

August 27, 2012

Charles Krauthammer turns his attention, and ours, to the growing storm in Iran. ... *What to do? The sagest advice comes from Anthony Cordesman, a military analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Cordesman is a hardheaded realist — severely critical of the Bush administration’s conduct of the Iraq war, skeptical of the “war on terror,” dismissive of the strategic importance of Afghanistan, and a believer that “multilateralism and soft power must still be the rule and not the exception.”*

He may have found his exception. “There are times when the best way to prevent war is to clearly communicate that it is possible,” he argues. Today, the threat of a U.S. attack is not taken seriously. Not by the region. Not by Iran. Not by the Israelis, who therefore increasingly feel forced to act before Israel’s more limited munitions — far less powerful and effective than those in the U.S. arsenal — can no longer penetrate Iran’s ever-hardening facilities.

Cordesman therefore proposes threefold action.

1. *“Clear U.S. red lines.”*

It’s time to end the ambiguity about American intentions. Establish real limits on negotiations — to convince Iran that the only alternative to a deal is preemptive strikes and to persuade Israel to stay its hand.

2. *“Make it clear to Iran that it has no successful options.”*

Either its program must be abandoned in a negotiated deal (see No. 1 above) on generous terms from the West (see No. 3 below), or its facilities will be physically destroyed. Ostentatiously let Iran know about the range and power of our capacities — how deep and extensive a campaign we could conduct, extending beyond just nuclear facilities to military-industrial targets, refineries, power grids and other concentrations of regime power.

3. *Give Iran a face-saving way out. ...*

Andrew Ferguson says Romney is an acquired taste.

Now that he’s officially the Republican nominee for president and has an excellent chance of becoming the most powerful man in the world, I feel free to admit, in the full knowledge that nobody cares, that I never liked Mitt Romney. My distaste for him isn’t merely personal or political but also petty and superficial. There’s the breathless, Eddie Attaboy delivery, that half-smile of pitying condescension in debates or interviews when someone disagrees with him, the Ken doll mannerisms, his wanton use of the word “gosh”—the whole Romney package has been nails on a blackboard to me.

*Evidently not many of my fellow Republicans agreed. I assumed I was missing something and resolved to dive into the Romney literature, which I soon discovered should post a disclaimer, like a motel pool: NO DIVING. By my count the literature includes one good book, *The Real Romney*, by two reporters from the Boston Globe. That’s the same Globe with the leftward tilt to its axis and a legendary anti-Romney animus—which lends authority to their largely favorable*

portrait. The flattering details of Romney's life were so numerous and unavoidable that the authors, dammit, had no choice but to include them. ...

... The Real Romney adds other traits that will continue to grate—he's a know-it-all and likely to remain so, and his relationship to political principle has always been tenuous. Which makes him a, uh, politician. But now I suspect he's also something else, a creature rarely found in the highest reaches of American politics: a good guy.

Toby Harnden has a great article on Obama's 'joyless slog' to November.

Barack Obama was swept to the White House in 2008 by a wave of idealism and inspirational campaigning in which he encapsulated the mood of the nation with his slogans of 'Hope', 'Change' and 'Yes we can'.

Then, his message was a fundamentally positive one. Americans wanted an end to the Bush era but that almost went without saying. Obama pointed to his own vision of the country; a post-partisan, post-racial America in which gridlock in Washington was ended and common-sense centrist solutions were adopted.

What a difference four years makes. Obama is campaigning ferociously for a second term – and he is a candidate who would have probably have been disdained by the Obama of 2008.

Obama is waging a relentlessly negative campaign of changing the subject from the one that, overwhelmingly, most Americans care about – the economy. Every week there is a new issue his campaign seizes on, preferring to talk about something, anything other than jobs and 8.3 per cent unemployment.

While Obama is still drawing sizable crowds, they are nothing like the size of those who flocked to see him in 2008. ...

Yuval Levin says the Dem strategy is to lie their way to November.

Last week I spoke with a journalist who covers health care who was marveling at the trouble the Democrats had allowed themselves to get into on Medicare — thanks to Obamacare on the one hand and the Romney-Ryan plan on the other, it's suddenly Democrats who would cut the program for current seniors but would fail to save it from collapse and Republicans who would leave current seniors protected and stand a real chance of saving Medicare (and the federal budget) in the long run. In their attempt to run away from this new reality, the Democrats have found themselves pushed into a series of increasingly implausible and unserious defenses and seemed to be losing ground on Medicare, which they had hoped might be their strongest issue this year. "So what will they do?" I asked him. He didn't hesitate: "They'll just lie." He thought they would revert to the same story they have told for years — Republicans will increase seniors' costs and destroy Medicare and Democrats won't — and assume that people will just believe it.

That certainly made sense, and we now know he was right. On Saturday, the Obama campaign released [this ad](#) attacking the Romney Medicare proposal. The ad doesn't walk some sort of narrow line between misleading and deceiving, it's just simply a pack of lies from top to bottom.

The ad's most significant claim is that "instead of a guarantee, seniors could pay \$6,400 more a year" under the Romney plan — a claim attributed on the screen to the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#). As the Obama campaign well knows, since it has been called on this particular deception before, this claim of \$6,400 in cost shifting is from a 2011 CBPP [analysis](#) based on a 2011 CBO [analysis](#) of an older version of premium-support, and simply does not apply to Romney's plan. A similar calculation applied to Romney's plan would show cost shifting not of \$6,400 but of zero dollars. ...

Lots of good news out of Massachusetts. [Legal Insurrection](#) thinks Liz Warren is going the way of Martha Coakley.

... Earlier this week [PPP released a poll](#) showing Brown ahead by 5 points, and people were stunned particularly on the left.

For the first time in their adult lives, the progressive movement is wondering out loud whether the "[nice guy](#)" Brown is beatable at all, and whether Warren is up to the task. Demands that Warren "[nationalize](#)" (how fitting a word!) the race are increasing.

Warren herself seems desperate to lash out on the war on women theme so much so that she is becoming a caricature.

All in all, there is a sense in the air that resembles what took place in [early January 2010](#) when the political world collectively came to the realization that the Democrats had nominated a seriously flawed candidate, and were up against a guy with a unique political talent and ability to connect with the folks.

Make no mistake, Warren's bizarre handling of her false claim to Native American ancestry has compounded if not caused the problem, as it revealed a personality defect which is not very becoming.

PPP's results now have been confirmed by a second poll just released which shows [Brown up by 6 points](#) (via [Weekly Standard](#)): ...

[Michael Barone](#) says things are not so great at GM.

... Obama talks about the auto bailout frequently, since it's one of the few things in his record that gets positive responses in the polls. But he's probably wise to avoid probing questions, since the GM bailout is not at all the success he claims.

GM has been selling cars in the U.S. at deep discount and, while it's making money in China -- and is outsourcing operations there and elsewhere -- it's bleeding losses in Europe. It's spending billions to ditch its Opel brand there in favor of Chevrolet, including \$559 million to put

the Chevy logo on Manchester United soccer team uniforms -- and just fired the marketing exec who cut that deal.

It botched the launch of its new Chevrolet Malibu by starting with the green-friendly Eco version, which pleased its government shareholders but which got lousy reviews. And it's selling only about 10,000 electric-powered Chevy Volts a year, a puny contribution toward Obama's goal of 1 million electric vehicles on the road by 2015.

"GM is going from bad to worse," reads the headline on Automotive News Editor-in-Chief Keith Crain's analysis. That's certainly true of its stock price.

The government still owns 500 million shares of GM, 26 percent of the total. It needs to sell them for \$53 a share to recover its \$49.5 billion bailout. But the stock price is about \$20 a share, and the Treasury now estimates that the government will lose more than \$25 billion if and when it sells. ...

Washington Post

The Cordesman criteria

by Charles Krauthammer

Either Israel is engaged in the most elaborate ruse since the Trojan horse or it is on the cusp of a preemptive strike on Iran's nuclear facilities.

What's alarming is not just Iran's increasing store of enriched uranium or the [growing sophistication of its rocketry](#). It's also the increasingly menacing annihilationist threats emanating from Iran's leaders. Israel's existence is "an insult to all humanity," says [President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#). "Anyone who loves freedom and justice must strive for the annihilation of the Zionist regime." Explains the country's Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#), Israel is "a true cancer tumor on this region that should be cut off."

Everyone wants to avoid military action, surely the Israelis above all. They can expect a massive counterattack from Iran, [50,000 rockets launched from Lebanon](#), Islamic Jihad firing from Gaza, and worldwide terror against Jewish and Israeli targets, as [happened last month in Bulgaria](#).

Yet Israel will not sit idly by in the face of the most virulent genocidal threats since Nazi Germany. The result then was 6 million murdered Jews. There are 6 million living in Israel today.

Time is short. Last-ditch negotiations in Istanbul, Baghdad and Moscow [have failed abjectly](#). The Iranians are contemptuously playing with the process. The strategy is delay until they get the bomb.

What to do? The sagest advice comes from [Anthony Cordesman](#), a military analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Cordesman is a hardheaded realist — severely critical of the Bush administration’s conduct of the Iraq war, skeptical of the “war on terror,” dismissive of the strategic importance of Afghanistan, and a believer that “multilateralism and soft power must still be the rule and not the exception.”

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3. *Give Iran a face-saving way out.*

Offer Iran the most generous possible terms — economic, diplomatic and political. End of sanctions, assistance in economic and energy development, trade incentives and a regional security architecture. Even Russian nuclear fuel.

Tellingly, however, Cordesman does not join those who suggest yielding on nuclear enrichment. That’s important because a prominently leaked [proposed “compromise”](#) would guarantee Iran’s right to enrich, though not to high levels.

In my view, this would be disastrous. Iran would retain the means to potentially produce fissile material, either clandestinely or in a defiant breakout at a time of its choosing.

Would Iran believe a Cordesman-like ultimatum? Given the record of the Obama administration, maybe not. Some (though not Cordesman) have therefore suggested the further step of requesting congressional authorization for the use of force *if* Iran does not negotiate denuclearization.

First, that’s the right way to do it. No serious military action should be taken without congressional approval ([contra Libya](#)). Second, Iran might actually respond to a threat backed

by a strong bipartisan majority of the American people — thus avoiding both war and the other nightmare scenario, a nuclear Iran.

If we simply continue to drift through kabuki negotiations, however, one thing is certain. Either America, Europe, the Gulf Arabs and the Israelis will forever be condemned to live under the threat of nuclear blackmail (even nuclear war) from a regime the State Department identifies as the [world's greatest exporter of terror](#). Or an imperiled Israel, with its more limited capabilities, will strike Iran — with correspondingly greater probability of failure and of triggering a regional war.

All options are bad. Doing nothing is worse. “The status quo may not prevent some form of war,” concludes Cordesman, “and may even be making it more likely.”

Weekly Standard

[Learning to Like Mitt](#)

Andrew Ferguson, reluctant Romneyite

by Andrew Ferguson

Now that he's officially the Republican nominee for president and has an excellent chance of becoming the most powerful man in the world, I feel free to admit, in the full knowledge that nobody cares, that I never liked Mitt Romney. My distaste for him isn't merely personal or political but also petty and superficial. There's the breathless, Eddie Attaboy delivery, that half-smile of pitying condescension in debates or interviews when someone disagrees with him, the Ken doll mannerisms, his wanton use of the word “gosh”—the whole Romney package has been nails on a blackboard to me.

Evidently not many of my fellow Republicans agreed. I assumed I was missing something and resolved to dive into the Romney literature, which I soon discovered should post a disclaimer, like a motel pool: NO DIVING. By my count the literature includes one good book, *The Real Romney*, by two reporters from the *Boston Globe*. That's the same *Globe* with the leftward tilt to its axis and a legendary anti-Romney animus—which lends authority to their largely favorable portrait. The flattering details of Romney's life were so numerous and unavoidable that the authors, dammit, had no choice but to include them.

Romney once famously called himself “severely” conservative. Other adverbs fit better: culturally, personally, instinctively. He seems to have missed out on The Sixties altogether, and wanted to. As a freshman at Stanford he protested the protesters, appearing in the quad carrying signs of his own: SPEAK OUT, DON'T SIT IN! In 1968 the May riots stranded him in Paris. “The disorder appalled him,” the authors write. He left Stanford for BYU, where long hair, rock bands, and peace symbols were banned. As a young go-getter he liked to give friends copies of *Think and Grow Rich*, by Napoleon Hill—a Stephen Covey for the Coolidge era, sodden with moral uplift. (Even his anachronisms are anachronistic.) “There was nothing jaded about him,” a school friend tells the authors, “nothing skeptical, nothing ironic.”

At his wedding, he declined when the photographer asked him to kiss the bride: “Not for cameras,” he said. Since that day, Ann says, they haven't had an argument; friends believe her.

And their kids—we've all seen their kids. The authors tick off a typical week for the young family. Sunday: "church, reflection, volunteer work, family dinners." Monday: "family night," when the family gathered for Bible stories and skits about animals. Tuesday was for family basketball games and cookouts. Friday was date night for Mitt and Ann. Saturday was for doing chores, and so on, in a pinwheel of wholesomeness that a -post-60s ironist can only gape at, disbelieving. The Romneys present a picture of an American family that popular culture has been trying to undo since—well, since *An American Family*, the 1973 PBS documentary that exposed the typical household as a cauldron of resentment and infidelity.

And now, here, 40 years later, it's as though it all never happened: a happy American family, led by a baby boomer with no sense of irony! Romney is the sophisticate's nightmare.

Almost every personal detail about Romney I found endearing. But my slowly softening opinion went instantly to goo when *The Real Romney* unfolded an account of his endless kindnesses—unbidden, unsung, and utterly gratuitous. "It seems that everyone who has known him has a tale of his altruism," the authors write. I was struck by the story of a Mormon family called (unfortunately) Nixon. In the 1990s a car wreck rendered two of their boys quadriplegics. Drained financially from extraordinary expenses, Mr. Nixon got a call from Romney, whom he barely knew, asking if he could stop by on Christmas Eve. When the day came, all the Romneys arrived bearing presents, including a VCR and a new sound system the Romney boys set up. Later Romney told Nixon that he could take care of the children's college tuition, which in the end proved unnecessary. "I knew how busy he was," Nixon told the authors. "He was actually teaching his boys, saying, 'This is what we do. We do this as a family.' □"

Romney's oldest son Tagg once made the same point to the radio host Hugh Hewitt. "He was constantly doing things like that and never telling anyone about them," Tagg said. "He doesn't want to tell people about them, but he wanted us to see him. He would let the kids see it because he wanted it to rub off on us."

To this touching kindness and fatherly wisdom, *The Real Romney* adds other traits that will continue to grate—he's a know-it-all and likely to remain so, and his relationship to political principle has always been tenuous. Which makes him a, uh, politician. But now I suspect he's also something else, a creature rarely found in the highest reaches of American politics: a good guy.

Daily Mail, UK

[Low blows, lower turnouts and low expectations: Four years after he was swept to victory, how Obama's election campaign is a joyless slog](#)

by Toby Harnden

Barack Obama was swept to the White House in 2008 by a wave of idealism and inspirational campaigning in which he encapsulated the mood of the nation with his slogans of 'Hope', 'Change' and 'Yes we can'.

Then, his message was a fundamentally positive one. Americans wanted an end to the Bush era but that almost went without saying. Obama pointed to his own vision of the country; a post-

partisan, post-racial America in which gridlock in Washington was ended and common-sense centrist solutions were adopted.

What a difference four years makes. Obama is campaigning ferociously for a second term – and he is a candidate who would have probably have been disdained by the Obama of 2008.



Four more years? President Obama, pictured left in March 2008, and right, at an event in Las Vegas earlier this week; the Commander-in-Chief is waging a relentlessly negative campaign for the White House

Obama is waging a relentlessly negative campaign of changing the subject from the one that, overwhelmingly, most Americans care about – the economy. Every week there is a new issue his campaign seizes on, preferring to talk about something, anything other than jobs and 8.3 per cent unemployment.

While Obama is still drawing sizable crowds, they are nothing like the size of those who flocked to see him in 2008. In Las Vegas, Obama held a rally in a high school before more than 2,000 people but there was space for plenty more.

On the outskirts of Manchester, New Hampshire on Monday morning, Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan attracted more than 3,000 people who patiently queued in lines across a field to be searched by the Secret Service.

Crowd size is not everything – as Obama himself could attest after losing in the 2008 New Hampshire primary to Hillary Clinton even though he had attracted unprecedented numbers to his events, eclipsing the former First Lady by two or three to one.

But the difference between the numbers Obama is attracting now compared to four years ago should be a cause of deep concern to his campaign.

More significantly, the mood of the crowds is different. There is a sullenness, even resentment, that was not present in 2008. Ask an Obama supporter about their man and as often as not you will get a few words about him and then a demeaning attack on Romney or Ryan.

They are taking their cue from the candidate himself. Obama used not to mention Romney by name. In Las Vegas, he did so nine times.

And while he was careful to call him 'Governor Romney' and not stoop to the kind of attacks he has left to his campaign and its allies (such as accusing him of being a felon or linking him to the death of a woman from cancer), the contempt he has for his opponent was almost visceral.

Significantly, the mood of the crowds is different. There is a sullenness, even resentment, that was not present in 2008. Ask an Obama supporter about their man and as often as not you will get a few words about him and then a demeaning attack on Romney or Ryan.

The crowd sensed it. When Obama mentioned 'Republicans in Congress', they began to boo loudly. Obama attempted to quiet them: 'No, no, no, no, no, don't boo – vote,' he said. 'That's right. Vote.'

But the crowd had taken their cue from Obama – the booing reflected the tone he had adopted. It was clever politics – whip up the crowd, then make a high-minded appeal for civility while at the same time trying to turn their anger into action.

Obama has taken on Ryan by name – presidential candidates, never mind incumbent presidents, don't normally stoop to mentioning the bottom half of the opposing ticket.

In 2008, the Obama campaign was full of endless possibilities and expectations of a bright new horizon. This time, it's a joyless slog. And there's something else: Obama now tends to look emptily past rather than at his audiences. It's as if the light in his eyes has gone out.

Obama has seized on the bone-headed 'legitimate rape' remarks of Todd Akin, a previously obscure figure running for the US Senate in Missouri, to try to make them central to his campaign.

At a New York fundraiser on Wednesday, Obama joked about referred 'the Senator of Missouri, Mr Akin' (he's a congressman) who 'sits on the House Committee on Science and Technology but somehow missed science class'.

The Obama campaign appears intent on turning the Democratic convention into one long gloat about Akin's comments in the hope of driving women voters away from Romney. Obama advisers are even talking of Akin being "on the ticket" with Romney and Ryan.

In Las Vegas, a campaign event and a stridently partisan one at that, Obama's lectern was decorated with the presidential seal. Back in 2010, Obama's then press secretary Robert Gibbs said that 'at strictly political events we would not use' the seal, which is a symbol of the office of the presidency not of a political candidate.

Another remarkable thing is that many of those at Obama's events – like many people across the country - are not listening to him. In Reno on Tuesday evening, it was at times hard to follow what Obama was saying because of the chatter.

A number of those attending seemed only to want to get a picture of themselves with Obama speaking in the background. In 2008, audiences would be rapt, almost mesmerised, when Obama spoke. At Romney and Ryan events there is near silence and many an intent, furrowed brow as the case for change is made.

In Las Vegas, the crowd chanted 'Yes We Can' before Obama appeared but it sounded like a dirge rather than the perky, upbeat chant of 2008. It was so different that one local reporter even walked over to me to ask what they were chanting.

Behind Obama was emblazoned the word 'Forward', a slogan once used by Josef Stalin. But at the core of Obama's case is the notion that President George W. Bush's policies are responsible for the mess America is in. Listening to him at times it is as if the last four years never happened.

Obama's campaign schedule reveals a lot about how he seeks victory in November. Last week, he spend three days in Iowa and held nine events. Iowa has six electoral college votes of the 270 Obama needs to win.

On Saturday, Obama held two events in New Hampshire, which has four Electoral College votes and on Tuesday and Wednesday he was in Nevada, which has six. Obama, moreover, won Nevada by more than 12 percentage points in 2008.

What does this tell us? That Obama is on the defensive and knows the only way he can win re-election is by the narrowest of margins, by 'slicing and dicing' – his own pejorative term – and eking out a 51 to 49 per cent victory, crawling across the line to 270 electoral college votes.

Perhaps the most striking thing of all is Obama's demeanour. He has visibly greyed over the past four years but that happens to most world leaders. What is more noteworthy is his lugubrious expression and the fact that he grimaces much more often than he smiles.

The Corner
'They'll Just Lie'
by Yuval Levin

Last week I spoke with a journalist who covers health care who was marveling at the trouble the Democrats had allowed themselves to get into on Medicare — thanks to Obamacare on the one hand and the Romney-Ryan plan on the other, it's suddenly Democrats who would cut the program for current seniors but would fail to save it from collapse and Republicans who would

leave current seniors protected and stand a real chance of saving Medicare (and the federal budget) in the long run. In their attempt to run away from this new reality, the Democrats have found themselves pushed into a series of increasingly implausible and unserious defenses and seemed to be losing ground on Medicare, which they had hoped might be their strongest issue this year. “So what will they do?” I asked him. He didn’t hesitate: “They’ll just lie.” He thought they would revert to the same story they have told for years — Republicans will increase seniors’ costs and destroy Medicare and Democrats won’t — and assume that people will just believe it.

That certainly made sense, and we now know he was right. On Saturday, the Obama campaign released [this ad](#) attacking the Romney Medicare proposal. The ad doesn’t walk some sort of narrow line between misleading and deceiving, it’s just simply a pack of lies from top to bottom.

The ad’s most significant claim is that “instead of a guarantee, seniors could pay \$6,400 more a year” under the Romney plan — a claim attributed on the screen to the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#). As the Obama campaign well knows, since it has been called on this particular deception before, this claim of \$6,400 in cost shifting is from a 2011 CBPP [analysis](#) based on a 2011 CBO [analysis](#) of an older version of premium-support, and simply does not apply to Romney’s plan. A similar calculation applied to Romney’s plan would show cost shifting not of \$6,400 but of zero dollars.

Here’s why: The CBO analysis in question involved the premium-support proposal in the original Ryan budget (released in the spring of 2011). That proposal would have started, in 2022, with a premium-support payment based on the average Medicare spending per beneficiary in the prior year, but CBO argued that while that amount would be enough to pay for what fee-for-service Medicare would cover in 2021, it would not be enough to pay for private coverage in 2022 because private insurers pay higher rates than Medicare. So by giving people the value of the benefit they would have gotten from Medicare but having them spend it in a different system, the Ryan proposal would be giving them less than it would cost them to buy coverage in that new system and so increasing their out of pocket costs by as much as \$6,400 that year. The assumption at the heart of this analysis — that fee-for-service Medicare would pay far less per beneficiary than private insurance could — is very likely wrong, as evidence from the [Medicare Advantage](#) program has shown in recent years, and it also ignores (or treats as meaningless) the entire purpose of the premium-support reform, and assumes that competition has no potential to reduce costs whatsoever (an assumption other government health economists, like the actuary of Medicare, [do not](#) share). My colleague Jim Capretta took apart these assumptions behind the CBO figure last year [here](#).

But even if we stipulated for the sake of argument that the analysis made sense and the \$6,400 figure applied to the first Ryan proposal, it absolutely does not apply to either Ryan’s later proposal (in the spring of 2012) or to Romney’s proposal, which is what this ad purports to be talking about. Both of those proposals, which are very similar, were designed precisely to avoid this possibility. In both proposals, the level of the premium-support benefit is determined by a process in which insurers bid to offer comprehensive coverage at the lowest rates they’re able or willing to offer, and the second-lowest bid determines the [Medicare payment](#). That means, by definition, that you have at least one (and generally at least two) comprehensive-coverage options for which the premium-support payment is sufficient to cover the premium to the same extent today’s Medicare does. This is so by definition, or by system design, precisely to avoid the problem of providing seniors with less than it would take to pay that premium. So this ad’s

most significant claim, directed squarely at Romney's proposed Medicare reform, is simply and completely false.

The ad's lesser claims are also untrue — at least to the extent that they're decipherable at all. It claims Romney would “replace your benefits with a voucher.” That claim is attributed on the screen to an Associated Press story from November of 2011, most likely [this story](#), written before the campaign had unveiled any particulars of its proposal. That proposal, again because it provides a guaranteed benefit while having insurers compete to make it available most cheaply, does not “replace your benefits” but guarantees them.

The ad says that under the Romney proposal “insurance companies could just keep raising rates.” It's hard to know quite what this means. Companies could, I suppose, keep raising rates, but they would be competing with other insurers who would have a huge incentive to undersell one another so just raising rates wouldn't get them customers. And if they all kept raising rates, then the premium-support payment would rise to adjust — the government wouldn't save money, but seniors would still have a comprehensive guaranteed benefit. This claim, by the way, is attributed to a *Boston Globe* story from August 18. It is presumably [this story](#), which again compares Obama's Medicare proposal with the older version of Ryan's proposal — not the current version, and not Mitt Romney's proposal.

Finally, the ad says that “AARP says the plan Mitt Romney supports undermines Medicare.” Here the ad cites [this](#) AARP letter to Congress from March of this year, showing a quote on the screen that says “would undermine . . . Medicare.” The words replaced by the ellipses are “the market power of.” The AARP letter argues that the Ryan budget's Medicare reform proposal would undermine the negotiating leverage of Medicare and so would risk higher costs. That's hardly the same as saying the proposal would undermine Medicare. If you think Medicare's magical market power has done a great job of keeping costs down and making the system efficient to date, then I suppose you ought to oppose reforming the system. But if instead you think Medicare is woefully inefficient and its costs are out of control, you might want to inject some market pressures into the program to try to reduce costs without undermining benefits. Either way, the AARP letter doesn't say the Ryan proposal, let alone the Romney proposal, undermines Medicare.

Those are all the claims in the ad, and they are all false. At least as striking, though, is what the ad doesn't mention. It doesn't mention that the Romney Medicare proposal would leave current seniors entirely unaffected or that it would provide a guaranteed comprehensive benefit to future seniors through a premium-support system. It doesn't mention that the Democrats cut \$716 billion from Medicare in this decade to spend on Obamacare, and did so largely through increased price controls, which are the most counterproductive way to reduce short-term costs since they tend to drive up long-term costs and undermine efficiency, quality, and access. It doesn't say that Obamacare subjects Medicare to a board of 15 rationers who will decide which benefits are worthwhile and which are not — for both current and future seniors.

In other words, the ad pretends Obamacare does not exist, ignores the reality of the Romney Medicare proposal, and presents a series of flatly untrue claims in its place.

I suppose that, because it doesn't directly accuse Mitt Romney of killing anyone's wife, such an ad actually qualifies as an elevation of the Obama camp's rhetoric. But it's still a pack of lies.

Legal Insurrection

Scott Brown surges ahead of Martha Coakley

by William A. Jacobson

No, that's not a typo or some psychological slip.

It's what I believe to reflect a sea change in how people view the Scott Brown – Elizabeth Warren match-up.

Earlier this week [PPP released a poll](#) showing Brown ahead by 5 points, and people were stunned particularly on the left.

For the first time in their adult lives, the progressive movement is wondering out loud whether the “[nice guy](#)” Brown is beatable at all, and whether Warren is up to the task. Demands that Warren “[nationalize](#)” (how fitting a word!) the race are increasing.

Warren herself seems desperate to lash out on the war on women theme so much so that she is becoming a caricature.

All in all, there is a sense in the air that resembles what took place in [early January 2010](#) when the political world collectively came to the realization that the Democrats had nominated a seriously flawed candidate, and were up against a guy with a unique political talent and ability to connect with the folks.

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According to a Kimball Political Consulting survey of registered voters in Massachusetts, Senator Scott Brown has a 6 point lead over Democrat Elizabeth Warren (49 percent to 43 percent) with 9 percent undecided. The figure is just within the survey's 4 percent margin of error.

President Obama continues to hold a double digit lead over former Massachusetts Mitt Romney (52 percent to 41 percent) with 7 percent undecided. Poll results are based on a sample of respondents most likely to vote in November.

“Senator Brown is winning decisively among independents but Warren still has a chance to come back. The data suggest that for Warren to close the gap it may be time for her to change her emphasis, from the cost of education to job creation,” said Spencer Kimball, Political Consultant and President of [Kimball Political Consulting](#)....

Independent voters are splitting their voting choices between President Obama and Senator Brown; 56% of Independents favor the Senator and 44% intend to vote for the President. Warren also needs to shore up her base of Democrat support with 21% of Democrats saying they would vote for Brown.

The most important issue facing likely voters in Massachusetts is jobs at 40 percent followed by the deficit at 21 percent.

There will be ups and downs in the polling. Just days before the election in January 2010 there were polls showing Coakley [running strong](#), but no one believed it anymore, it was against the trend, and the momentum [on the ground](#) was all Brown.

To put it in plain terms, Democrats selected a class and sex warrior when people are not concerned with those issues.

Washington Examiner

[GM goes from bad to worse despite Obama bailout](#)

by Michael Barone



LANSING, MI, - JULY 26: A General Motors' worker assembles a 2012 Cadillac CTS on the assembly line at the General Motors Lansing Grand River Assembly Plant July 26, 2012 in Lansing, Michigan.

Readers with long memories may recall that Charles E. Wilson, president of General Motors and nominee for secretary of defense, got into trouble when he told a Senate committee, "What is good for the country is good for General Motors, and what's good for General Motors is good for the country."

That was in 1953, and Wilson was trying to make the point that General Motors was such a big company -- it sold about half the cars in the United States back then -- that its interests were inevitably aligned with those of the country as a whole.

Things are different now. General Motors' market share in the U.S. is below 20 percent. It has gone through bankruptcy and exists now thanks to a federal bailout. But Barack Obama seems to think that it's as closely aligned with the national interest as Charles E. Wilson did.

"When the American auto industry was on the brink of collapse," Obama told a campaign event audience in Colorado earlier this month, "I said, let's bet on America's workers. And we got management and workers to come together, making cars better than ever, and now GM is number one again and the American auto industry has come roaring back."

His conclusion: "So now I want to say that what we did with the auto industry, we can do in manufacturing across America. Let's make sure advanced, high-tech manufacturing jobs take root here, not in China. Let's have them here in Colorado. And that means supporting investment here."

Was he calling for a federal bailout of other American manufacturing companies? And what does he mean by "supporting investment"? White House reporters have not asked these obvious questions, for the good reason that the president, who has been attending fundraisers on an average of one every 60 hours, had not held a press conference in something like two months until recently. They were not asked in his brief, impromptu press conference on Monday.

Obama talks about the auto bailout frequently, since it's one of the few things in his record that gets positive responses in the polls. But he's probably wise to avoid probing questions, since the GM bailout is not at all the success he claims.

GM has been selling cars in the U.S. at deep discount and, while it's making money in China -- and is outsourcing operations there and elsewhere -- it's bleeding losses in Europe. It's spending billions to ditch its Opel brand there in favor of Chevrolet, including \$559 million to put the Chevy logo on Manchester United soccer team uniforms -- and just fired the marketing exec who cut that deal.

It botched the launch of its new Chevrolet Malibu by starting with the green-friendly Eco version, which pleased its government shareholders but which got lousy reviews. And it's selling only about 10,000 electric-powered Chevy Volts a year, a puny contribution toward Obama's goal of 1 million electric vehicles on the road by 2015.

"GM is going from bad to worse," reads the headline on Automotive News Editor-in-Chief Keith Crain's analysis. That's certainly true of its stock price.

The government still owns 500 million shares of GM, 26 percent of the total. It needs to sell them for \$53 a share to recover its \$49.5 billion bailout. But the stock price is about \$20 a share, and the Treasury now estimates that the government will lose more than \$25 billion if and when it sells.

That's in addition to the revenue lost when the Obama administration permitted GM to continue to deduct previous losses from current profits, even though such deductions are ordinarily wiped out in bankruptcy proceedings.

It's hard to avoid the conclusion that GM is bleeding money because of decisions made by a management eager to please its political masters -- and by the terms of the bankruptcy arranged by Obama car czars Ron Bloom and Steven Rattner.

Rattner himself admitted late last year, in a speech to the Detroit Economic Club, that "We should have asked the [United Auto Workers] to do a bit more. We did not ask any UAW member to take a cut in their pay." Nonunion employees of GM spin-off Delphi lost their pensions. UAW members didn't.

The UAW got its political payoff. And GM, according to Forbes writer Louis Woodhill, is headed to bankruptcy again.

Is this really what Obama wants to do for all manufacturing across America? Let's hope not.



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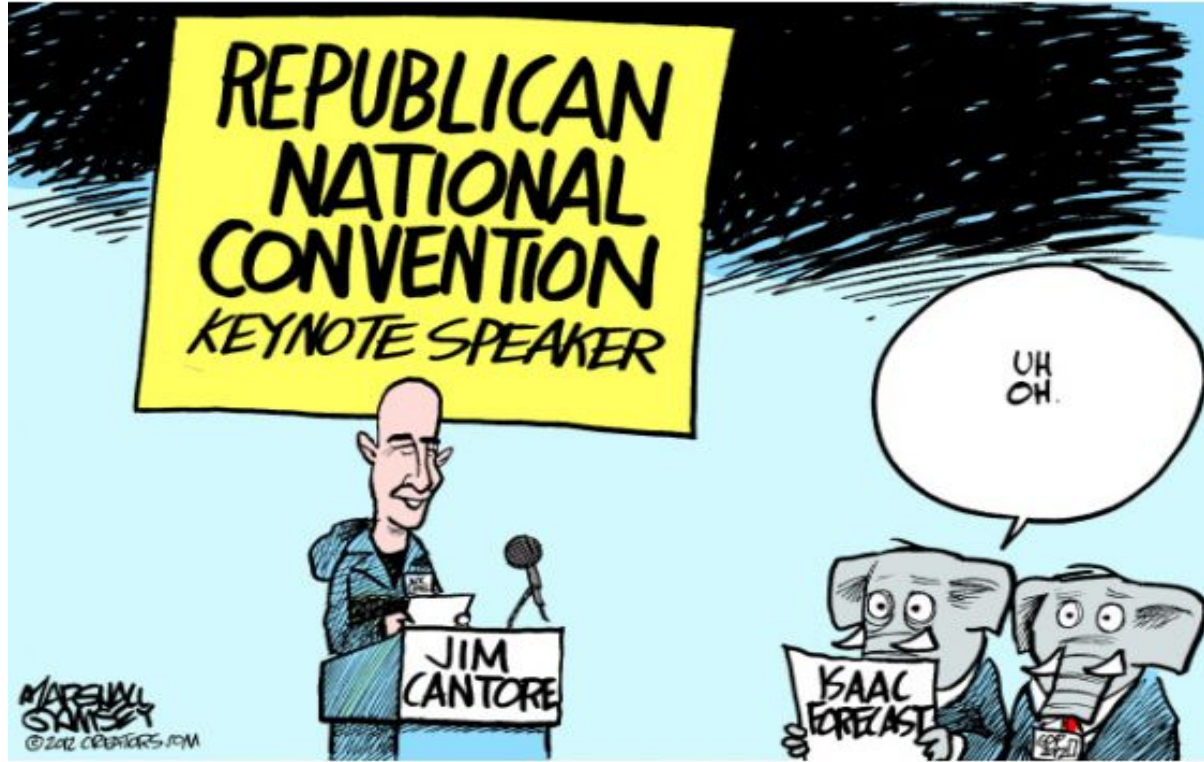
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