy world he inhabits where Cuba is of some geopolitical significance. In his mind but none the real world. If Cuba disappeared tomorrow in a volcanic eruption like Santorini, nobody would notice geopolitically, but Obama had to go cause this is legacy. This is settling the Cold War arguments of the academic left of Obama's Columbia University days. The people who worship the Cuban Revolution, the Sandinistas. Obama had his picture taken in front of a relief of Che Guevara, which sort of stated his worldview of his adolescent days and now he does it as president. On the one hand is the real threat to the world. You heard from Chairman McCaul, this is hair raising stuff that the Belgians are completely outmanned. The Europeans have no way of tracking and that we are completely in the blind. We don't know what we don't know. That's the real world. Obama calls it the JV team. He pretends it's contained and controlled. It is not. Instead he does this sort of ideological holiday trip in Cuba while the world burns.

BAIER: Quickly, there is criticism, obviously, from Republicans about, you know whether he should have stopped this trip short. Whether he shouldn't have to the baseball game today and the image of all that and doing the wave at the baseball game. Your thoughts on all of that?

KRAUTHAMMER: I don't think a president should cut short his trip because it is sort of handing a victory to the terrorists. Moreover, the trip to Argentina is important cause Argentina I an important country and it's just had a change of regime to a favorable American one, but he should never have been on the trip in the first place and he needs to make a speech about world terrorism and what he's going to do.

BAIER: Charles, as always, thank you.

Jewish World Review
Obama's Che moment
by Rich Lowry

President Barack Obama inadvertently found the perfect photo-op for his Cuba visit at a wreath-laying ceremony at the Jose Marti Memorial in Havana.

A news photo at Revolution Square caught Obama standing together with American and Cuban officials, with an enormous mural of the iconic revolutionary Che Guevara looming over his shoulder on the adjacent Ministry of the Interior building.

Che is, of course, ubiquitous on dorm-room walls and T-shirts in the United States, and a hero of the Cuban revolution. He also was a coldblooded killer who set up the Cuban gulag and presided over summary executions of political prisoners (trials were, per Che, "an archaic bourgeois detail"). No doubt, he would have been astonished at the Yanqui president coming to Revolution Square to pay his respects -- and exceedingly pleased.

President Obama's trip is self-consciously historic. As the president's introducer at an event at the U.S. Embassy put it, Obama often said, "Yes, we can," and now we can say, "Yes, we did."

But did what? The trip ensures that the first visit to Cuba by an American president in almost 90 years will be part of Obama's legacy, and seeks to make his opening to Cuba, announced in December 2014, irreversible. If that means extending credibility and a financial lifeline to a Castro regime that has no intention of reforming, so be it.

The regime made it clear that it wouldn't bother with maintaining a pretense of relaxing its grip with the arrest of protesters at a march of the dissident group Ladies in White while President Obama was en route to the country. A reporter with a government news outlet told The New York Times that he and colleagues had been warned not even to discuss Obama's visit with friends.

At a press conference with President Raul Castro on Monday, Obama spoke in euphemistic terms of our "two different systems," eliding the fact that one system is open, democratic and prosperous, while the other is closed, dictatorial and economically ruinous. Castro railed against alleged human-rights abuses in the United States -- Obama obligingly said he welcomed the dialogue -- and El Presidente denied holding any political prisoners when reporters dared ask about it.

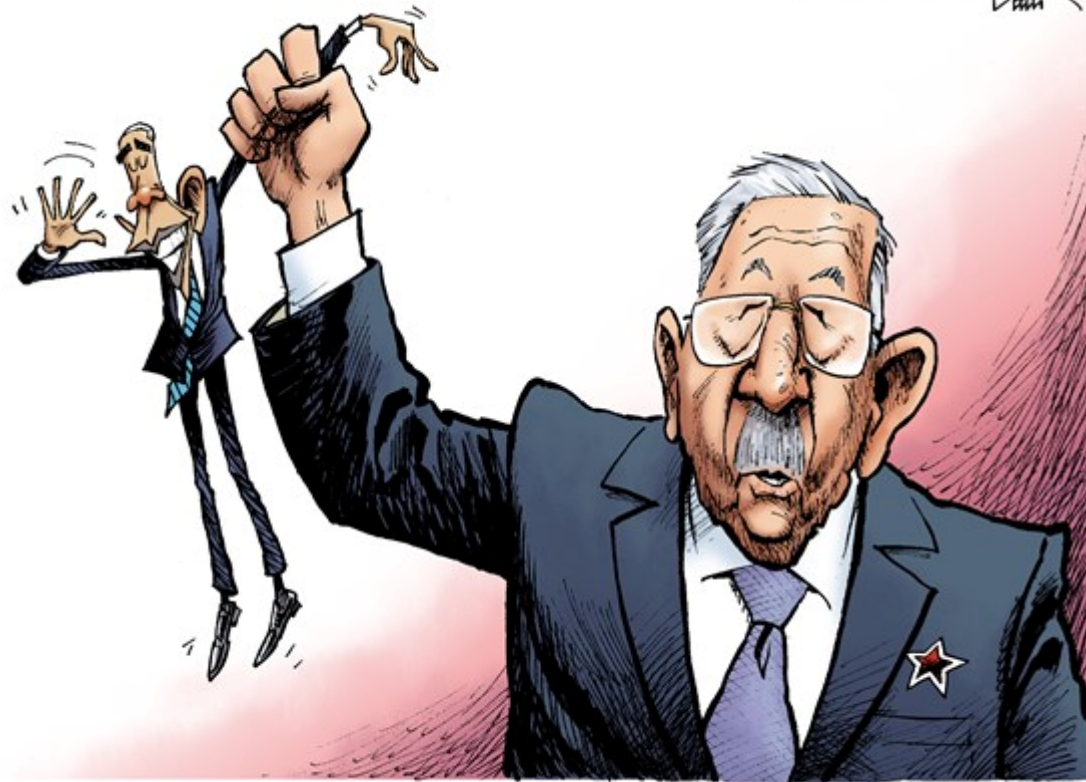
There is no sign of greater openness in Cuba since President Obama forged his break with long-standing U.S. policy. Political arrests have accelerated. There were more than 8,000 in 2015, four times as many as in 2010. The exodus of desperate Cubans to the United States has picked up. And the country still ranks below Zimbabwe and Iran on Internet connectivity.

But Obama's opening has produced a financial windfall for the regime. The Cuban military occupies the commanding heights of the economy and controls the tourism business, which has been thriving with the influx of American tourists. Starwood Hotels and Resorts just got special permission from the U.S. Treasury to operate three hotels in Havana, in a boost, not for the free market, but for the Cuban government.

If Cuba were a repressive, small-minded military dictatorship of the right, Obama's visit and accommodationist attitude wouldn't be considered so broad-minded. But a patina of revolutionary romance, embodied by that image of Che looking down on President Obama, still hangs over Cuba. It makes its human-rights abuses, theft and lies an afterthought, or even excusable, for the American left.

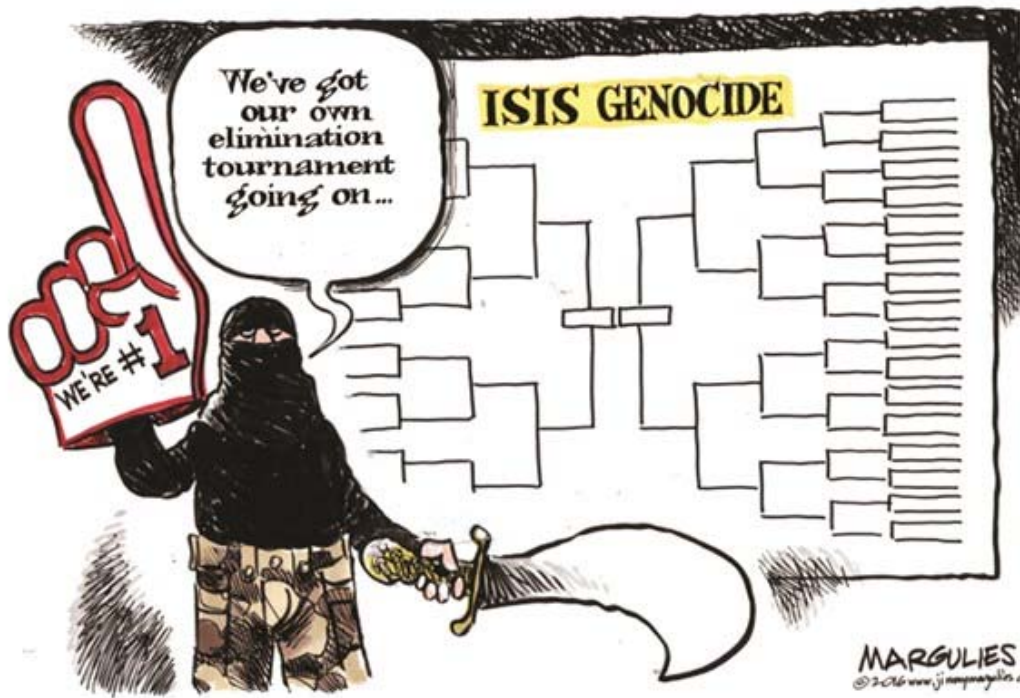
After the Cuban missile crisis, Che said that in the event of a U.S. attack, "if the rockets had remained, we would have used them all and directed them against the very heart of the United States, including New York, in our defense against aggression." It would have been beyond his imagining that so many decades later, with the revolutionary regime cash-strapped and decrepit, the imperialist Goliath would come bearing gifts, and asking for nothing substantial in return, except a line in President Obama's Wikipedia entry.





NEW DAY for CUBA





Lisa 2016 3-23 Dist. by Wash. Post/White House Group



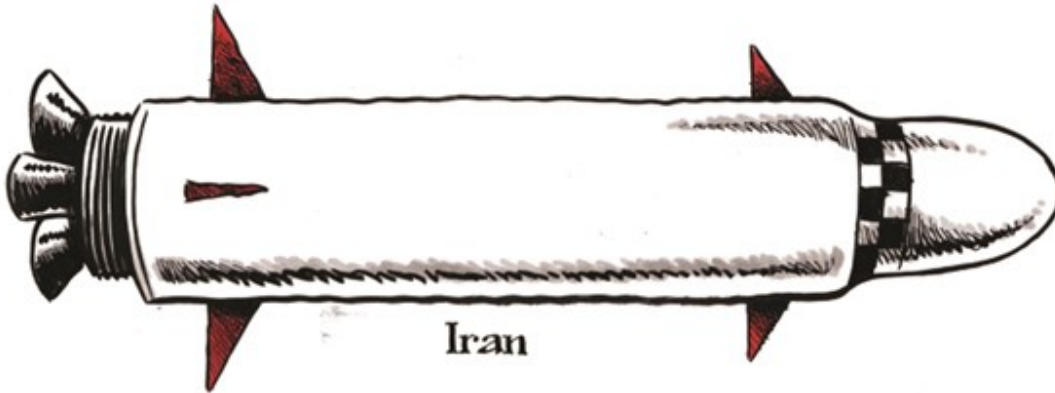
The Suicide Vest



U.S.-Iran Nuclear Treaty SOUVENIR PENS



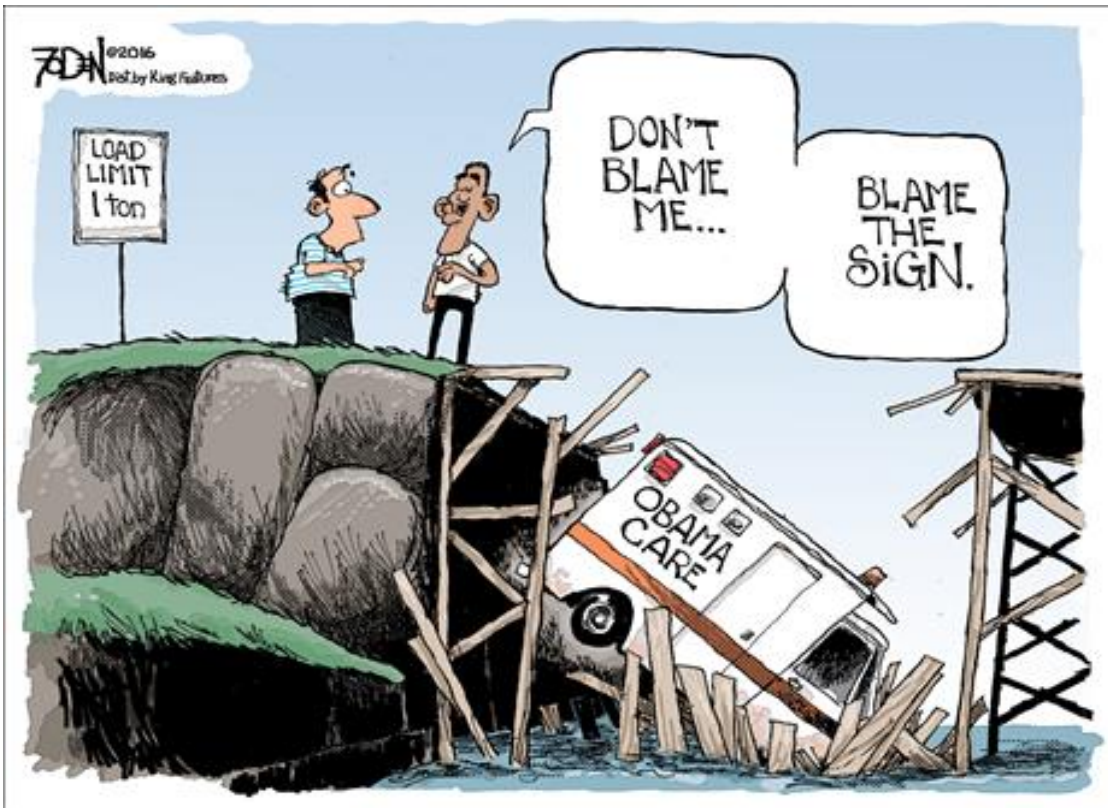
U.S.



Iran

MARGULIES
© 2016 www.jumpingbean.com





 <p>Harry Reid May 19, 2005</p> <p>"THE DUTIES OF THE SENATE ARE SET FORTH IN THE U.S. CONSTITUTION. NOWHERE IN THAT DOCUMENT DOES IT SAY THE SENATE HAS A DUTY TO GIVE PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTEES A VOTE."</p>	<p>Harry Reid March 1, 2016</p> <p>"WE HAVE THAT NASTY LITTLE CONSTITUTION, WHICH SAYS THEY ARE OBLIGATED TO HOLD HEARINGS AND THEY ARE OBLIGATED TO VOTE."</p>
--	--