

March 28, 2016 - BRUSSELS - CUBA JUXTAPOSITION

Our last issue on the prez missed a great post from [Craig Pirrong](#) at Streetwise Professor. Pickings has a weakness for items that treat Dilettante with the contempt he has earned. And then more on the Brussels/Cuba juxtaposition kept appearing in the mailbox.

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More from Pirrong's post with a focus on the Cuba visit.

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*The low point in the visit was a photo op in front of the Cuban Interior Ministry, complete with a huge portrait of mass murdering, racist Che looming in the background. Given the meticulous planning that goes into presidential visits, this had to be deliberate: leftist trolling at its worst.*

*The boycott of Cuba is an anachronism. It is justifiable to jettison it, and to restore relations with Cuba. But that does not require doing what Obama did: validating, and arguably celebrating, a vicious, oppressive regime, while insulting and apologizing for the country that did him the honor of electing him president twice.*

More on the president from Charles Krauthammer.

*... Obama came into office believing that we had vastly exaggerated the threat of terrorism and allowed it to pervert both our values and our foreign policy. He declared a unilateral end to the global war on terror and has downplayed the threat ever since. He frequently reminds aides, reports Jeffrey Goldberg of the Atlantic, that more Americans die annually of bathtub accidents.*

*It's now been seven years. The real world has stubbornly refused to accommodate Obama's pacific dreams. The Islamic State has grown from JV team to worldwide threat, operating from Libya to Afghanistan, Sinai to Belgium. It is well into the infiltration phase of its European campaign, with 500 trained and hardened cadres in place among the estimated 5,000 jihadists returned from the Middle East. The increasing tempo and sophistication of its operations suggest that it may be poised for a continent-wide guerrilla campaign.*

*In the face of this, Obama remains inert, unmoved, displaying a neglect and insouciance that borders on denial. His nonreaction to the Belgian massacre — his 34-minute speech in Havana devoted 51 seconds to Brussels — left the world as stunned as it was after the Paris massacre, when Obama did nothing. Worse, at his now notorious November news conference in Turkey, his only show of passion regarding Paris was to berate Islamophobes.*

*David Axelrod called Obama's response "tone-deaf." But that misses the point. This is more than a mere mistake of presentation. Remember his reaction to the beheading of the American journalist James Foley? Obama made a statement expressing his sympathies — and then jumped onto his golf cart for a round of 18. ...*

Mike Gonzalez, in The Federalist, writes on the good, bad, ugly, and truly evil of the Cuba trip.

### **The Good**

*Even strong critics of President Obama's visit, like me, readily admit it was good for him to say—in a speech televised to the Cuban people, with dictator Raul Castro in attendance—that all people, even the wretched souls who live under communism, have rights. ...*

### **The Bad**

*President Obama's visit has legitimized Castro's illegitimate rule, and will help him perpetuate his family's future grip on power. This is of much more importance than Obama's words, and something for which the neither the president nor his foreign policy Svengali, deputy national security advisor Ben Rhodes, have an answer.*

*Even if Obama's speech galvanizes some brave Cubans to demand their rights, the Castro Pretorian guard will crush them with impunity. ...*

### **The Ugly**

*This section could take thousands of words. There's so much from which to pick, from Obama's incessant caveats in his speech ("Let me tell you what I believe. I can't force you to agree...") to his egregious comparison of the American Revolution to the Cuban one. But by far the ugliest*

was his gratuitous appearance with Raul at a baseball game between the Tampa Bay Rays and Cuba's national team.

Here was the president, along with his entire family (even granny!) enjoying himself next to the man who has aided and abetted anti-Americanism worldwide, who represses his people, who continues to give sanctuary to U.S. fugitives, even cop killers, and who harbors terrorists—all on the day that our ally, Belgium, suffered a devastating terrorist attack and the whole alliance looked in vain for leadership from the leader of the free world.

We learned later through the [British news agency Reuters](#) that Rodrigo Londono, the leader of the Colombian terrorist group FARC (designated as a terrorist group by Obama's own State Department), was also at the game, along with 40 other terrorists. ...

### **The Pure Evil**

This one is easy. When Castro told an American newsman there were no political prisoners in Cuba, he was taking malevolence to a new pitch of darkness. The ever-helpful Rhodes explained what Castro meant at a press conference in Havana Monday evening: "It's their belief that they are not political prisoners, that they are in prison for various crimes and offenses against Cuban law."

Thanks, Ben. You must be very proud.

**Matthew Continetti** says we actually have a Secretary General In Chief.

... Rarely has Obama's attitude toward terrorism been brought into such stark relief. Why does he respond so perfunctorily, so coolly, so stoically to the mayhem? Not because he lacks sympathy. Because he believes his job is to restrain America from overreaction, from hubris, from our worst instincts of imperialism and oppression.

Yes, the thinking goes, ISIS and al Qaeda are threats to be fought, contained, defeated. But the greater threat, in Obama's view, is that Americans may become scared, afraid, disrupted, divided. We might invade Iraq again, or cut off immigration and trade, or discriminate against the Muslim minority. That is the real danger against which this president stands. Terrorism will burn itself out. The problem of American maximalism remains.

This is not the sort of thing you expect to hear from an American president. It's what you expect from a secretary general of the United Nations, from the president of the European Commission, from the foreign ministry of France circa 2002. It's the worldview of the international NGO, of the multilateral bureaucrat: Terrorism? We can manage. But the U.S. hyper-power? We've got to put a lid on this problem, stat.

Liberal internationalists have agonized over the wanton use of our power for years. The treaties and institutions they support are brakes on American unilateralism. They bind America's freedom of action. "It was the Gulliver effect," wrote Charles Krauthammer in "[Democratic Realism](#)." "Call a committee meeting of countries with hostile or contrary interests—i.e., the U.N. Security Council—and you have guaranteed yourself another 12 years of inaction."

*What makes Obama unique is not that he subscribes to the multilateral worldview but that he applies it to the American people themselves. He seeks not only to constrain the American military but also the American citizenry, to tamp down our anger and worry and frustration, replace our false consciousness with consciousness-raising, check the emotional and hawkish impulses of a media-addled people. He's the Ban Ki-moon of the Potomac. ...*

**Glenn Reynolds** columns on Bill Clinton's accidental remark about "the awful legacy of the last eight years."

*Monday night in Spokane, Wash., former President Bill Clinton praised his wife, presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, by contrasting her to what he called "the awful legacy of the last eight years" under President Obama.*

*Although a Clinton spokesperson has since walked back Bill's apparent gaffe, that couldn't have gone over well at the White House — or, at any rate, at the mansion in Cuba where President Obama was staying just then — but Clinton was right. Barack Obama has left an awful legacy, and the next president, whoever it is, will have a lot to deal with. Fortunately, the next president — whether it's Hillary, Donald Trump or Ted Cruz, or even Bernie Sanders — will probably be a better president.*

*For one example of Obama's "awful legacy," we need look no further than the terror attacks this week in Brussels. These attacks, which killed dozens and injured close to 200, were perpetrated by the Islamic State, the group that Obama once disparagingly called a "jayvee team."*

*Well, for a jayvee team, they've done a lot of damage, in the Middle East and beyond, and it's in large part because of Obama's premature withdrawal from Iraq, which fulfilled a political promise, but which had the effect of squandering a decade of blood and treasure, and costing many thousands of lives.*

*As late as 2010, things were going sufficiently well in Iraq that the Obama Administration was bragging about what a huge success they had going there. But in his 2008 campaign, Obama had promised to pull U.S. troops out of Iraq, and so it was essential that he do so before 2012, or his antiwar supporters would complain. So Obama pulled out. And that was a mistake. ...*

"Beware of false knowledge," said George Bernard Shaw, "It is more dangerous than ignorance." A good illustration is prez's remark there is little difference between communism and capitalism. **InfoWars** has the story.

*President Obama has stoked controversy after he suggested to an audience of Argentinian youth that there was no great difference between communism and capitalism and that they should just "choose from what works".*

*Obama responded to a question about nonprofit community organizations and the necessity of attracting funding from both the public and private sectors.*

*"So often in the past there has been a division between left and right, between capitalists and communists or socialists, and especially in the Americas, that's been a big debate," Obama said.*

*"Those are interesting intellectual arguments, but I think for your generation, you should be practical and just choose from what works. You don't have to worry about whether it really fits into socialist theory or capitalist theory. You should just decide what works," he added. ...*

**Thomas Sowell** points out what is insidious about fascism.

*It bothers me a little when conservatives call Barack Obama a "socialist." He certainly is an enemy of the free market, and wants politicians and bureaucrats to make the fundamental decisions about the economy. But that does not mean that he wants government ownership of the means of production, which has long been a standard definition of socialism.*

*What President Obama has been pushing for, and moving toward, is more insidious: government control of the economy, while leaving ownership in private hands. That way, politicians get to call the shots but, when their bright ideas lead to disaster, they can always blame those who own businesses in the private sector.*

*Politically, it is heads-I-win when things go right, and tails-you-lose when things go wrong. This is far preferable, from Obama's point of view, since it gives him a variety of scapegoats for all his failed policies, without having to use President Bush as a scapegoat all the time.*

*Government ownership of the means of production means that politicians also own the consequences of their policies, and have to face responsibility when those consequences are disastrous -- something that Barack Obama avoids like the plague.*

*Thus the Obama administration can arbitrarily force insurance companies to cover the children of their customers until the children are 26 years old. Obviously, this creates favorable publicity for President Obama. But if this and other government edicts cause insurance premiums to rise, then that is something that can be blamed on the "greed" of the insurance companies. ...*

We'll close where we started with **Craig Pirrong** who posts on the "do what works" nostrum.

*... The criticism here should be directed at his vapidly and superficiality and question begging. By what criteria are the things that "work" to be determined? How do liberty, individual autonomy, and reliance on coercion and repression come into play when evaluating what works?*

*Further, real world decisions always involve trade-offs. Works-Doesn't Work is binary: trade offs aren't.*

*Obama also apparently believes that it is possible to design policies without a theoretical framework. Hayek was closer to the truth when he said without theory the facts are silent. Theories are about causal mechanisms, and policies are all about manipulating cause to achieve particular effects. You can't make a reasonable evaluation ex ante of what policies will "work" (based on your objective function) without some theoretical framework. Further, those who don't think deeply about cause and effect when designing policies inevitably unleash unintended consequences that are usually more baleful than beneficial. ...*

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## Streetwise Professor

### Our Peevish President Dismisses Terrorism, and Bolsters a Repressive Regime

by Craig Pirrong

The latest terrorist atrocity, this time in Brussels, proves yet again that Europe is infested with dens of vipers, which it is largely powerless to control. Perhaps this should be expected in a country like Belgium, which cannot execute raids between the hours of 10 PM and 5 AM, and must ring the doorbell when they do.

Obama's reaction to these appalling events was appalling in its own way. The most peevish president was obviously immensely annoyed that ugly reality intruded on his Cuban victory lap/holiday. He grudgingly spared a grand total of 51 seconds to address the subject during a scheduled speech in Havana. He then proceeded to take in a baseball game, during which he did the wave with his new besty Raul Castro.

Obama's remarks, such as they were, displayed his impatience with and indifference to the issue of terrorism. It consisted of the standard bromides, including the old standby of a promise to help bring the perpetrators to justice.

Um. The perpetrators were suicide bombers. They blew themselves up. They are quite clearly well beyond the reach of human justice.

When pressed on the issue today in Argentina, Obama responded with his by now familiar petulance and irritation at the topic. He has a lot on his plate, he said, by way of rationalizing not giving the matter more attention. Further, in a reprise of another well-worn theme, Obama stated that terrorism is not an existential threat to the US.

This is Obama's typical false choice/straw man rhetoric in action. There are very few existential threats: if presidents were bound to respond only to existential threats, their plates would be quite empty. Plenty of time for golf and ESPN. Come to think of it . . . Seriously, though, although Obama thinks Americans are irrationally obsessed with a terrorism threat which in his mind ranks somewhere below the risk of drowning in the bathtub (no, really), although not existential, it is a sufficiently great danger that a more aggressive posture is fully warranted.

It should be said that Obama is doing more than he lets on. But that in itself is a problem. For the second time in recent months, only the death of an American serviceman has forced the administration (though not Obama personally, for he floats above it all, unquestioned by the press) to admit a more extensive involvement in combat in Iraq and Syria. This time, the death of a Marine in an ISIS rocket attack on a firebase in Iraq compelled the Pentagon to concede its existence, which it had previously not acknowledged: if the Marine hadn't died (with eight more wounded) the firebase would remain a secret. From Americans, anyways. In response to questions arising from the Marine's death, SecDef Carter was forced to concede that US personnel numbers in Iraq exceeded, by about 50 percent, the authorized number.

So this means that the war against ISIS is more robust than Obama admits. That's good in a way, but the secrecy is disturbing. It is not for operational reasons: after all, ISIS clearly figured

out the base was there, and took it under fire. It is purely to protect Obama personally. Acknowledging more robust campaign would be an admission that his past inaction on ISIS was a mistake. And Obama is constitutionally incapable of admitting error. Sadly, a press that would be baying like hounds on the trail of a fox if a Republican president had done this is silent, and thereby complicit in concealing military action from the American people.

Obama's terrorism remarks were only one of many low points on his two day visit to Cuba. He spewed one leftist shibboleth about the Communist country after another. It was an extended exercise in moral equivalence between the US and Cuba.

For instance, he said the Cuban Revolution and the American Revolution were quite similar, in that they were both fighting oppression. Even overlooking the fact that the philosophical and political foundations of the two revolutions could not be more different, the obvious difference is that the Cuban Revolution replaced one tyranny with a far worse one, whereas the American revolution gave (in Lincoln's words) a new birth of liberty. It is deeply insulting to compare the American founding generation to the murderous thugs who led the Cuban uprising, and who continue to grind the country under their geriatric heels almost 60 years later.

Further, Obama said that Cuba had things to teach the US about human rights (!), specifically citing universal health care. Where to begin? Identifying health care as a human right is typically progressive, but leave that aside for the moment. Cuba's "universal health care" is a sick joke. The elite gets far better treatment than the vast majority of Cubans, who universally get crappy medical treatment: they are equal in the primitiveness of the treatment they get.

The low point in the visit was a photo op in front of the Cuban Interior Ministry, complete with a huge portrait of mass murdering, racist Che looming in the background. Given the meticulous planning that goes into presidential visits, this had to be deliberate: leftist trolling at its worst.

The boycott of Cuba is an anachronism. It is justifiable to jettison it, and to restore relations with Cuba. But that does not require doing what Obama did: validating, and arguably celebrating, a vicious, oppressive regime, while insulting and apologizing for the country that did him the honor of electing him president twice.

## Washington Post

### [Obama's ideological holiday in Havana](#)

by Charles Krauthammer

The split screen told the story: on one side, images of the terror bombing in Brussels; on the other, Barack Obama doing the wave with Raúl Castro at a baseball game in Havana.

[On one side](#), the real world of rising global terrorism. On the other, the Obama fantasy world in which romancing a geopolitically insignificant Cuba — [without an ounce](#) of democracy or human rights yielded in return — is considered a seminal achievement of American diplomacy.

Cuba wasn't so much a legacy trip as a vanity trip, vindicating the dorm-room enthusiasms of one's student days when the Sandinistas were cool, revolution was king and every other friend had a dog named Che.

When [Brussels intervened](#), some argued that Obama should have cut short his trip and come back home. I disagree. You don't let three suicide bombers control the itinerary of the American president. Moreover, [Obama's next stop](#), Argentina, is actually important and had just elected a friendly government that broke from its long and corrupt Peronist past.

Nonetheless, Obama could have done without the baseball. What kind of message does it send to be yukking it up with Raúl even as Belgian authorities are picking body parts off the floor of the Brussels airport?

Obama came into office believing that we had vastly exaggerated the threat of terrorism and allowed it to pervert both our values and our foreign policy. He declared a unilateral end to the global war on terror and has downplayed the threat ever since. He frequently reminds aides, [reports Jeffrey Goldberg](#) of the Atlantic, that more Americans die annually of bathtub accidents.

It's now been seven years. The real world has stubbornly refused to accommodate Obama's pacific dreams. The Islamic State has grown from JV team to worldwide threat, operating from Libya to Afghanistan, Sinai to Belgium. It is well into the infiltration phase of its European campaign, with [500 trained and hardened](#) cadres in place among the [estimated 5,000 jihadists](#) returned from the Middle East. The increasing tempo and sophistication of its operations suggest that it may be poised for a continent-wide guerrilla campaign.

In the face of this, Obama remains inert, unmoved, displaying a neglect and insouciance that borders on denial. His nonreaction to the Belgian massacre — his [34-minute speech in Havana](#) devoted 51 seconds to Brussels — left the world as stunned as it was after the Paris massacre, when Obama did nothing. Worse, at his now notorious November [news conference in Turkey](#), his only show of passion regarding Paris was to berate Islamophobes.

David Axelrod [called Obama's response](#) "tone-deaf." But that misses the point. This is more than a mere mistake of presentation. Remember his reaction to the beheading of the American journalist James Foley? Obama made a statement expressing his sympathies — and then jumped onto his golf cart for a round of 18.

He [later told](#) Chuck Todd that this was a mistake. "Part of this job is also the theater of it," he explained, "it's not something that always comes naturally to me." As if postponing a bucolic recreation was a required piece of political playacting rather than a president's natural reaction — a mixture of shock and sorrow — to the terrible death of a citizen he could not save.

It's not as if Obama is so super cool that he never shows emotion. Just a few months ago, [he](#) [teared up](#) when speaking about the Sandy Hook school shooting. That was the work of a psychotic. But when speaking about the work of Islamist terrorists, he offers flat perfunctory words.

I cannot fathom why. Perhaps having long seen himself uniquely qualified by background and history to make peace between Islam and the West, to now recognize how badly things have gone on his watch is to admit both failure and the impossible grandiosity of his original pretensions.

Whatever the reason, he seems genuinely unmoved by a menace the rest of the world views, correctly, with horror and increasing apprehension. He's been in office seven years, yet seems utterly fixed on his campaign promises and pre-presidential obsessions: shutting down Gitmo, rapprochement with Iran, engagement with tyrants (hence Havana), making the oceans recede

(hence the Paris climate trip). Next we'll see yet another useless Washington "summit" on yet another Obama *idée fixe* : eliminating nuclear materials.

With the world on fire, the American president goes on ideological holiday. As was said of the Bourbons: "They have learned nothing and have forgotten nothing."

## **The Federalist**

### **What's Good, Bad, And Ugly About Obama's Cuba Trip**

by Mike Gonzalez

Dissident leader Antonio Rodiles, himself beaten and detained on Monday along with his wife, told me President Obama's Cuba visit had occasioned 'a festival of repression.'

Any truly comprehensive analysis of President Obama's trip to Cuba must include the good, the bad, and the ugly. Only this time, because we're dealing with the Castros, a new category should be added to the Eastwood trope: "the pure evil."

#### **Cuba Visit: The Good**

Even strong critics of President Obama's visit, like me, readily admit it was good for him to say—in a speech televised to the Cuban people, with dictator Raul Castro in attendance—that all people, even the wretched souls who live under communism, have rights.

"Every person should be equal under the law," Obama said. "Citizens should be free to speak their mind without fear — to organize, and to criticize their government, and to protest peacefully, and that the rule of law should not include arbitrary detentions of people who exercise those rights. I believe that every person should have the freedom to practice their faith peacefully and publicly. And, yes, I believe voters should be able to choose their governments in free and democratic elections."

Addressing himself directly to Castro, Obama added: "I am also confident that you need not fear the different voices of the Cuban people — and their capacity to speak, and assemble, and vote for their leaders." As difficult as it may be for some to believe, these are words most Cubans, 77 percent of whom have known nothing but communism, have never heard.

Not every dissident I spoke with yesterday liked President Obama's speech, but I think the dissident leader known simply as "Antunez" put it best when he told me on the phone, "Independent of the fact that I think the trip has been a big mistake, it was good that he urged the dictator to respect human rights. It was an important lesson for the dictator." It is important to note that Antunez, whose name is Jorge Luis Garcia Perez, did not attend the dissidents' meeting with Obama to protest the visit.

Sadly, that's all the good there was.

#### **Cuba Visit: The Bad**

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something for which the neither the president nor his foreign policy Svengali, deputy national security advisor Ben Rhodes, have an answer.

Even if Obama's speech galvanizes some brave Cubans to demand their rights, the Castro Pretorian guard will crush them with impunity. We know this because that happened *while Obama was in Cuba*. Sources on the island said some Cubans gathered spontaneously after the speech to demand the rights enumerated in it, only to be brutally repressed by the Castro security forces. Yet the president not only did not leave in protest, but he failed to voice any objections or even mention it, at least publicly.

Indeed, during the three days of the Obama visit, dissidents were beaten, arrested, dragged through streets, stripped naked, and threatened with the rape of their daughters. Dissident leader Antonio Rodiles, himself beaten and detained on Monday along with his wife, told me the Obama visit had occasioned "a festival of repression."

Given this, and that Obama kept obsequiously repeating that the United States had "neither the capacity nor the intention to impose change on Cuba," Castro surely feels he has carte blanche to continue to impose his will through brutality, as he and his brother Fidel have done for 56 years.

While the vast majority of commentators speak of Fidel, 89, and Raul, 84, the Castros to keep in mind are Raul's son, Col. Alejandro Castro Espin, 50, his daughter, Mariela Castro Espin, 53, and his son-in-law, Gen. Luis Alberto Rodriguez Lopez-Callejas, 54.

Alejandro is [an unrepentant ideologue](#) who sports a Lenin mustache and goatee and whose 2009 book, "The Empire of Terror," was an anti-American screed. An intelligence officer, he speaks in [the hackneyed jargon](#) of a Marxist-Leninist and is due to inherit political power after Raul is gone.

Mariela is a member of Cuba's rubber-stamp National Assembly whose position as an LGBT activist will ensure that [Western useful idiots](#) continue to lionize the Revolution. As for Rodriguez, he heads GAESA, the holding company that controls almost all of the Cuban economy. As [Bloomberg put it recently](#), "Want to do business with Cuba? Prepare to partner with the general."

By throwing a line to the Castros just as the Venezuelan sugar daddy ran out of money (socialism always does that), Obama has all but ensured (barring a reversal by the next president) that we will have a brutal anti-American corporatist regime just 90 miles away.

### **Cuba Visit: The Ugly**

This section could take thousands of words. There's so much from which to pick, from Obama's incessant caveats in his speech ("Let me tell you what I believe. I can't force you to agree...") to his egregious comparison of the American Revolution to the Cuban one. But by far the ugliest was his gratuitous appearance with Raul at a baseball game between the Tampa Bay Rays and Cuba's national team.

Here was the president, along with his entire family (even granny!) enjoying himself next to the man who has aided and abetted anti-Americanism worldwide, who represses his people, who continues to give sanctuary to U.S. fugitives, even cop killers, and who harbors terrorists—all on the day that our ally, Belgium, suffered a devastating terrorist attack and the whole alliance looked in vain for leadership from the leader of the free world.

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Thanks, Ben. You must be very proud.

*Mike Gonzalez, a senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation, spent close to 20 years as a journalist, 15 of them reporting from Europe, Asia, and Latin America.*

## **Free Beacon**

### **[Our Secretary-General In Chief](#)**

***President Obama is more concerned with American overreaction than ISIS terrorism***

by Matthew Continetti

Terror in Brussels leaves at least 30 dead. Visiting Cuba, President Obama responds. For 51 seconds. Then he gets back to burying the Cold War. Which ended in 1991.

Later in Havana, [explaining to ESPN](#) why he followed through with plans to attend a baseball game despite the international crisis, the president invoked David Ortiz of the Red Sox, who rallied Boston after the 2013 marathon bombing. What Obama said of Ortiz is revealing.

"That is the kind of resilience and kind of strength that we have to continually show in the face of these terrorists," he said. "They cannot defeat America. They can't—they don't produce anything. They don't have a message that appeals to the vast majority of Muslims or the vast majority of people around the world. But what they can do is scare us and make people afraid and disrupt our daily lives and divide us. As long as we don't allow that to happen, we'll be ok."

Whew, what a relief. Islamic holy warriors bomb, kill, maim, mutilate, decapitate, rape, crucify, and shoot civilians of every sex, age, race, and creed—but they won't win, so long as the president maintains the fortitude to stick to his schedule and *watch a baseball game with a Communist dictator*. Now watch Raul and me do the wave.

Rarely has Obama's attitude toward terrorism been brought into such stark relief. Why does he respond so perfunctorily, so coolly, so stoically to the mayhem? Not because he lacks sympathy. Because he believes his job is to restrain America from overreaction, from hubris, from our worst instincts of imperialism and oppression.

Yes, the thinking goes, ISIS and al Qaeda are threats to be fought, contained, defeated. But the greater threat, in Obama's view, is that Americans may become scared, afraid, disrupted, divided. We might invade Iraq again, or cut off immigration and trade, or discriminate against the

Muslim minority. That is the real danger against which this president stands. Terrorism will burn itself out. The problem of American maximalism remains.

This is not the sort of thing you expect to hear from an American president. It's what you expect from a secretary general of the United Nations, from the president of the European Commission, from the foreign ministry of France circa 2002. It's the worldview of the international NGO, of the multilateral bureaucrat: Terrorism? We can manage. But the U.S. hyper-power? We've got to put a lid on this problem, stat.

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The president, writes [Jeffrey Goldberg of the Atlantic](#), "has never believed that terrorism poses a threat to America commensurate with the fear it generates." When ISIS began its killing spree in the summer of 2014, Obama told an adviser, "They're not coming here to chop our heads off." Goldberg reports that Obama has taken to wandering the halls of the White House, reminding "his staff that terrorism takes far fewer lives in America than handguns, car accidents, and falls in bathtubs do."

Figures: If terrorism kills fewer Americans than bathtubs, why miss the baseball game? But Obama's logic is ridiculous. It rests on the mother of all category errors. Auto crashes and life-threatening falls are the result of bad luck. Terrorism and gun crime are acts of human agency. Individuals are behind them. And in the case of terrorism (and of gangs) these individuals are embedded in networks of radicalization, training, equipment, and support.

There is no global conspiracy of Jacuzzis to murder Americans. But there is, as the last decade and a half has made disturbingly clear, a widespread effort by an ideological movement to kill as many people as possible—most of whom, we ought to remember, are Muslims themselves—in the revanchist pursuit of a twenty-first century Caliphate. You insure against accidents. But you fight crime and terrorism and global jihad by raising defenses, securing territory, and disrupting the bad actors before they disrupt you.

"Several years ago," Goldberg writes, President Obama "expressed to me his admiration for Israelis' 'resilience' in the face of constant terrorism, and it is clear that he would like to see resilience replace panic in American society." What a low view of the American people is expressed in this anecdote—and what a backhanded compliment of Israel. For there is no "panic" gripping America other than the desire for the president to treat the problem of ISIS and Islamic terrorism more seriously than he has. And Israel's response to Palestinian terrorism goes far beyond "resilience" in the face of suicide bombs and rocket attacks—to include a global campaign against terror networks, the forward deployment of forces in the West Bank, and retaliatory offensives against Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza that the president and his multilateral friends are always so quick to criticize and bring to an end.

There is an old joke about how the U.S. ambassador to the United Nation so often acts as the U.N. ambassador to the United States. As the threat of Islamic radicalism has grown and the lands under its dominion have expanded, President Obama has fallen into the role of the hapless diplomat. He is far more interested in constraining American power in a shortsighted effort not to repeat the supposed mistakes of his predecessor than in unleashing the full might of the American power and leading a serious and sustained international effort to deny ISIS legitimacy by depriving it of safe haven. It must give Barack Obama cold comfort to know that his successor is far more likely to act not as secretary-general of the United States, but as its commander-in-chief.

## USA Today

### [Bill Clinton's inadvertent truth](#)

*From San Bernardino to Brussels, we're seeing the 'awful legacy' of Obama's presidency*

by Glenn Harlan Reynolds

Monday night in Spokane, Wash., former President Bill Clinton praised his wife, presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, by contrasting her to what he called "[the awful legacy of the last eight years](#)" under President Obama.

Although a Clinton spokesperson has since walked back Bill's apparent gaffe, that couldn't have gone over well at the White House — or, at any rate, at the mansion in Cuba where President Obama [was staying](#) just then — but Clinton was right. Barack Obama has left an awful legacy, and the next president, whoever it is, will have a lot to deal with. Fortunately, the next president — whether it's Hillary, Donald Trump or Ted Cruz, or even Bernie Sanders — will probably be a better president.

For one example of Obama's "awful legacy," we need look no further than the terror attacks this week in Brussels. These attacks, which [killed dozens](#) and injured close to 200, were perpetrated by the Islamic State, the group that Obama once disparagingly called a "[jayvee team](#)."

Well, for a jayvee team, they've done a lot of damage, in the Middle East and beyond, and it's in large part because of Obama's premature withdrawal from Iraq, which fulfilled a political promise, but which had the effect of squandering a decade of blood and treasure, and [costing many thousands](#) of lives.

As late as 2010, things were going sufficiently well in Iraq that the Obama Administration was [bragging](#) about what a huge success they had going there. But in his 2008 campaign, Obama [had promised](#) to pull U.S. troops out of Iraq, and so it was essential that he do so before 2012, or his antiwar supporters would complain. So Obama pulled out. And that was a mistake.

As journalist Bob Woodward [observed](#): "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."

No, we didn't. In fact, as *The New Yorker's* [Dexter Filkins reported](#), the White House didn't want to make a deal to stay. Filkins, an Iraq War critic, agreed with radio host Hugh Hewitt that

Obama's withdrawal may have been "[the worst strategic decision of many bad strategic decisions.](#)"

And the consequence of that mistake was the rise of ISIL after the United States pulled out, lost influence and lost the intelligence network that it had maintained in Iraq.

The White House made plain to intelligence agencies that it didn't want to hear bad news about ISIL. From low-level analysts to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, [everyone knew](#), so it increasingly appears, that the intelligence was being politically skewed to support the Obama Administration's preferred view that ISIL wasn't a threat, thus justifying the pullout and Obama's policy of inaction. The result is a "[messy ... intelligence scandal](#)," as the *Observer* put it, that would be a lot messier if it didn't implicate a Democratic president that so many in the press want to protect.

And now, despite all of Obama's Nobel Peace Prize posturing, *The Washington Post* reports that his administration has put [a lot more of our military in Iraq](#) than it has been saying. We may have to fight the war all over again.

Bill Clinton is right. Obama's is an awful legacy, one that has borne ugly fruit in the Middle East, in Europe and — as Islamic-State-inspired attacks strike here, too, from San Bernadino to [Garland, Texas](#) — in the United States.

Writer Roger Simon asks, "[Are we ready for reality](#) after the Brussels terror attacks?" Nope. But with luck, we will be after November.

## InfoWars

### [Obama: 'There's Little Difference Between Communism and Capitalism'](#)

***"Just choose from what works"***

by Paul Joseph Watson

President Obama has stoked controversy after he suggested to an audience of Argentinian youth that there was no great difference between communism and capitalism and that they should just "choose from what works".

Obama responded to a question about nonprofit community organizations and the necessity of attracting funding from both the public and private sectors.

"So often in the past there has been a division between left and right, between capitalists and communists or socialists, and especially in the Americas, that's been a big debate," Obama said.

"Those are interesting intellectual arguments, but I think for your generation, you should be practical and just choose from what works. You don't have to worry about whether it really fits into socialist theory or capitalist theory. You should just decide what works," he added.

Obama went on to praise Cuba's socialist system under dictator Raúl Castro, touting the country's free access to basic education and health care, although he acknowledged that Havana itself "looks like it did in the 1950s" because the economy is "not working".

Obama concluded his comments by arguing that a market-based system “has to have a social and moral and ethical and community basis”.

Reaction to the remarks wasn't pretty.

“This man is so destructive, so harmful and so ignorant,” [wrote Jim Hoft](#).

“The Marxist in the White House is erasing the lines between two dangerous ideologies and the one that made the US great, just as he erased our borders. This is a man who would be at home in communist China,” chided the [Independent Sentinel](#).

For a more accurate breakdown of how capitalism beats socialism every time, watch the video below.

## **Townhall** **Socialist or Fascist**

by Thomas Sowell

It bothers me a little when conservatives call Barack Obama a "socialist." He certainly is an enemy of the free market, and wants politicians and bureaucrats to make the fundamental decisions about the economy. But that does not mean that he wants government ownership of the means of production, which has long been a standard definition of socialism.

What President Obama has been pushing for, and moving toward, is more insidious: government control of the economy, while leaving ownership in private hands. That way, politicians get to call the shots but, when their bright ideas lead to disaster, they can always blame those who own businesses in the private sector.

Politically, it is heads-I-win when things go right, and tails-you-lose when things go wrong. This is far preferable, from Obama's point of view, since it gives him a variety of scapegoats for all his failed policies, without having to use President Bush as a scapegoat all the time. Government ownership of the means of production means that politicians also own the consequences of their policies, and have to face responsibility when those consequences are disastrous -- something that Barack Obama avoids like the plague.

Thus the Obama administration can arbitrarily force insurance companies to cover the children of their customers until the children are 26 years old. Obviously, this creates favorable publicity for President Obama. But if this and other government edicts cause insurance premiums to rise, then that is something that can be blamed on the "greed" of the insurance companies. The same principle, or lack of principle, applies to many other privately owned businesses. It is a very successful political ploy that can be adapted to all sorts of situations. One of the reasons why both pro-Obama and anti-Obama observers may be reluctant to see him as fascist is that both tend to accept the prevailing notion that fascism is on the political right, while it is obvious that Obama is on the political left.

Back in the 1920s, however, when fascism was a new political development, it was widely -- and correctly -- regarded as being on the political left. Jonah Goldberg's great book "Liberal

Fascism" cites overwhelming evidence of the fascists' consistent pursuit of the goals of the left, and of the left's embrace of the fascists as one of their own during the 1920s.

Mussolini, the originator of fascism, was lionized by the left, both in Europe and in America, during the 1920s. Even Hitler, who adopted fascist ideas in the 1920s, was seen by some, including W.E.B. Du Bois, as a man of the left.

It was in the 1930s, when ugly internal and international actions by Hitler and Mussolini repelled the world, that the left distanced themselves from fascism and its Nazi offshoot -- and verbally transferred these totalitarian dictatorships to the right, saddling their opponents with these pariahs.

What socialism, fascism and other ideologies of the left have in common is an assumption that some very wise people -- like themselves -- need to take decisions out of the hands of lesser people, like the rest of us, and impose those decisions by government fiat.

The left's vision is not only a vision of the world, but also a vision of themselves, as superior beings pursuing superior ends. In the United States, however, this vision conflicts with a Constitution that begins, "We the People..."

That is why the left has for more than a century been trying to get the Constitution's limitations on government loosened or evaded by judges' new interpretations, based on notions of "a living Constitution" that will take decisions out of the hands of "We the People," and transfer those decisions to our betters.

The self-flattery of the vision of the left also gives its true believers a huge ego stake in that vision, which means that mere facts are unlikely to make them reconsider, regardless of what evidence piles up against the vision of the left, and regardless of its disastrous consequences. Only our own awareness of the huge stakes involved can save us from the rampaging presumptions of our betters, whether they are called socialists or fascists. So long as we buy their heady rhetoric, we are selling our birthright of freedom.

## **Streetwise Professor**

### **[A Practical President, Who Believes Himself Exempt From Intellectual Influence](#)**

by Craig Pirrong

Obama caused a kerfuffle with his [remarks in Argentina on Thursday](#). The most common interpretation of his remarks was that he was drawing an equivalence between communism/socialism and capitalism. Yes, one can interpret his speech that way, but I don't think that's the most accurate way to parse it.

Obama was denigrating all ideological frames as interesting subject matter for academic debate, but of little interest or relevance to practical politics:

I guess to make a broader point, so often in the past there's been a sharp division between left and right, between capitalist and communist or socialist. And especially in the Americas, that's been a big debate, right? Oh, you know, you're a capitalist Yankee dog, and oh, you know, you're some crazy communist that's going to take away everybody's property. And I mean,

those are interesting intellectual arguments, but I think for your generation, you should be practical and just choose from what works. You don't have to worry about whether it neatly fits into socialist theory or capitalist theory — you should just decide what works.

In short, he advocated a rigorously pragmatic approach. Or put differently, a Chinese menu theory of government: take one item from menu A, another from menu B, depending on your taste and what “works” for you.

The criticism here should be directed at his vapidness and superficiality and question begging. By what criteria are the things that “work” to be determined? How do liberty, individual autonomy, and reliance on coercion and repression come into play when evaluating what works?

Further, real world decisions always involve trade-offs. Works-Doesn't Work is binary: trade offs aren't.

Obama also apparently believes that it is possible to design policies without a theoretical framework. Hayek was closer to the truth when he said without theory the facts are silent. Theories are about causal mechanisms, and policies are all about manipulating cause to achieve particular effects. You can't make a reasonable evaluation *ex ante* of what policies will “work” (based on your objective function) without some theoretical framework. Further, those who don't think deeply about cause and effect when designing policies inevitably unleash unintended consequences that are usually more baleful than beneficial.

All that said, the fact that Obama apparently believes that some socialist or communist policies “work” by any criteria held by non-socialists/communists is revealing. All empirical experience is that explicitly communist and socialist systems have delivered lower standards of living (often dramatically so), less freedom, and more coercion. Further, their alleged virtue—equality—is largely chimerical. There is always a privileged elite in socialist/communist systems, and what equality there is tends to be an equality of misery. What's more, inequality can be palliated (and is considerably even in the US) by transfer programs that fall well short of communism or socialism. The Bernie worshipping millennial idiots who point to Denmark or Sweden as socialist paradises have no clue: they are welfare states, which is a very different kettle of fish.

The examples from Cuba that Obama cited as things that “work” in a communist system are something of a joke. Non-communist/socialist systems deliver better education and health care than Castro's Cuba.

Obama was not revealing that he is a closet commie, although he clearly does not think communism is inherently a bad thing. In fact, he was being an old school progressive, making arguments old school progressives have made since Wilson and through FDR. The New Dealers were of a similarly pragmatic bent, and like Obama, openly advocated using policies adopted by fascist or communist countries if they “worked.” Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini all had admirers among the New Dealers, who believed that they had found better policies than voluntary contract and exchange, and open competition.

When I read Obama's remarks, I immediately thought of [FDR's speech at Oglethorpe University](#) in May, 1932 (while he was running for president):

Do not confuse objectives with methods. When the Nation becomes substantially united in favor of planning the broad objectives of civilization, then true leadership must unite thought behind definite methods.

The country needs and, unless I mistake its temper, the country demands bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it: If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something. The millions who are in want will not stand by silently forever while the things to satisfy their needs are within easy reach.

“Bold experimentation” is basically a prescription to try anything and see if it “works.” If one thing doesn’t “work,” (i.e., “if it fails”) try something else. Once the “broad objectives” are defined, any method that achieves those objectives is fair game. Roosevelt in Georgia, like Obama in Argentina, was saying that all methods should be open for consideration and evaluated on purely pragmatic grounds.

Roosevelt was also making a favorable reference to planning, which at the time was associated with the USSR. Like Obama, he was saying don’t rule out a particular policy just because it originates in communism.

Of course, the implementation of this theory of government in the New Deal led to a confused hodge-podge of policies that largely failed to achieve their stated objectives, and indeed, in many cases worsened the nation’s economic crisis: that is, these policies were rife with unintended consequences.

This provides an excellent example of Hayek’s dictum. Those operating based on standard microeconomic (e.g., capitalist) principles/theories rightly predicted that cartelizing product and labor markets would not lead to higher output, and they were right. Contrary to Obama, “capitalist theory” was more than an intellectually interesting subject for classroom debate: it was a very useful guide to evaluating the practical effects of policies, which the New Dealers ignored, to the nation’s detriment.

And those progressives like Wilson, FDR, and now Obama who touted the superiority of pragmatism, and claimed their practicality and independence from theoretical abstractions and systems, were largely fooling themselves. The Pragmatism (note the capitalization) that has infused progressive thought for well over a century isn’t a-theoretical or a-ideological. It is an ideological and philosophical system developed in Germany in the 19th century. Not that Obama gets that.

No, Obama seems to be exactly the kind of man that Keynes so trenchantly described in the *General Theory* 80 years ago:

Practical men who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.

What Keynes describes is a form of intellectual conceit common among politicians, and especially progressive ones. That conceit, rather than some soft spot for socialism, is the problem with Obama’s “do what works” nostrum.

IT TAKES A SPECIAL KIND OF STUPID TO  
SAY

THE U.S. COULD LEARN ABOUT HUMAN  
RIGHTS FROM CUBA

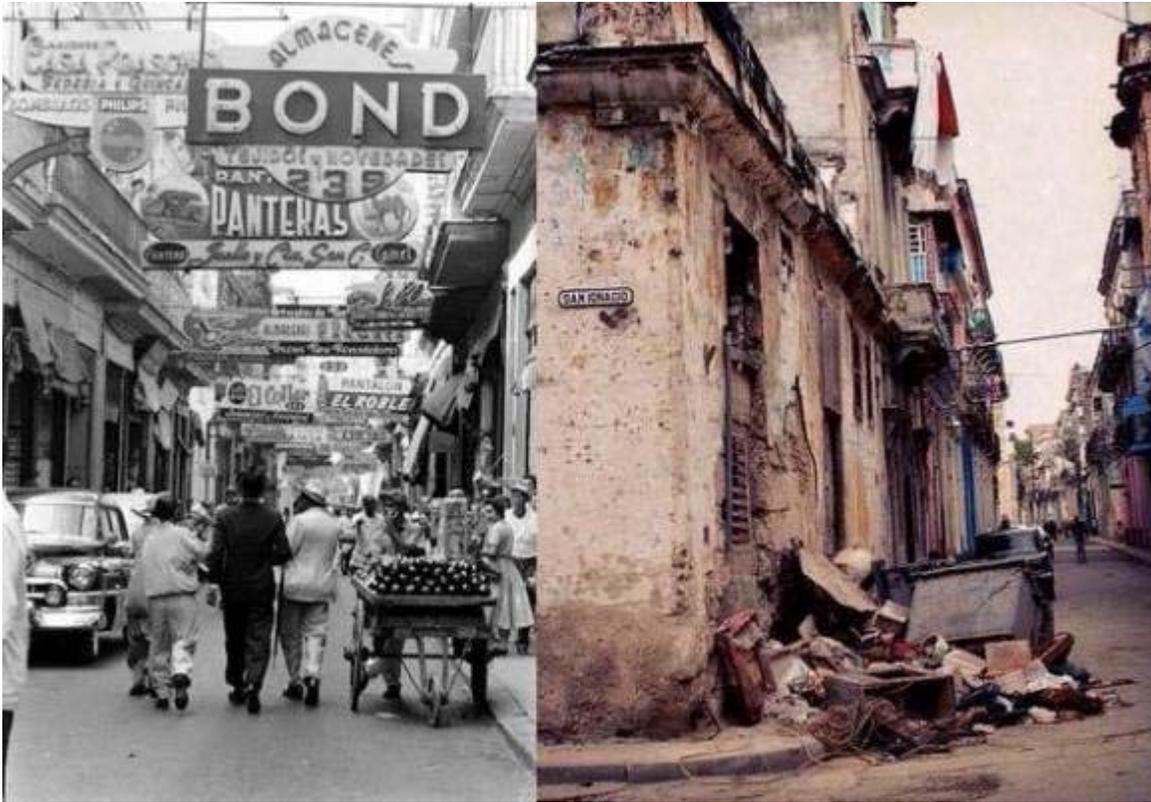
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*Cuba Before and After Castro (kind of like Detroit and Democrats)*

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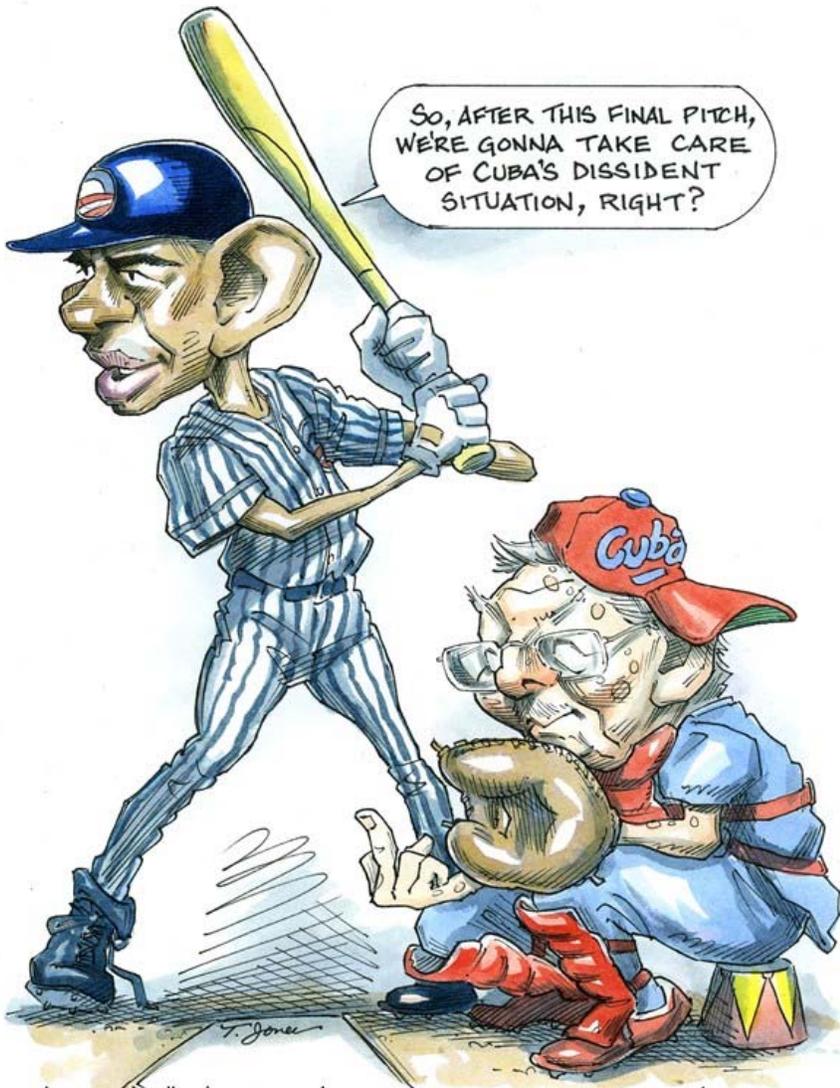
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FOR  
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IF FIDEL CASTRO,



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