

March 3, 2016 –PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE PREZ

It's been more than a week since the refusal of the president to attend Scalia's service and it still rankles. It was a perfect chance for a passive aggressive personality. By doing nothing, the president was able to give the finger to millions. [Townhall](#) columnist writes on President Demeanor.

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It turned the 2000 election partially into a referendum on restoring the dignity, or at least the veneer of it, to the office. Thanks to the words and deeds of Barack Obama, that dignity needs to be restored yet again.

Disagreements over policy are common, and natural, really. And presidents have used language they, perhaps, would like to have back in hindsight. But their actions, at least their public actions, generally have been presidential. No more.

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More from [Kyle Smith](#) on president petulant.

Gratuitous. Nasty. Petty. Spiteful. Insulting. Just plain rude. When the rhetoric of a major party's leading presidential candidate falls to this level, we should be scornful.

So, how is it OK when it isn't just a presidential candidate, but a president, who does it?

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So how is barry doing elsewhere. Charles Krauthammer sums up foreign policy.

1. In the South China Sea, on a speck of land of disputed sovereignty far from its borders, China has just installed anti-aircraft batteries and stationed fighter jets. This after China landed planes on an artificial island it created on another disputed island chain (the Spratlys, claimed by the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam). These facilities now function as forward bases for Beijing to challenge seven decades of American naval dominance of the Pacific Rim.

"China is clearly militarizing the South China Sea," the commander of the U.S. Pacific Command told Congress on Tuesday. Its goal? "Hegemony in East Asia."

2. Syria. Russian intervention has turned the tide of war. Having rescued the Bashar al-Assad regime from collapse, relentless Russian bombing is destroying the rebel stronghold of Aleppo, Syria's largest city, creating a massive new wave of refugees and demonstrating to the entire Middle East what a Great Power can achieve when it acts seriously.

The U.S. response? Repeated pathetic attempts by Secretary of State John Kerry to propitiate Russia (and its ally, Iran) in one collapsed peace conference after another. On Sunday, he stepped out to announce yet another "provisional agreement in principle" on "a cessation of hostilities" that the CIA director, the defense secretary and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff deem little more than a ruse.

3. Ukraine. Having swallowed Crimea so thoroughly that no one even talks about it anymore, Russia continues to trample with impunity on the Minsk cease-fire agreements. Vladimir Putin is now again stirring the pot, intensifying the fighting, advancing his remorseless campaign to fracture and subordinate the Ukrainian state. Meanwhile, Obama still refuses to send the Ukrainians even defensive weapons.

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The U.S. response? Words. ...

OK, we know Krauthammer is not a fan. How about the liberal Daily Beast? Here they are in How Obama Lost the Mideast to Putin.

The Middle East is in flames. Just as Iraq was President George W. Bush's catastrophic legacy, Syria will be Obama's. Bush's sins of commission wrought no less chaos than Obama's sins of omission. ...

... so much of this could have been avoided, if President Barack Obama had displayed two qualities in his foreign policy: leadership and strategic vision.

We know he lacked a strategy because, well, he told us so. And there was no moment of more memorable spinelessness than when Syrian President Bashar Assad crossed Obama's chemical "red line" with impunity.

However which way Obama is remembered for his domestic record, I—and no doubt many other foreign policy pundits—will forever be gritting our teeth at the sheer arrogant indifference he displayed to the unraveling of the Middle East, and the rise of the Russian Bear. Putin stared Obama down; Obama cowered and blinked. ...

... The consequences of Obama's stunning lack of vision will be felt in Europe, too, in more ways than one. As Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kurds, Turkey, Russia and various jihadist terrorist factions such as ISIS and al Qaeda fight over the Middle-Eastern jewel, half of Syria's population has become displaced. Hundreds of thousands are fleeing to Europe, and the resulting cultural civil strife this has sparked will only bolster those—like Putin—who seek to break up the European Union. ...

And here is the German internationalist Der Spiegel on the Syrian Debacle.

Instapundit has the story.

... The war has long since ceased being solely about Syria. The country has become Ground Zero of global geopolitics, an unholy mixture of Russia's desired return to superpower status, an increasingly authoritarian Turkey, tentative US foreign policy, the Kurdish conflict, the arch-rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Islamist terror and the inability of a divided, crisis-ridden EU to do much of anything.

The war in Syria has transformed from a civil war into a world war.

It has long since reached Europe in the form of millions of refugees, terror attacks in Paris and attacks on tourists in Tunisia and Istanbul. And America, which has long been the leader of the West and guarantor of security in Europe, has refused to get involved. . . .

The man who could answer many of these questions is saying very little these days about Syria, despite the recent drama. In the past, Barack Obama has said that Assad must step down and he still refers to him as "a brutal, ruthless dictator." At the same time, though, Obama is doing nothing to counter him and there are no signs that he has anything up his sleeve either.

The New York Times recently wrote that it is difficult to distinguish between Putin's and Obama's Syria strategies. Meanwhile, historian and journalist Michael Ignatieff and Brookings Institution fellow Leon Wieseltier lamented in the Washington Post, "It's time for those who care about the moral standing of the United States to say that this policy is shameful."...

Victor Davis Hanson compares today to the time before WW II.

... Had the U.S. kept its military strong after World War I, and had it entered into a formal alliance with its former World War I partners, Germany never would have risked a second war against the combined strength of a fully armed Britain, France, and United States.

Instead, Hitler assumed the U.S. either could not or would not offer much military help to his intended European targets.

Why, then, did a relatively weak Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1941 believe that it could take on much of the world, and inspire Axis partners such as Italy and Japan to follow its suicidal lead?

The answer is obvious. British and French appeasement, Soviet collaboration, and American isolation had together convinced Hitler and his Axis allies that the victors of World War I were more eager to grant concessions at any cost than were the defeated.

The world of 2016 is eerily beginning to resemble the powder keg of 1939 Europe.

Iran, China, and North Korea, along with radical Islamic terrorist groups, all have particular contempt for Western democracies. Almost daily, various aggressive nations or organizations seek provocation by shooting off intercontinental missiles, boarding American boats, sending millions of young male Middle Easterners into the West, and issuing unending threats. China is creating new artificial islands to control commercial routes to and from Asia. ...

John Hinderaker, using a WaPo editorial, posts on the failures of our Cuba policy. *The Washington Post* editorial board documents the pathetic failure of the Obama administration's Cuba policy under the bleak headline: "Failure In Cuba." Whether it is a failure, of course, depends on what you think Obama was trying to achieve.

President Obama's opening to Cuba seems to be failing to live up to its declared goals. When the end to a half-century of hostility was announced in December 2014, the proclaimed U.S. purpose was to "unleash the potential of 11 million Cubans," to "engage and empower the Cuban people," and to "empower the nascent Cuban private sector," among other things. ...

Yet there is scant evidence so far of a sea change in Cuba — perhaps because Mr. Obama continues to offer the Castro regime unilateral concessions requiring nothing in return.

So, it's not just Iran. It is Obama's foreign policy.

Since the United States has placed no human rights conditions on the opening, the Castro regime continues to systematically engage in arbitrary detention of dissidents and others who speak up for democracy. In fact, detentions have spiked in recent months. The state continues to monopolize radio, television and newspapers.

Which raises the question: does Barack Obama actually want Cuba to be free of socialist domination? If you think the answer to that question is Yes, can you offer any evidence? ...

Townhall

[Demearing The Office](#)

by Derek Hunter

When President Bill Clinton's affair with intern Monica Lewinsky was exposed, it was a new low for the office of president. It wasn't the first affair by a president (or Clinton), not by a long shot. But the fact it was with an intern and he committed perjury behind it demeaned the office in a way that hadn't been done before.

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There are a lot of perks when you're president. Your every whim is catered to – a kitchen staff on call, butlers, Air Force One, access to the rich, powerful and famous, living in the White House, and so on.

With that lifestyle comes certain responsibilities. The constitutional ones are obvious and enumerated. Beyond those are duties inherent in the office which, although sometimes unpleasant, are no less important.

The most important intrinsic duty of the president is to represent the people of the United States, not in policy but in person. The president can't get drunk and stumble around in public, for example. That would be universally panned as beneath the dignity of the office.

Yet, other events, perhaps undignified on the surface, are simply tradition and "part of the job." Every Thanksgiving the president holds a press conference, delivers a pointless speech, pardons a couple of turkeys and sends them off to live the rest of their lives on a farm somewhere. There are about a million things any president would rather be doing. But that has become part of the job, so they have to do it.

Another thing the president must do is show up at events that matter, that are markers in history, and to represent the American people because we can't attend.

The president represents us at important, and sometimes only symbolic, events.

President Obama shows up only when he wants up, only when it matters to him. The funeral of Nelson Mandela – he was there. The funeral of Margaret Thatcher – he couldn't be bothered. Both were important figures in world history; only one was crucial in winning the Cold War.

The president has no interest in fighting terrorism beyond what he must do. Therefore, after the attack on the offices of Charlie Hebdo, when world leaders united and marched in solidarity to honor the victims, Barack Obama was uninterested.

A stalwart conservative justice of the Supreme Court dies in office, and even though every time in American history a sitting Supreme Court justice died in office the president attended the funeral, Barack Obama can't be bothered. He's sending the vice president.

The vice president is dispatched to important events when the president can't go, not when they don't want to. Children skip events they don't want to attend, adults attend events they don't want to out of respect for others. Barack Obama refuses.

This petty public refusal has lowered the bar of the Civil Society.

President Obama did not like Antonin Scalia because President Obama doesn't like anyone who disagrees with him. Considering how rarely he bothers speaking with members of Congress, he doesn't even seem to like people who do agree with him. He has his world and his worldview and nothing, not even duty, is going to penetrate that bubble.

For all the talk of bipartisanship, he doesn't have decency in him. For all the complaints of partisan rancor, he doesn't have it in him to rise above it for even a few hours. Either he either thinks he's above the job, or the job bores him.

A man who gets bored during the raid to kill Osama bin Laden to the point he leaves the room to play cards with an employee has no interest in the dignity of the office.

The man could not bring himself to show up to the funeral of a sitting Supreme Court Justice. Let that sink in. Having his spokesman state publicly he wouldn't rule out golfing instead exposed the man in the office as, yet again, as demeaning the office.

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NY Post

[Obama's rudeness hits new heights with Scalia, Schumer](#)

by Kyle Smith

Gratuitous. Nasty. Petty. Spiteful. Insulting. Just plain rude. When the rhetoric of a major party's leading presidential candidate falls to this level, we should be scornful.

So, how is it OK when it isn't just a presidential candidate, but a president, who does it?

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Obama's latest, silent insult — leaving a spokesman to explain he had better things to do on a Saturday than attend the funeral of a 30-year justice of the Supreme Court — isn't surprising when you consider the mean-spirited things he says virtually every time he steps in front of a microphone.

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Police Commissioner Bill Bratton noted, accurately, that this was pure politics — the president was punishing New York to get back at Schumer.

Obama was doing exactly what he accuses Republican members of Congress of doing, calling them "hostage takers . . . [of] the American people." Except that his rhetoric was about a debate over tax cuts, not Obama's actual cutting of money needed to keep the nation's largest city safe.

Meanwhile, when it comes to actual hostage takers, Obama can't muster much outrage. At last year's national prayer breakfast, he barely paused to obliquely refer to the Islamists who had just burned alive a Jordanian pilot so he could single out Christianity for bashing: "Lest we get on our high horse and think that this is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ," Obama said. "In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ."

If you recall Christian principles, as embodied by a minister named Martin Luther King Jr., being a crucial component of civil-rights victories, Obama thinks you're a dope. If you can't see how 11th century atrocities more or less cancel out the ones committed the day before yesterday, you're not the broad historical thinker Obama thinks he is.

Comparing Islamist fanatics to conservative Americans, and implying that he is more comfortable with the former, is a favorite Obama tactic. Dismissing extremists in Iran, Obama said last August, "In fact, it's those hard-liners who are most comfortable with the status quo. It's those hard-liners chanting 'death to America' who have been most opposed to the deal. They're making common cause with the Republican caucus."

Just two days after promising to scale back his attacks on Republicans at the 2013 Jefferson Dinner, Obama told George Stephanopoulos his opponents wanted to "gut Medicare or gut Social Security or gut Medicaid." At the end of 2012, at a moment when Republicans thought they were on the verge of closing a budget deal with Obama, he instead staged a press conference and said the Republican policy was "we're just going to try to . . . shove spending cuts at us, that will hurt seniors, or hurt students, or hurt middle-class families." In 2012 he advised Latino voters to think, "We're gonna punish our enemies." In a 2012 chat with Douglas Brinkley for Rolling Stone, he called Mitt Romney a "bulls—er."

All of this has come from a president who is forever bewailing the partisan rancor of a country that, he keeps sadly informing us, has let him down by proving unable to discuss its differences in a civil way.

Obama fanboys often claim that their superhero has been subjected to an unprecedented level of attack and can only take so much. Couldn't Trump justify his insult-based campaign on that basis? George W. Bush certainly took more than his share of abuse, but to fire back would have struck him as ungentlemanly. He ducked the insults as blithely as he ducked that flying shoe in Iraq.

Besides, usually Obama fans are so desperate to come up with an example of "vitriol" directed against their superhero that they wind up quoting the last four words of a 2009 remark by Rush Limbaugh: "Look, what [Obama] is talking about is the absorption of as much of the private sector by the US government as possible, from the banking business, to the mortgage industry, the automobile business, to health care. I do not want the government in charge of all of these things. I don't want this to work . . . I hope he fails."

Limbaugh and Obama have more in common than either would like to admit. Except one of them is supposed to represent the entire country. One of them isn't supposed to sound like talk radio.

Washington Post [While Obama fiddles ...](#)

by Charles Krauthammer



A Syrian Civil Defense worker carries a child wrapped in a blanket over the rubble following a reported air strike by Syrian government forces on in Aleppo, on Jan. 16.

State of the world, Year Eight of Barack Obama:

1. In the South China Sea, on a speck of land of disputed sovereignty far from its borders, China has just installed anti-aircraft batteries and [stationed fighter jets](#). This after China landed planes on an artificial island it created on another disputed island chain (the Spratlys, claimed by the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam). These facilities now function as forward bases for Beijing to challenge seven decades of American naval dominance of the Pacific Rim.

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Unlike gravitational waves, today’s strategic situation is not hard to discern. Three major have-not powers are seeking to overturn the post-Cold War status quo: Russia in Eastern Europe, China in East Asia, Iran in the Middle East. All are on the march.

To say nothing of the Islamic State, now extending its reach from Afghanistan to West Africa. The international order built over decades by the United States is crumbling.

In the face of which, what does Obama do? [Go to Cuba](#).

Yes, Cuba. A supreme strategic irrelevance so dear to Obama’s anti-anti-communist heart.

Is he at least going to celebrate progress in human rights and democracy — which Obama [established last year](#) as a precondition for any presidential visit? Of course not. When has Obama ever held to a red line? Indeed, since Obama began his “historic” normalization with Cuba, the repression has gotten worse. Last month, the regime arrested [1,414 political dissidents](#), the second-most ever recorded.

No matter. Amid global disarray and American decline, Obama sticks to his cherished concerns: Cuba, Guantanamo (about which he gave a rare televised address this week) and, of course, climate change.

Obama could not bestir himself to go to Paris in response to the various jihadi atrocities — [sending Kerry instead](#) “to share a big hug with Paris” (as Kerry explained) with James Taylor

singing “You’ve Got a Friend” — but he did make an ostentatious three-day visit there for climate change.

So why not go to Havana? Sure, the barbarians are at the gates and pushing hard knowing they will enjoy but 11 more months of minimal American resistance. But our passive president genuinely believes that such advances don’t really matter — that these disruptors are so on the wrong side of history, that their reaches for territory, power, victory are so 20th century.

Of course, it mattered greatly to the quarter-million slaughtered in Syria and the millions more exiled. It feels all quite real to a dissolving Europe, an expanding China, a rising Iran, a metastasizing jihadism.

Not to the visionary Obama, however. He sees far beyond such ephemera. He knows what really matters: climate change, Gitmo and Cuba.

With time running out, he wants these to be his legacy. Indeed, they will be.

Daily Beast

[How Obama Lost the Mideast to Putin](#)

Vision, strategy, and courage might have prevented the disaster we see today in Syria. But those elements were nowhere to be found.

by Naajid Nawaz

LONDON — The Middle East is in flames. Just as Iraq was President George W. Bush’s catastrophic legacy, Syria will be Obama’s. Bush’s sins of commission wrought no less chaos than Obama’s sins of omission. If the [Stop the War lobby](#)’s primary motive was to avoid civilian casualties, then by any standard they should slither away shamefully into voluntarily redundancy

By latest human rights accounts, [Syria’s five-year civil war has left 470,000 dead](#). To add to our disgrace, we don’t even know how accurate these figures are because—as if in despair—the United Nations gave up collecting statistics 18 months ago. Syria has spiraled into the biggest humanitarian, political and security challenge of our time (**since**) the Cuban Missile crisis of 2016.

Last week in Munich, the “well-meaning but under-powered” U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry optimistically [announced](#) a temporary ceasefire, leading up to UN-brokered peace talks scheduled for Feb. 25. Onlookers meanwhile, wondered what sort of “cessation of hostilities” allows Russia to continue hostilities, and questioned whether depressing realities on the ground truly reflect Kerry’s sleight of hand.

Those realities are dire. Through a combination of Shia-Islamist sectarianism in Yemen and Lebanon, terrorist intimidation via Hizbollah, and meddling in Iraq and Syria, Iran has succeeded in setting the region alight.

No less a culprit, Saudi Arabia has spent decades funding its own sectarian agenda—Sunni-Wahabi puritanism. As Saudi struggles feverishly to compete against the ayatollahs, Iran’s “Shia

crescent” has cast its shadow from Persia through Iraq, deep into the Levant and pierces its way into the Arabian Peninsula via Oman and Yemen. In desperation, the Saudis have [threatened to send ground troops](#) into Syria, just as they already did in Bahrain and Yemen.

Turkey—bursting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s neo-Ottoman delusions of grandeur—is desperate to prevent the triple threat of being overwhelmed by refugees, facing a resurgent hostile Assad regime, and watching as an independent Kurdish region arises on its border. Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has [warned that Turkey will not hesitate](#) to act military to halt Kurdish ambitions. Already [bombing](#) Kurdish strongholds inside Syria, the Turks too are suggesting sending in ground troops to join Saudi Arabia.



Hearing of Turkish and Saudi ground troops, Russia’s Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev responded by [threatening](#) “permanent war”. Hypocritically, Russia has already committed her own ground troops, and flies up to 510 combat sorties a week inside Syria from its airbase near Latakia.

Putin is pursuing his aim of dividing Europe, and dividing NATO, by championing the Kurds. As Turkey downed a Russian jet last year, Russia retaliated by [amassing her forces](#) on the Turkish border to secure a base in the Syrian Kurdish region. The two countries’ militaries are currently fighting on the ground [“mere kilometers from each other”](#) and if a clash occurs NATO could either be unwillingly dragged into war or—to Putin’s delight —lose all credibility as a common defence pact.

Perhaps as a reward for hosting a Russian base, and as a [snub to “fickle”](#) American support—which really *should* have been there from the start, the Kurds of Rojava, an autonomous Kurdish area in northern Syria, have been given their first overseas representative office in Moscow. As

well as Rojava, there is the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq. The Kurds have risen up and are incredibly unlikely to ever accept Syrian, Iraqi or Turkish rule again, no matter what “cessation of hostilities” Kerry reaches.

This is how it came to be that the region now stands precariously at the cusp of World War III. But so much of this could have been avoided, if President Barack Obama had displayed two qualities in his foreign policy: leadership and strategic vision.

We know he lacked a strategy because, well, he [told](#) us so. And there was no moment of more memorable spinelessness than when Syrian President Bashar Assad crossed Obama’s [chemical “red line”](#) with impunity.

However which way Obama is remembered for his domestic record, I—and no doubt many other foreign policy pundits—will forever be gritting our teeth at the sheer arrogant indifference he displayed to the unraveling of the Middle East, and the rise of the Russian Bear. Putin stared Obama down; Obama cowered and blinked.

As in Afghanistan, then in Bosnia, and now in Syria, the story of how entire generations came to be radicalized is incomplete without considering the role of Russian aggression.

In Afghanistan the Soviets invaded—only to provide the perfect context for a nascent al Qaeda. In Bosnia, Russia supplied the Serbs while the International Community stood by its arms embargo—paving the way for the Bosnian genocide that radicalized an entire generation of European Muslims. And now in Syria, Putin props up his puppet Assad while destroying entire Syrian cities— and completely ignoring ISIS-held areas. Meanwhile, the Far-Left gleefully denounce lackadaisical American “colonialism” from [Russian state television channels](#) or pontificate over American ills, [as asylum seekers](#) in Moscow.

The consequences of Obama’s stunning lack of vision will be felt in Europe, too, in more ways than one. As Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kurds, Turkey, Russia and various jihadist terrorist factions such as ISIS and al Qaeda fight over the Middle-Eastern jewel, [half](#) of Syria’s population has become displaced. Hundreds of thousands are fleeing to Europe, and the resulting [cultural civil strife](#) this has sparked will only bolster those—like Putin—who seek to break up the European Union.

Naivety is perhaps too generous a word for Merkel’s open door immigration policy. It is as if she was oblivious to the forthcoming UK referendum scheduled for June 23rd on the Brexit, or Britain leaving Europe.

It’s too late for Obama now, but not for the next American president to recoil from this record of failure. American leadership and strategic vision should, first and foremost, have recognized that the intervention pendulum has swung too far the other way, to pacifism. A global power vacuum, by definition, would soon be filled by another power. Enter Russia.

American leadership would have called Putin’s bluff over that “red line,” and recognized that Putin’s position in Moscow was weaker than it looked. American leadership would have recognized that the recent center-left trend towards isolationism— far from being true to the principles of liberal internationalism— has always been symptomatic of parochial conservative populism. This is why it eventually gave way to Donald Trump.

American strategy would have exploited the opportunity of talks with Iran to force a compromise over Assad. American strategy would have exploited the Egyptian, Saudi and Israeli common

foes of Iran and Assad, to unify them instead around a deal over Palestine. American strategy would have long ago supported an independent Kurdish state before Russia began to seize that opportunity, too. A Kurdish state would have been the Middle East's only secular, democratic Muslim-majority country, and could have acted as a torchlight for the entire region against insurgent Islamism.

Instead, none of this happened. But Obama did receive a Nobel Peace Prize. Congratulations, Mr. President.

Instapundit

DER SPIEGEL ON OBAMA — AND HILLARY'S, AND JOHN KERRY'S — SYRIAN DEBACLE:

The war has long since ceased being solely about Syria. The country has become Ground Zero of global geopolitics, an unholy mixture of Russia's desired return to superpower status, an increasingly authoritarian Turkey, tentative US foreign policy, the Kurdish conflict, the arch-rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Islamist terror and the inability of a divided, crisis-ridden EU to do much of anything.

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It has long since reached Europe in the form of millions of refugees, terror attacks in Paris and attacks on tourists in Tunisia and Istanbul. And America, which has long been the leader of the West and guarantor of security in Europe, has refused to get involved. . . .

The man who could answer many of these questions is saying very little these days about Syria, despite the recent drama. In the past, Barack Obama has said that Assad must step down and he still refers to him as "a brutal, ruthless dictator." At the same time, though, Obama is doing nothing to counter him and there are no signs that he has anything up his sleeve either.

The New York Times recently wrote that it is difficult to distinguish between Putin's and Obama's Syria strategies. Meanwhile, historian and journalist Michael Ignatieff and Brookings Institution fellow Leon Wieseltier lamented in the Washington Post, "It's time for those who care about the moral standing of the United States to say that this policy is shameful."

It is very clear at this point that the US has no strategy beyond its half-hearted efforts to provide training and arms to rebels — and to otherwise rely on negotiations. But none of this has born any fruit, as events in early February demonstrated.

Secretary of State Kerry worked for three months to get the warring parties to a negotiating table under the auspices of the United Nations — moderate rebels, representatives of the regime, Iranians, Saudi Arabians and Russians. But Moscow then turned around and launched its offensive right as the talks began. Within 48 hours, the Russian air force carried out 320 airstrikes in northern Syria alone. It was no coincidence that the storm on Aleppo began at that exact moment. The aim was that of destroying any possibility that the opposition would have a say in Syria's future.

"All sides were aware that a continuation of the talks would become increasingly difficult for the opposition as the regime intensified its military offensive," diplomats in Geneva said. After two

days, the UN mediator Staffan de Mistura suspended talks. Right now, it doesn't look as though the opposition will be prepared to return to Geneva on Feb. 25 as planned. And why should they?

Remember when they told us they'd be smart and sophisticated, not like that dumb cowboy Bush? Yeah, not so much.

National Review

[The West Is Repeating the Mistakes of the 1930s](#)

by Victor Davis Hanson

World War II broke out when Nazi Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. A once preventable war had become inevitable — and would soon become global — due to three fatal decisions.

Most infamously, the Western European democracies had appeased Hitler during the late 1930s in hopes that he would quit gobbling up his neighbors. Unfortunately, the Nazis considered Western appeasement as weakness to be manipulated rather than magnanimity to be reciprocated.

After the bloodless annexation of Austria and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, Hitler assumed that Britain and France would not go to war at all if he went into Poland. Or, if they did, that they would not fight very seriously.

Yet Western appeasement did not alone guarantee the outbreak of World War II.

The Germans invaded Poland only after a guarantee from Josef Stalin that the Soviet Union would soon join in attacking the Poles from the east. The two dictatorships could then divvy up the country.

Stalin's Communist Russia had foolishly gambled that by making a deal with Nazi Germany, Hitler would leave the Soviets alone. At first, Stalin hoped that Germany would turn its war machine loose only on the Western European democracies.

Yet Stalin's collaboration with Hitler eventually guaranteed that Russia also would be double-crossed — less than two years after signing an agreement with the Third Reich, Germany surprise-attacked the Soviet Union, on June 22, 1941. Due to Stalin's collaboration, almost 30 million Russians would die on the Eastern Front over the next four years.

But it was more than Western appeasement of Hitler and Soviet collaboration that made World War II inevitable. Nazi Germany still remained relatively weak in 1939. The populations, economies, and territories of its likely enemies were collectively far greater than those of the Third Reich and its allies.

A third, fatal decision was necessary to ensure a war. The United States had entered World War I late in April 1917, and it revived the sagging Allied effort, helping to crush the Germany army and win the war by November 1918.

But by 1919, America had rapidly disarmed and forgotten its key role in World War I. Americans had tired of the Europeans. They were sick of the endless horse-trading that had led to the postwar Versailles Treaty.

By the start of the Great Depression in 1929, America was mostly unarmed and determined never to get involved in European feuding again. Most Americans complained that the huge death toll of World War I had led to neither perpetual peace nor even a peaceful Germany.

America's isolationism and disarmament also helped prompt another global war. Had the U.S. kept its military strong after World War I, and had it entered into a formal alliance with its former World War I partners, Germany never would have risked a second war against the combined strength of a fully armed Britain, France, and United States.

Instead, Hitler assumed the U.S. either could not or would not offer much military help to his intended European targets.

Why, then, did a relatively weak Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1941 believe that it could take on much of the world, and inspire Axis partners such as Italy and Japan to follow its suicidal lead?

The answer is obvious. British and French appeasement, Soviet collaboration, and American isolation had together convinced Hitler and his Axis allies that the victors of World War I were more eager to grant concessions at any cost than were the defeated.

The world of 2016 is eerily beginning to resemble the powder keg of 1939 Europe.

Iran, China, and North Korea, along with radical Islamic terrorist groups, all have particular contempt for Western democracies. Almost daily, various aggressive nations or organizations seek provocation by shooting off intercontinental missiles, boarding American boats, sending millions of young male Middle Easterners into the West, and issuing unending threats. China is creating new artificial islands to control commercial routes to and from Asia.

The European Union is largely unarmed. Yet it still trusts that it can use its vaunted "smart diplomacy" to reason with its enemies.

Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin's Russia cuts deals with Iran, Syria, and most of the enemies of the West. Like Stalin before, Putin cynically assumes that his triangulations will turn aggressive powers exclusively against the West. Recently, he warned the West of a "new world war" starting in the Middle East.

America is slowly withdrawing from involvement abroad, using the same isolationist arguments heard in the 1920s.

Past interventions in the Middle East have worn on the nation. Ingrate nations did not appreciate American sacrifices. In tough economic times, some contend that defense spending should be diverted to more social programs.

Appeasement, collaboration, and isolationism always prove a lethal mix — past and present.

Power Line

OBAMA MADE A TERRIBLE DEAL WITH CUBA, TOO

by John Hinderaker

The Washington Post editorial board documents the pathetic failure of the Obama administration's Cuba policy under the bleak headline: "Failure In Cuba." Whether it is a failure, of course, depends on what you think Obama was trying to achieve.

President Obama's opening to Cuba seems to be failing to live up to its declared goals. When the end to a half-century of hostility was announced in December 2014, the proclaimed U.S. purpose was to "unleash the potential of 11 million Cubans," to "engage and empower the Cuban people," and to "empower the nascent Cuban private sector," among other things. ...

Yet there is scant evidence so far of a sea change in Cuba — perhaps because Mr. Obama continues to offer the Castro regime unilateral concessions requiring nothing in return.

So, it's not just Iran. It is Obama's foreign policy.

Since the United States has placed no human rights conditions on the opening, the Castro regime continues to systematically engage in arbitrary detention of dissidents and others who speak up for democracy. In fact, detentions have spiked in recent months. The state continues to monopolize radio, television and newspapers.

Which raises the question: does Barack Obama actually *want* Cuba to be free of socialist domination? If you think the answer to that question is Yes, can you offer any evidence?

The administration has defined one of its goals as opening Cuba to the Internet, but the nation still suffers from some of the lowest connectivity rates in the world. The regime established a few dozen Wifi spots but charges people \$2 an hour to use them; the average salary is \$20 a month. The state retains a chokehold on the economy, including tourism; the benefits of a 50 percent increase in U.S. visitors are being garnered by Raúl Castro's son-in-law, the industry's boss.

Cuba is effectively a monarchy. Maybe Obama likes that.

Meanwhile, Cuba's purchases of U.S. goods have fallen by a double-digit percentage.

So you can't blame the Chamber of Commerce for this one.

The hoped-for explosion in individual enterprise has not materialized either. On the contrary: The number of licensed self-employed workers has been dropping. If there are commercial deals as a result of the latest U.S. measures, it is Cuban state organizations that will benefit; only they are allowed to engage in foreign trade.

This shouldn't be a surprise. The purpose of Obama's deal with the Castros was to prop them up and keep them in power. American leftists like Obama have always been fans of the Castros because they love violent, authoritarian leftism. Or warlordism, as the case may be. Fidel Castro may have stolen more of his country's wealth than any warlord in world history, but that is A-OK

with American liberals. Why? Because, like them, he hates America. That is what they really care about.

What's most evident over the past year is that the Castro brothers are effectively preventing real change and reform even as they reap the rewards of Mr. Obama's opening. The president's only response has been more unilateral concessions, along with talk of a visit to the island before he leaves office. Autocrats everywhere must be watching with envy the Castros' good fortune.

I suspect that autocrats everywhere are even more focused on the Iranian mullahs' good fortune. After all, Obama didn't arrange for the Castros to get checks totaling more than \$100 billion. Still, wherever you look, the message is the same: Obama's foreign policy strengthens our enemies and weakens America. Maybe that is an accident. You be the judge.

LiberalLogic101.com

President Obama decided not to attend the funeral of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia...

...after his advisers told he probably wouldn't be allowed to dance on the grave.

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PRESS GUIDE to the HATCHING of OBAMA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Year 1



STIMULUS WORKING

Year 2



OBAMACARE MAKING JOBS

Year 3



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Year 4



ANY MINUTE NOW

Year 5



ANY MINUTE...

Year 6



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Year 7



Year 8

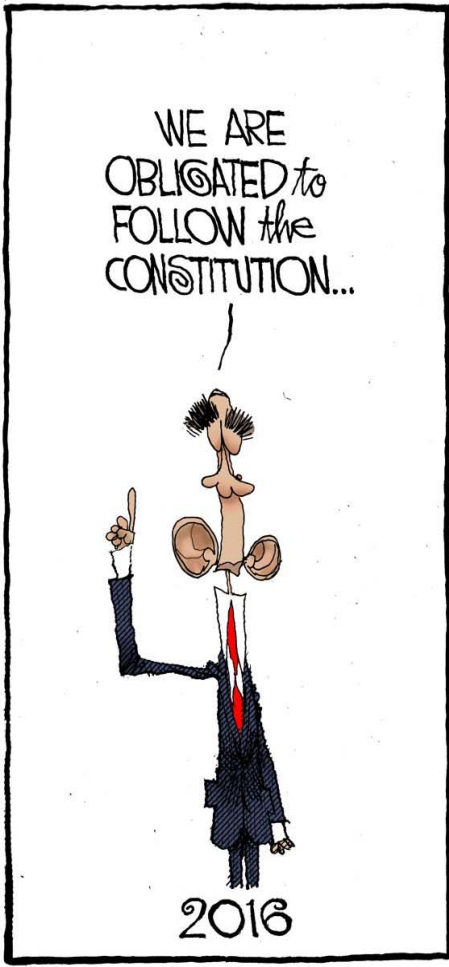


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January 20, 2017

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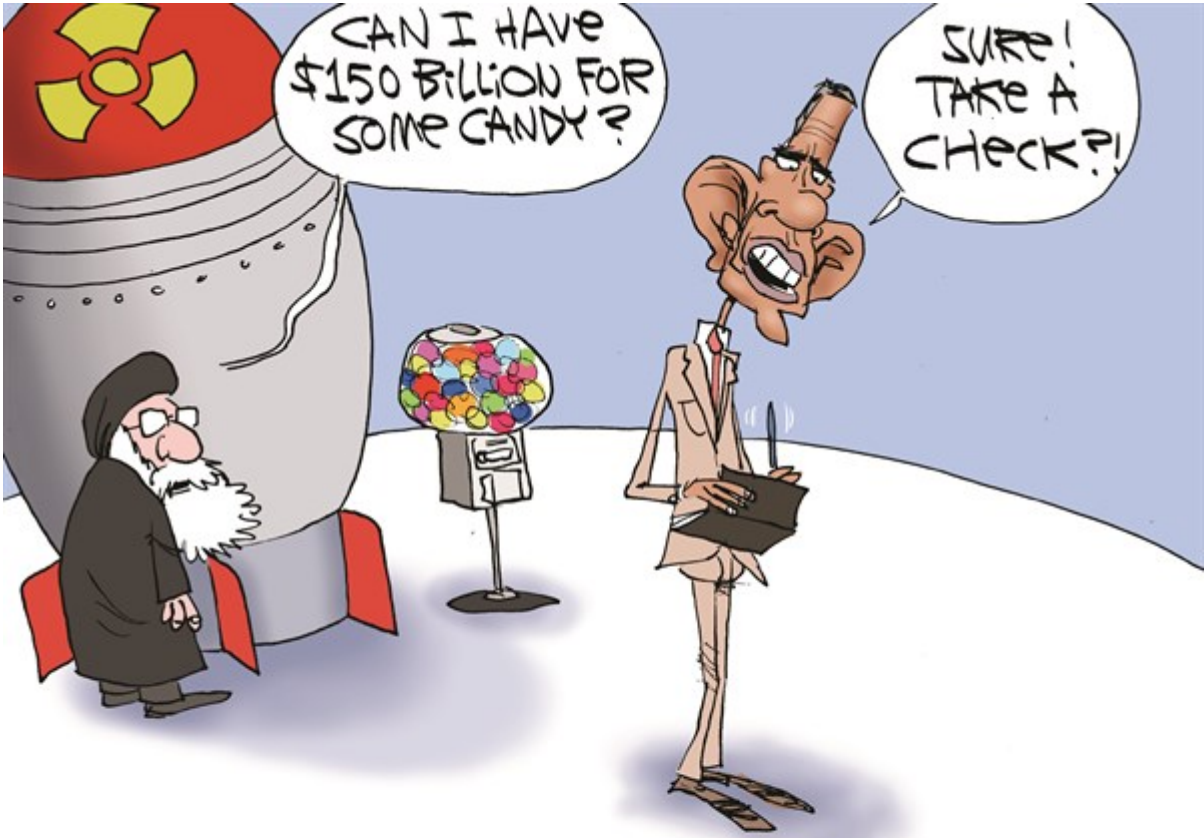
ENQUIRER

Jenner To Donate
Testicles To Obama



World Exclusive Honey
Boo Boo's Alien Baby
Inside page 53





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