

November 10, 2010

[Christopher Hitchens](#) comments on a number of serious issues in Iraq.

...On the morning that I received that note, the Washington Post carried a [brief and heart-breaking](#) report. It described a lawsuit, brought to the Baghdad District Court by a coalition of "civil society and human rights organizations." The suit demanded that elected Iraqi parliamentarians give back the salaries they have so far earned, and forego future payments, until they have overcome the paralyzing torpor that has deprived the country of the fruits of its hard-won right to vote. A short while ago, the same alliance of forces convinced the nation's Supreme Court to order the lawmakers to resume their negotiations.

...There are still immense dangers facing any Iraqi who wants to express a democratic or nonsectarian opinion, but these dangers do not come so much from the state. They come from the prowling, sleepless murder-gangs who, almost every day, find ways of killing civilians either selectively or en masse. By some kind of convention, we still agree to refer to these people as insurgents. (In the recently fizzled debate over WikiLeaks, the hideous casualties the "insurgents" inflict were also described semi-neutrally in the press as coming from "other Iraqis," though witnesses to the recent massacre of a Baghdad Christian congregation spoke of hearing foreign Arab accents among the assassins.) But in what possible sense can such actions be described as a rebellion or an insurgency, especially in a society that now offers its citizens at least some of the means of lawful dissent and redress?

This is the aspect of our intervention that is unquantifiable. As with Afghanistan, we cannot know the long-term effect of promulgating a federal constitution, holding elections, opening clinics and schools for women, and attempting to protect the rights of minorities. And the Afghan and Iraqi governments are such wretched simulacra of the principles they are supposed to embody that results are even harder to gauge. The principles may even be discredited by association with corruption. Still, we have to remain on the side of those Iraqis and Afghans who fight against such desperate odds to make these principles real and to carry them into the future. ...

The nation has experienced a recession, but government has not. [Mark Steyn](#) writes about the unsustainability of the ever-growing government.

...In the year after the passage of Obama's "stimulus", the private sector lost 2.5 million jobs, but the federal government gained 416,000 jobs. Even if one accepts the government's ludicrous concept of "creating or saving" jobs, by its own figures four out of every five jobs "created or saved" were government jobs. "Stimulus" stimulates government, not the economy.

...Jobs rarely "come back". ...After the recession of the early Nineties, America lost some three million jobs in manufacturing but gained a little under the same number in construction. Then the subprime hit the fan, and America now has more housing stock than it will need for a generation. So what replaces those three million lost construction jobs? What are all those carpenters, plasterers, excavators going to be doing? Not to mention the realtors, home-loan bankers, contract lawyers, rental-income accountants and other "professional service" cube people whose business also relies to one degree or another on a soaraway property market.

What if we've run out of "next"?

For the Obamatrons, government is what comes next. Government jobs, government "light rail" projects, government "green jobs" pork projects...Non-jobs for a Potemkin Main Street. ...

...The new class war in the western world is between “public servants” and the rest of us. ...To reprise my favorite Ronald Reagan line:

We are a nation that has a government — not the other way around.

...Alas, in Reagan’s own country, we are atrophying into a government that has a nation. That’s what November 2nd was about.

In the Telegraph, UK, [Toby Harnden](#) discusses Obama's reaction to the elections, and gives an overview of where this may lead.

...It seems much more likely that Obama will double down on his strategy during his first two years, moving to the Left to appease his critics there and challenging Republicans, much as President Harry Truman did after 1946 when he railed against the “do-nothing” Republican-controlled Congress. Two years later, Republicans lost 75 House seats and Truman was returned to the White House.

This time, however, Republicans do not control Congress. They won back the House but fell short in the Senate.

Their failure to secure ascendancy in both chambers may be a blessing in disguise. The defeat of candidates like Christine O'Donnell of Delaware and Sharron Angle of Nevada has helped fuel a complacent Washington consensus that the Tea Party failed. Never mind that his grassroots anti-tax, small-government “constitutional conservatism” movement provided the energy and momentum behind the biggest congressional election victory in 62 years.

...Best of all for Republicans is that Democrat Senator Harry Reid will remain Senate Majority Leader after squeezing home against Angle, and Representative Nancy Pelosi, the ousted House Speaker, looks set to become House Minority Leader. This gives Republicans the opportunity to run against the Obama-Reid-Pelosi triumvirate again in 2012 – their very presence indicating that Democrats failed to learn from 2010. ...

In [NRO's - The Feed](#), Greg Pollowitz posts a piece on Notre Dame's karma.

After honoring President Barack Obama during last May’s commencement ceremonies, the University of Notre Dame has seen less contributions and is feeling financial heat. In May 2009, debate was heated over the fact that Notre Dame, a Catholic university, invited President Obama to speak at its graduation. It was controversial mainly because some of Obama’s policies are contrary to church doctrine. Katie Walker of American Life League (ALL) tells OneNewsNow the school has paid a price. “Notre Dame has come out \$120 million short for the fiscal year in which President Obama spoke during commencement and received an honorary law degree,” she reports. She believes that staggering number is in direct response of alumni and others around the country who feel scandalized “that Notre Dame would host this man and give one of the most pro-abortion presidents in the nation’s history an honorary law degree.”

[Jennifer Rubin](#) discusses liberal reactions to the White House continuing to steer hard left.

...The less-deluded Democrats are furious now, convinced that the White House is on a political suicide mission. The defeated Democratic gubernatorial candidate [Alex Sink](#) is beside herself:

"They got a huge wake-up call [on election day], but unfortunately they took a lot of Democrats down with them," said Sink of the White House.

... "I think they were tone-deaf," she said. "They weren't interested in hearing my opinion on what was happening on the ground with the oil spill. And they never acknowledged that they had problems with the acceptance of health care reform."

The new law, she said, is "unpopular particularly among seniors" — a key voting bloc in the Sunshine State. ...

In the [Weekly Standard Blog](#), Victorino Matus highlights Charles Lane's projections on how the Census will affect electoral votes.

As the Washington Post's Charles Lane reminds us,

Since the U.S. population continues to flow South and West, reapportionment will probably add House seats in red states and subtract them in blue states. Thus, the Census looks like a setback for Democratic chances to win the 270 electoral votes necessary to become president.

... Take the 22 states that voted for John McCain as the GOP base in the 2012 presidential election. That base is about to grow from 173 electoral votes to 180. And if Republicans hold it, they could get to 271 by carrying just six more states—Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, Indiana, Virginia and Nevada—each of which has voted GOP in a majority of the last ten elections.

As it happens, all six of these states, except for North Carolina, will have Republican governors next year, and all six, except for Nevada, will have Republican state legislatures. ...

Indians are about to say to the president, "Ghandi, schmandi. Give it a rest please!" [Jim Yardley](#) in the [NYTimes](#) discusses Obama's continual references to Gandhi, but then mentions a serious indication of Obama's ignorance.

... India's political establishment, if thrilled by the visit, is also withholding judgment. Mr. Obama was faulted in New Delhi for some early missteps, including his comment that China should play an active role in South Asia. His battering in the midterm elections has raised concerns about his political viability. And many Indian officials still hold a torch for former President [George W. Bush](#), who was popular for pushing through a landmark civilian nuclear deal between the two countries.

Mr. Obama's visit is intended to dispel those doubts and deepen a partnership rooted in shared democratic values. Since taking office, he has already met several times with Prime Minister [Manmohan Singh](#), as well as with other delegations of Indian officials. On several occasions, he has cited his deep admiration for Gandhi, perhaps as evidence of his fondness for India.

"The impression on the Indian side is every time you meet him, he talks about Gandhi," said Shekhar Gupta, editor of The Indian Express, a leading English-language newspaper, adding that the repeated references struck some officials as platitudinous. ...

Marty Peretz has more on the one note president.

...as an eminent Indian journalist put it to Yardley, "...the impression on the Indian side is every time you meet him, he talks about Gandhi." But, as Sheryl Stolberg also of the Times, points out this morning, all that students questioning him wanted to discuss was "jihad." And he was ready with that bull-shitty quarter truth that "Well, the phrase jihad has a lot of meanings within Islam and is subject to a lot of different interpretations." ...

...Obama continued: All of us recognize that this great religion in the hands of a few extremists has been distorted to justify violence towards innocent people that is never justified. So, I think, one of the challenges that we face is how do we isolate those who have distorted notions of religious war.

This does not sit well with the billion Indians, especially Hindu Indians, who are sitting ducks for jihadist terror. and it certainly did not sit well with the president's listeners. (Not that the Hindus -or the Israelis- are completely free of their own fanatics.) But, believe me, what defines Islam these days is not the Sufis.

...Even among our "allies" in the Yemeni government, among our "fighting comrades" in Afghanistan, among our friends in the Pakistani sort-of state, there appears to be no anger at the debauchery of random liquidation. And not in the Sudan either. These are the countries of the salient jihad: Al-Qaeda plus the indifference of the rest. If the Israelis were to permit it they, too, would be the victims.

...

Don Boudreaux makes a very important delineation about what it means for the government to be "pro-business", in Cafe Hayek.

...There are two ways for a government to be 'pro-business.' The first way is to avoid interfering in capitalist acts among consenting adults – that is, to keep taxes low, regulations few, and subsidies non-existent. This 'pro-business' stance promotes widespread prosperity because in reality it isn't so much pro-business as it is pro-consumer. When this way is pursued, businesses are rewarded for pleasing consumers, and only for pleasing consumers.

The second, and very different, way for government to be pro-business is to bestow favors and privileges on politically connected firms. These favors and privileges, such as tariffs and export subsidies, invariably oblige consumers to pay more – either directly in the form of higher prices, or indirectly in the form of higher taxes – for goods and services. This way of being pro-business reduces the nation's prosperity by relieving businesses of the need to satisfy consumers. When this second way is pursued, businesses are rewarded for pleasing politicians. Competition for consumers' dollars is replaced by competition for political favors.

The fact that more than 200 American business executives are in India with the President is cause to fear that any pro-business policies he might adopt will be of the second, impoverishing sort.

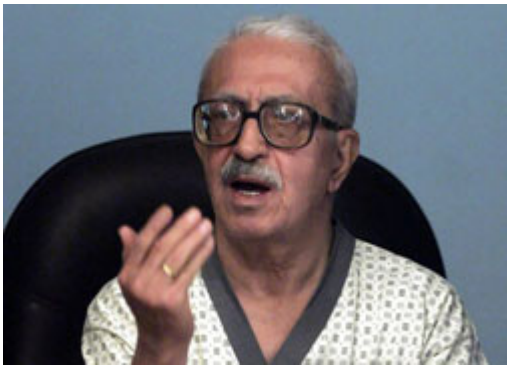
Slate's Fighting Words

[Don't Hang Tariq Aziz](#)

The death sentence for Saddam's henchman threatens Iraq's exceedingly fragile democracy.

by Christopher Hitchens

The decision of the Iraqi war crimes tribunal to [sentence Tariq Aziz to death](#) is one that needs to be vigorously opposed for several reasons. Although it is true that, as Saddam Hussein's longtime henchman and deputy, he is morally tainted with some of the most appalling crimes in modern history, Aziz was not, in fact, condemned to execution for his part in the annexation of Kuwait, the destruction of the Marsh Arabs, or the attempted genocide against Iraq's Kurdish minority. (Indeed, there is some evidence that he advised his boss against the insane attack on Kuwait in 1990.) For his relatively minor role in those and other events, he has in any case already been sentenced to terms of imprisonment that would keep him in jail until he died—old and infirm as he now is—of natural causes. No, Aziz has been ordered to hang because of his long-ago role in repressing the Dawa movement, a Shiite religious faction with ties to Iran, which under the Baathist dictatorship conducted armed resistance and which is now a political party. Its leader, Nuri al-Maliki, is currently—or should one say nominally?—the prime minister of Iraq.



The decision to put Tariq Aziz to death is almost the only sign of "life" to have emerged from Iraqi official circles since the elections of March 7 this year. It seems only to confirm that Maliki looks at politics through the cold eyes of a habitual religious sectarian.

I received a letter from some comrades in Baghdad this week, as exactly eight months elapsed since the voters last went to the polls. The Iraqi political class, they wrote, had achieved the apparently impossible by making Asif Ali Zardari's regime in Pakistan look like a model of pluralism and good government. But in spite of all this, they said, the Iraqi people were enduring and had not soured on the idea of democracy.

On the morning that I received that note, the *Washington Post* carried a [brief and heart-breaking](#) report. It described a lawsuit, brought to the Baghdad District Court by a coalition of "civil society and human rights organizations." The suit demanded that elected Iraqi parliamentarians give back the salaries they have so far earned, and forego future payments, until they have overcome the paralyzing torpor that has deprived the country of the fruits of its hard-won right to vote. A short while ago, the same alliance of forces convinced the nation's Supreme Court to order the lawmakers to resume their negotiations.

I still have a tendency to rub my eyes when I read about this sort of thing, rather as I do when I read of Tariq Aziz's lawyers readying their appeal and meanwhile complaining about the prison conditions in which their client is being held. Citizens' groups approaching the courts; petitions about the seating of members of parliament; radio and TV networks disputing the issues and the outcome; millions of

Iraqis joining the argument by way of cellphones and the Internet; Sunni and Shiite and secular parties competing for the allegiance of the Kurdish bloc in the assembly. ... Do people understand the night-and-day difference that this involves?

When I first visited Iraq under Saddam Hussein, it was illegal to import a typewriter into the country. When I next visited, the Kurdish area of the country was a smoldering wilderness that had been cleansed by mass deportation and expulsion and seared by chemical weapons. Those who complained, or who were suspected of thinking of complaining, did not get to enjoy a day in court, or have their say on a call-in show. Instead, they vanished into the dreaded precincts of the Abu Ghraib prison or into one of the mass graves that are still being uncovered across the landscape. Today there is still censorship and rough handling of reporters, but it would be near-impossible to reduce Iraqis to the cowed and silent condition in which they used to have to live.

There are still immense dangers facing any Iraqi who wants to express a democratic or nonsectarian opinion, but these dangers do not come so much from the state. They come from the prowling, sleepless murder-gangs who, almost every day, find ways of killing civilians either selectively or *en masse*. By some kind of convention, we still agree to refer to these people as *insurgents*. (In the recently fizzled debate over WikiLeaks, the hideous casualties the "insurgents" inflict were also described semi-neutrally in the press as coming from "other Iraqis," though witnesses to the recent massacre of a Baghdad Christian congregation spoke of hearing foreign Arab accents among the assassins.) But in what possible sense can such actions be described as a rebellion or an insurgency, especially in a society that now offers its citizens at least some of the means of lawful dissent and redress?

This is the aspect of our intervention that is unquantifiable. As with Afghanistan, we cannot know the long-term effect of promulgating a federal constitution, holding elections, opening clinics and schools for women, and attempting to protect the rights of minorities. And the Afghan and Iraqi governments are such wretched simulacra of the principles they are supposed to embody that results are even harder to gauge. The principles may even be discredited by association with corruption. Still, we have to remain on the side of those Iraqis and Afghans who fight against such desperate odds to make these principles real and to carry them into the future.

At least we can say with certainty that the proposed execution of Tariq Aziz, like the awful circus that accompanied [the hanging of Saddam Hussein](#), *cannot* play any role in the upholding of a new model of society. As well as being part of a religious vendetta, his death would have too much in common with past bloody "transitions" from one Iraqi regime to another. Aziz was until not long ago a surrendered prisoner in U.S. custody, which makes it all the more important that Americans make themselves heard on this question.

Steyn on Line
[Stimulating Government](#)
by Mark Steyn

The other day *The Washington Post* previewed one aspect of last month's Jon Stewart rally – a march by government workers:

Organizers of the 'Government Doesn't Suck March' (their choice of words, not ours) were inspired in part by last week's Washington Post poll that revealed widespread negative perceptions of federal workers.

'We hear it day in and day out: the government sucks, federal employees are lazy and their positions are redundant,' said march organizer Steve Ressler, founder of GovLoop, a social networking Web site for public servants.

'It's time to turn the tables and remind the world that government employees just happen to be people -- people that don't suck,' Ressler said in a message sent to The Federal Eye on Sunday announcing the march. Government workers 'are a lot of cool cats' who work hard, listen to good music and watch Stewart's 'The Daily Show,' 'but that's all after they've spent a whole day keeping the country running,' he said.

Actually, government does suck. It sucks too much money out of my pocket and gives it to Steve Ressler and his fellow "cool cats". And they're not running the country, but running it into the ground. In the 18 months after the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008, over seven million Americans lost their jobs, yet the percentage of federal bureaucrats earning \$100,000 or more went up from 14 per cent to 19 per cent: An economic downturn for you, but not for them. They're upturn girls living in a downturn world. At the start of the "downturn" the Department of Transportation had just one employee earning more than \$170,000 per year. Eighteen months later, it had 1,690. In the year after the passage of Obama's "stimulus", the private sector lost 2.5 million jobs, but the federal government gained 416,000 jobs. Even if one accepts the government's ludicrous concept of "creating or saving" jobs, by its own figures four out of every five jobs "created or saved" were government jobs. "Stimulus" stimulates government, not the economy. It's part of the remorseless governmentalization of American life.

When the subject of the leviathan comes up, the media and other statism groupies tend to say, "Oh, well, it's easy to talk about cutting government spending, until you start looking at individual programs, most of which tend to be very popular."

"Programs" is a sly word. Regardless of the merits of the "program", it requires human beings to run it. And government humans cost more than private humans. In 2009, the average civilian employee of the United States government earned \$81,258 in salary plus \$41,791 in benefits. Total: \$123,049.

By contrast, the average American employed in the private sector earned \$50,462 in salary plus \$10,589 in benefits. Total: \$61,051.

So the federal worker earns more than twice as much as the private sector worker. "Experts" talk about the difficulty of restructuring entitlement programs, or of carving out a few billions in savings here and there. But here's a thought experiment:

Imagine if federal workers made the same as the private workers who pay their salaries. Imagine if they had to get by on 61K instead of 123 grand.

Meanwhile, in what's left of the real world, as disastrous as the squandering of America's money has been, the squandering of its human capital has been worse. Once upon a time, millions of Americans worked on farms. Then, as agriculture declined, they moved into the factories. When manufacturing was outsourced, they settled mostly into low-paying service jobs or better-paying cubicle jobs -- so-called "professional services" often deriving from the ever swelling accounting and legal administration that now attends almost any activity in America. What comes next?

Or, more to the point, what if there is no "next"?

Jobs rarely "come back". When they go, they go for good. Something else takes their place. After the recession of the early Nineties, America lost some three million jobs in manufacturing but gained a

little under the same number in construction. Then the subprime hit the fan, and America now has more housing stock than it will need for a generation. So what replaces those three million lost construction jobs? What are all those carpenters, plasterers, excavators going to be doing? Not to mention the realtors, home-loan bankers, contract lawyers, rental-income accountants and other “professional service” cube people whose business also relies to one degree or another on a soaraway property market.

What if we’ve run out of “next”?

For the Obamatrons, government is what comes next. Government jobs, government “light rail” projects, government “green jobs” pork projects, government “WiFi-in-every-two-day-a-week-rural-library” makework schemes. Non-jobs for a Potemkin Main Street. The White House website is a positive cornucopia of fantasy employment, in which, day in, day out, President Obama and his sidekicks hymn the delights of such transformative innovations as “solar energy”. Does even the Obama cabinet seriously believe solar energy will create hundreds of thousands of real (ie, non-subsidized boondoggled) jobs? This is the official narrative of the Obama era, and there is nothing in it anywhere even to hint at the possibility of a growing economy holding its own against China, India and other rivals.

An America comprised of therapeutic statist, regulatory enforcers, multigenerational dependents, identity-group rent-seekers, undocumented laborers, stimulus grantwriting liaison coordinators, six-figure community organizers, millionaire diversity-outreach consultants, billionaire carbon-offset traders, a diversionary-leisure “knowledge sector”, John Edwards’ anti-poverty consultancy, John Kerry’s vintner, and Al Gore’s holistic masseuse will still offer many opportunities, but not for that outmoded American archetype, the self-reliant citizen seeking to nourish his family through the fruits of his labor. And nor for millions of others just struggling to stay afloat. A statist America won’t be a large Sweden – unimportant but prosperous – but something closer to the Third World, corrupt and chaotic, broke and brutish – for all but a privileged few.

The new class war in the western world is between “public servants” and the rest of us. In Washington, the marching bureaucrats are telling us government doesn’t suck. But in Greece, the bloated public service has sucked so much out of the economy there’s nothing left. To reprise my favorite Ronald Reagan line:

We are a nation that has a government — not the other way around.

He said it in his inaugural address in 1981, and it sums up his legacy abroad: Across post-Communist Europe, from Lithuania to Bulgaria to Slovenia, governments that had nations were replaced by nations that have governments.

Alas, in Reagan’s own country, we are atrophying into a government that has a nation. That’s what November 2nd was about.

Telegraph, UK

Barack Obama becomes the Relevant Progressive President

The US President believes that his election 'shellacking' was about anything but his own liberal policies. Obama's stubborn self-belief in his own greatness might be his undoing.

by Toby Harnden

Facing the press the morning after the night before, Barack Obama struggled to explain the disaster that had befallen his party – and his presidency.

The man who ascended to the White House through his soaring oratory spoke with all the passion of a regional sales manager addressing a gathering of disgruntled customers.

After an hour, the White House press corps managed to extract what they needed. The Democrats had suffered a "shellacking", he admitted. Four times, Obama used the words "take responsibility". Towards the end, he managed to feign looking disconsolate, even crestfallen.

But Obama's response to loss of more than 60 seats in the House of Representatives and six in the Senate (the biggest congressional elections defeat since 1948) was the opposite of taking responsibility.

He had been so busy responding to an "emergency situation", he said, that he had failed to explain the wisdom of his policies. He was sympathetic, he said, to those who felt his agenda had been "looking like potential overreach" – a lawyerly utterance so hedged with qualifiers that it was virtually meaningless.

Americans had not "felt" the progress achieved due to his actions. There had not been "as much progress as we need to make" and in some areas he should have "pushed harder" for more progress. He was happy to work with Republicans, he explained, provided they had suggestions for "improvements on the progress that we've made".

The one thing Obama was not prepared to admit was that his policies, which have led to a massive expansion of government power and the national debt, could in any way be at fault. The problem with health care reform, he said, was that the process used to achieve it was "an ugly mess" – no mention that it was hugely unpopular and pushed through on a partisan vote without a single Republican legislator's support.

His repeated use of the word "progress" was instructive. In Middle America, the term "liberal" has been replaced with the equally pejorative "progressive".

To cap it all, Obama blithely tossed in, "a couple of great communicators, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, were standing at this podium two years into their presidency, getting very similar questions because, you know, the economy wasn't working the way it needed to be".

This was a reference to the loss of 26 House seats that Reagan's Republicans suffered in the 1982 midterms and the 52-seat Democratic defeat under Clinton in 1994. Unspoken was what everyone in the room knew – Reagan and Clinton were each comfortably re-elected two years later.

The Reagan comparison hardly holds water. The 1982 Republican defeat was relatively modest (the balance in the Senate remained unchanged) and an economic recovery began almost immediately afterwards. Unemployment dropped by almost four per cent over the next two years while growth soared towards seven per cent. No economist is forecasting anything like that by 2012.

After Tuesday's defeat, Obama aides were quick to brief journalists that the President was studying Taylor Branch's The Clinton Tapes, based on contemporaneous conversations with Clinton throughout his presidency.

Branch's book details the stark difference between Clinton's approach to defeat and that of Obama. Republicans had "whipped his ass" and voters had "clubbed him with a two-by-four", Branch remembers Clinton telling him. The then President concluded that he had "pushed change too rapidly" and that his answer was to "counterpunch from the centre".

Obama is not about to move to the centre. Whereas Clinton was an instinctive "Third Way" centrist from the South who had wandered too far Left, Obama is a standard-issue liberal of the type found in Ivy League commons rooms. Nothing in his career indicates he is ready to cut deals with political opponents. He is sure what he believes is right; if you don't agree with him, he pities you for being so slow to understand.

President George W. Bush fired Donald Rumsfeld as Pentagon chief the day after what Bush called the midterms "thumpin'" of 2006 (Republicans lost 31 House seats). Clinton turned his administration upside down as part of his change of course. In contrast, there is no sign of any major reshuffle within Obama's inner circle.

It seems much more likely that Obama will double down on his strategy during his first two years, moving to the Left to appease his critics there and challenging Republicans, much as President Harry Truman did after 1946 when he railed against the "do-nothing" Republican-controlled Congress. Two years later, Republicans lost 75 House seats and Truman was returned to the White House.

This time, however, Republicans do not control Congress. They won back the House but fell short in the Senate.

Their failure to secure ascendancy in both chambers may be a blessing in disguise. The defeat of candidates like Christine O'Donnell of Delaware and Sharron Angle of Nevada has helped fuel a complacent Washington consensus that the Tea Party failed. Never mind that his grassroots anti-tax, small-government "constitutional conservatism" movement provided the energy and momentum behind the biggest congressional election victory in 62 years.

The true nature of the Tea Party is much better represented by the likes of newly-minted senators Marco Rubio, Mike Lee and Rand Paul than the frankly wacky O'Donnell and Angle. It was hardly surprising that a spontaneous, chaotic movement managed to throw up some oddball candidates. The Tea Party is likely to readjust accordingly next time.

Best of all for Republicans is that Democrat Senator Harry Reid will remain Senate Majority Leader after squeezing home against Angle, and Representative Nancy Pelosi, the ousted House Speaker, looks set to become House Minority Leader. This gives Republicans the opportunity to run against the Obama-Reid-Pelosi triumvirate again in 2012 – their very presence indicating that Democrats failed to learn from 2010.

Republicans on Capitol Hill appear to have taken the lessons of 1994 on board. Then, Newt Gingrich stormed into office as Speaker that year announcing that he was in the driving seat, prompting Clinton to remind people, famously, that "the President is relevant here".

The strategy of Representative John Boehner, the new Speaker, and Senator Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader (wily old foxes who, unlike Gingrich, have no personal ambitions for the White

House) is to keep Obama front and centre. Gingrich over-promised and under-delivered. This time, gridlock is virtually guaranteed – the only thing up for grabs will be who is to blame.

In this task, Republicans will be greatly assisted by Obama's ego and his belief that he is not just any president but a great one – a Reagan of the Left.

One of the most revealing comments of his press conference was the notion that "folks didn't have any complaints about my leadership style when I was running around Iowa for a year" – as if campaigning for the Democratic caucuses has anything to do with running America.

Obama believes he can get by on Being Barack Obama. Last Tuesday was a setback like nothing else he had experienced in life and it appears to have left his enormous sense of self-assurance undiminished.

A majority of Americans voted against Obama's agenda that day and Republicans dearly want to make him history. It is far too soon to write off Obama's chances of re-election but his rhetoric of bipartisanship and forging consensus has been shown to be a sham, leaving his Left-wing core exposed.

But the first step to keeping him in the hole he has dug for himself is a counter-intuitive one. Republicans intend to capitalise on Obama's vanity and highlight his default ideology and determination to push "progress".

He is about to become the Relevant Progressive President.

NRO's The Feed

[Notre Dame Losing Donations Post Obama Visit?](#)

by Gregg Pollowitz

After honoring President Barack Obama during last May's commencement ceremonies, the University of Notre Dame has seen less contributions and is feeling [financial](#) heat. In May 2009, debate was heated over the fact that Notre Dame, a Catholic university, invited President Obama to speak at its graduation. It was controversial mainly because some of Obama's policies are contrary to church doctrine. Katie Walker of American Life League (ALL) tells



OneNewsNow the school has paid a price. “Notre Dame has come out \$120 million short for the fiscal year in which President Obama spoke during commencement and received an honorary law degree,” she reports. She believes that staggering number is in direct response of alumni and others around the country who feel scandalized “that Notre Dame would host this man and give one of the most pro-abortion presidents in the nation’s history an honorary law degree.”

Contentions

Blame Time

by Jennifer Rubin

The [Democrats](#) have discovered that Obama is out of touch:

“In his own assessments of what went wrong, the president has lamented his inability to persuade voters on the merits of what he has done, and blamed the failure on his preoccupation with a full plate of crises. But a broad sample of Democratic officeholders and strategists said in interviews that the disconnect goes far deeper than that.”

And now the Clinton (Bill, not Hillary) nostalgia, which periodically has wafted through GOP ranks, is gripping forlorn Dems:

Obama “is not Bill Clinton in the sense that he’s not an extrovert. He doesn’t gain energy by connecting with people,” said a Democratic strategist, who worked in the Clinton White House and asked not to be named while offering a candid criticism. “He needs to be forced to do it, either by self-discipline or others. There’s no one around him who will do that. They accommodate him, and that is a bad thing.”

He’s also not Clinton in the sense that Obama is ideologically rigid, while Clinton was anything but. But Democrats are conflicted: go to the center or double down on the agenda that wiped out so many of them? Hmm. What to do, what to do? (Republicans are biting their lips and laughing into their sleeves. “*Double down — puleeze,*” they whisper knowingly to each other.)

The less-deluded Democrats are furious now, convinced that the White House is on a political suicide mission. The defeated Democratic gubernatorial candidate [Alex Sink](#) is beside herself:

“They got a huge wake-up call [on election day], but unfortunately they took a lot of Democrats down with them,” said Sink of the White House.

She added: “They just need to be better listeners and be better at reaching out to people who are on the ground to hear about the realities of their policies as well as politics.” ...

“I think they were tone-deaf,” she said. “They weren’t interested in hearing my opinion on what was happening on the ground with the oil spill. And they never acknowledged that they had problems with the acceptance of health care reform.”

The new law, she said, is “unpopular particularly among seniors” — a key voting bloc in the Sunshine State.

None of this was hidden from view before the election, but Democratic officials and operatives were understandably reluctant to come forward. Now, with election returns in hand, they are pointing the finger at the White House. But let's be fair. Much of the credit goes to Nancy Pelosi — who wants to continue her reign over what's left of the Democratic House caucus. (To which Republicans say, "Go for it!")

The White House seems unconvinced that the problem is the agenda, not just a remote and increasingly unlikable president. They'll try to "warm him up" and do more feel-your-pain moments. But the core problem remains: Obama is infatuated with his own agenda and it is that agenda that is the recipe for the minority-status of his party.

And in all of this, one wonders what the left-leaning intelligentsia has learned. A *Harvard Law Review* editor, a law professor, a garden-variety leftist, a talker-not-a-doer, and a proponent of American unexceptionalism is a bust as president. In short, someone like them is utterly incapable of leading the country, and to rescue himself he will have to shed the very qualities and beliefs they hold dear. You can understand why they'd prefer to label the rest of the country "crazy."

Weekly Standard Blog

[Worse Than It Seems](#)

How the 2010 Census works against the Democrats

by Victorino Matus

Bad enough for the Democrats that they just lost their House majority and saw their Senate advantage tumble from 60 seats two years ago to 53 (it could have been worse), but now they must brace for the effects of the 2010 Census. As the *Washington Post's* Charles Lane [reminds us](#),

Since the U.S. population continues to flow South and West, reapportionment will probably add House seats in red states and subtract them in blue states. Thus, the Census looks like a setback for Democratic chances to win the 270 electoral votes necessary to become president.

Texas, which has voted Republican in 9 of the last 10 elections will gain 4 electoral votes, according to projections from preliminary Census data by [Polidata.com](#). The other gainers—one vote each—include Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina and Utah. All of these states have voted for the GOP candidate in at least 7 of the last 10 elections.... Meanwhile, eight states that usually go blue in presidential elections—Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Minnesota—are projected to lose one electoral vote each.

Or in other words,

Take the [22 states that voted for John McCain](#) as the GOP base in the 2012 presidential election. That base is about to grow from 173 electoral votes to 180. And if Republicans hold it, they could get to 271 by carrying just six more states—Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, Indiana, Virginia and Nevada—each of which has voted GOP in a majority of the last ten elections.

As it happens, all six of these states, except for North Carolina, will have Republican governors next year, and all six, except for Nevada, will have Republican state legislatures.

It's like a trap has been set. *"From here, you will witness the final destruction of the Alliance and the end of your insignificant rebellion!" (Star Wars - Return of the Jedi)*

NY Times

Obama Invokes Gandhi, Whose Ideal Eludes India

by Jim Yardley

NEW DELHI — Not long after [Barack Obama](#) was elected president, the United States Embassy in [India](#) printed a postcard showing him sitting in his old Senate office beneath framed photographs of his political heroes: the Rev. Dr. [Martin Luther King Jr.](#), [Abraham Lincoln](#) and the great Indian apostle of peace, democracy and nonviolent protest, [Mohandas K. Gandhi](#).

The postcard was a trinket of public diplomacy, a souvenir of the new president's affinity for India. Now that Mr. Obama is visiting India for the first time, on a trip pitched as a jobs mission, his fascination with Gandhi is influencing his itinerary and his message as he tries to win over India's skeptical political class.

"He is a hero not just to India, but to the world," the president wrote in a guest book on Saturday in Gandhi's modest former home in Mumbai, now the Mani Bhavan museum.

Yet if paying homage to Gandhi is expected of visiting dignitaries, Mr. Obama's more personal identification with the Gandhian legacy — the president once named him the person he would [most like to dine with](#) — places him on complicated terrain.

Gandhi remains India's patriarch, the founding father whose face is printed on the currency, but modern India is hardly a Gandhian nation, if it ever was one. His vision of a village-dominated economy was shunted aside during his lifetime as rural romanticism, and his call for a national ethos of personal austerity and nonviolence has proved antithetical to the goals of an aspiring economic and military power.

If anything, India's rise as a global power seems likely to distance it even further from Gandhi. India is inching toward a tighter military relationship with the United States, once distrusted as an imperialist power, even as the Americans are fighting a war in nearby Afghanistan.

India also has an urbanizing consumer-driven economy and a growing middle class that indulges itself in cars, apartments and other goods. It is this economic progress that underpins India's rising geopolitical clout and its attractiveness to the United States as a global partner.

Gandhi is still revered here, and credited with shaping India's political identity as a tolerant, secular democracy. But he can sometimes seem to hover over modern India like a parent whose expectations are rarely met.

Mr. Obama, too, has experienced the clash of those lofty expectations with political realities. When he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize, even as he was conducting two wars, he [described himself](#) as "living testimony to the moral force" of the nonviolent movement embodied by Dr. King and Gandhi.

"But as a head of state sworn to protect and defend my nation," he continued, "I cannot be guided by their examples alone."

That paradox was on vivid display on Saturday when Mr. Obama arrived in Mumbai, an event carried live on national television, celebrating Gandhi's legacy but also selling military transport planes and bringing along 200 American business leaders.

India's political establishment, if thrilled by the visit, is also withholding judgment. Mr. Obama was faulted in New Delhi for some early missteps, including his comment that China should play an active role in South Asia. His battering in the midterm elections has raised concerns about his political viability. And many Indian officials still hold a torch for former President [George W. Bush](#), who was popular for pushing through a landmark civilian nuclear deal between the two countries.

Mr. Obama's visit is intended to dispel those doubts and deepen a partnership rooted in shared democratic values. Since taking office, he has already met several times with Prime Minister [Manmohan Singh](#), as well as with other delegations of Indian officials. On several occasions, he has cited his deep admiration for Gandhi, perhaps as evidence of his fondness for India.

"The impression on the Indian side is every time you meet him, he talks about Gandhi," said Shekhar Gupta, editor of The Indian Express, a leading English-language newspaper, adding that the repeated references struck some officials as platitudinous.

The Spine

[Obama Loves Gandhi: Another Mendacious Delusion](#)

by Marty Peretz

I am no Gandhian. And neither is Barack Obama. But he is the president of the United States, and he can get his speechwriters to put into speeches any nonsense he wants. As Jim Yardley indicates in his New York Times [dispatch](#) from New Delhi, already in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance address Obama set Gandhi as "the North Star that sets us on our journey." Yardley also reminds us that the president once [said](#) that Gandhi was the person he most would have liked to have "dined" with, although his reason was perhaps a bit incoherent. No, it was more than incoherent. On the other hand, he realized that the meal would have been pretty small. Still, on signing the guest book at the Gandhi museum in Mumbai, he uttered the classic superlative of his generation: "pretty cool."

Pretty cool, indeed. But the world is very hot. Especially the Third World with which Obama fancies himself to have special bonds and towards which he seems to believe he has a special vocation. The truth is, of course, that even India has about as much Gandhian essence as the United States does the spirit of, say, Roger Williams. Which is very little, indeed.

Except that, as an eminent Indian journalist put it to Yardley, "...the impression on the Indian side is every time you meet him, he talks about Gandhi." But, as Sheryl Stolberg also of the Times, [points out](#) this morning, all that students questioning him wanted to discuss was "jihad." And he was ready with that bull-shitty quarter truth that "Well, the phrase jihad has a lot of meanings within Islam and is subject to a a lot of different interpretations." (This was the trope that that Harvard senior also deceitfully put forward in his 2002 commencement speech, which I wrote about at the time).

Obama continued: All of us recognize that this great religion in the hands of a few extremists has been distorted to justify violence towards innocent people that is never justified. So, I think, one of the challenges that we face is how do we isolate those who have distorted notions of religious war.

This does not sit well with the billion Indians, especially Hindu Indians, who are sitting ducks for jihadist terror. and it certainly did not sit well with the president's listeners. (Not that the Hindus -or the Israelis- are completely free of their own fanatics.) But, believe me, what defines Islam these days is not the Sufis.

Doubtless, there are tens of millions, maybe even hundreds of millions of Muslims whose faith binds their souls to peace. But we are not discussing the Muslims of southeast Asia. We are discussing the Islamic stretch, east to west, from Pakistan to Algeria and, north to south, from Turkey to Yemen and Somalia. This includes the Arab heart of Islam.

And in that heart there seems to be no sympathy for the victims of practical jihad, concrete jihad. In Iraq, during a several day outcropping of siege and bombings starting on October 31, perhaps 150 Christians and a lesser number of Shi'a were murdered. Yes, murdered in their innocence and at prayer. One can not count the injured and maimed. And there was neither protest nor outrage.

Even among our "allies" in the Yemeni government, among our "fighting comrades" in Afghanistan, among our friends in the Pakistani sort-of state, there appears to be no anger at the debauchery of random liquidation. And not in the Sudan either. These are the countries of the salient jihad: Al-Qaeda plus the indifference of the rest. If the Israelis were to permit it they, too, would be the victims.

So, please, Mr. President, be honest with us on this matter. For once, at least.

The fact is that Obama is in a Muslim trap of his own making. During the campaign, he eluded Islamic tropes, so much so that his problem became distinguishing himself from his nut-case Christian but anti-American and anti-Jewish preacher of twenty years, Reverend Jeremiah Wright. Then, upon inauguration and after, he played up Muslim themes. Still, as he took the oath of office, I was thrilled when he rang out "I, Barack Hussein Obama..." This is, after all, America.

Hey, on the other hand, everybody to his own pretensions. When it turned out, during the recent campaign, that perhaps a quarter of the American populace believed him to be faithful to Islam he took it out on the Sikhs of the Punjab in India. He would not go to their temple in Amritsar. If he did, he'd have to cover his head with a ritual skull cap. Those are the rules of the Sikhs. Oops, that might make him look like a Muslim even though the Sikhs are not that. Won't go, can't go. Is this man's identity so unsure, so slippery?

The truth is that, if he went to Israel (and there are all kinds of reasons why he won't) he might on occasion have also to wear a kippah, another type of skull cap. Going to the Wall, for example. And standing at the memorial flame of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial (whose architect is my friend Moshe Safdie and about which [I wrote](#) when it opened.) After all, in his little yarmulke, someone might still mistake the president for a Muslim. This is pathetic.

And so back to Gandhi. Unlike my friend, once my student, and the former editor of TNR Rick Hertzberg (who wrote about Gandhi in its pages) I have no feelings for Gandhi. In fact, I suppose I should say that "unlike Obama" I have no feelings for Gandhi at all. I react to him the way George Orwell did. You can read Orwell's essay [here](#). And [Andrew Sullivan](#) and [Christopher Hitchens](#) with both of whom I have many weighty differences.

Like Gandhi Obama wants to pass himself off as a transcendent human being. But, unlike Gandhi and since he commands official power, he can't. After all, Obama is cool, very cool. So he commands when he needs to the persona of the frustrated innocent. If I only I could be Gandhi...

Orwell paraphrases Gandhi on the Jewish problem during the Nazi era, that "the German Jews ought to commit collective suicide" so that they "would have aroused the world and the people of Germany to Hitler's violence."

Orwell goes on: After the war Gandhi justified himself: the Jews had been killed anyway, and might as well have died significantly.

Just like that. A gruesome calculation. Gandhi was not so transcendent, after all. Why the hell would anyone aspire to be Gandhi?

This is by no means the president's view. And I suppose that he should not have been burdened with the obligation to have called attention to Gandhi's venom towards the Jews, although there would have been a very different accounting had this venom been fixed on any other group.

As it happens, alas, it took Obama a very long time to recognize explicitly the historic right of the Jewish people to live in a Jewish state of their own. Here is the first truly coherent nation in history. And it had to wait for a year and a half for Barack Obama to be squeezed by political necessity into recognizing its historicity.

Cafe Hayek

Beware Policies that are Pro-Business

by Don Boudreaux

[The New York Times reports](#) that Pres. Obama's export-promoting trip to Asia is partly "an attempt to ease tensions with America's chief executives, many of whom spent the recent campaign accusing the White House of being antibusiness."

There are two ways for a government to be 'pro-business.' The first way is to avoid interfering in capitalist acts among consenting adults – that is, to keep taxes low, regulations few, and subsidies non-existent. This 'pro-business' stance promotes widespread prosperity because in reality it isn't so much pro-business as it is pro-consumer. When this way is pursued, businesses are rewarded for pleasing consumers, and *only* for pleasing consumers.

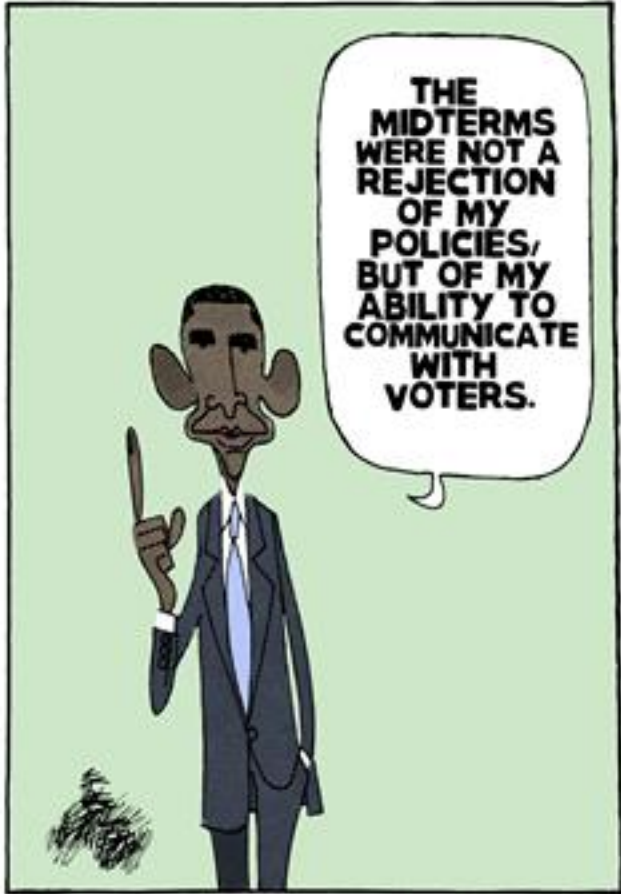
The second, and very different, way for government to be pro-business is to bestow favors and privileges on politically connected firms. These favors and privileges, such as tariffs and export subsidies, invariably oblige consumers to pay more – either directly in the form of higher prices, or indirectly in the form of higher taxes – for goods and services. This way of being pro-business reduces the nation's prosperity by relieving businesses of the need to satisfy consumers. When this second way is pursued, businesses are rewarded for pleasing politicians. Competition for consumers' dollars is replaced by competition for political favors.

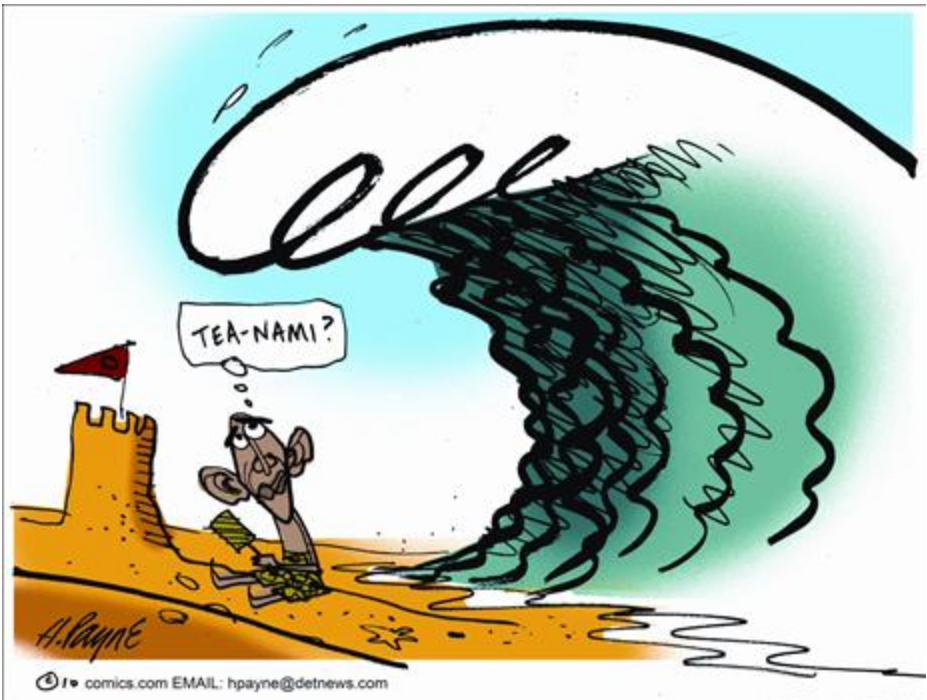
The fact that more than 200 American business executives are in India with the President is cause to fear that any pro-business policies he might adopt will be of the second, impoverishing sort.

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R. M. R. 7

...AND I
THOUGHT A
TRIP TO INDIA
MIGHT TAKE
MY MIND OFF
THE HUGE
GOP WIN...







MADAME SPEAKER,
YOU HELPED PUSH
THE PRESIDENT'S
AGENDA AND RAISED
LOTS OF MONEY FOR
OUR CANDIDATES...
IF YOU WANT TO BE
MINORITY LEADER,
WE SUPPORT YOU
COMPLETELY.

THANKS, BUT
REPUBLICANS
DON'T GET
TO VOTE
ON THAT.

