

# Parry to Receive I.F. Stone Award

**From Editor Robert Parry:** Our nearly two decades of work at Consortiumnews were recently recognized by Harvard's Nieman Foundation in awarding me the I.F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence. But this honor really is for all those who have written for this Web site and our many readers who have supported us with donations.

Indeed, none of this would have been possible without the help of you, our readers. Unlike some Web sites, we have never had one big-money donor. Instead, we have relied on contributions from readers and a few modest grants from family foundations, meaning that no one person can threaten Consortiumnews' independence.

We are now in a fall fund drive trying to raise \$25,000 to keep the Web site afloat. If you can, please consider a donation to our tax-exempt non-profit. You can use a credit card online (we accept Visa, Mastercard, American Express and Discover) or you can mail a check to Consortium for Independent Journalism (CIJ); 2200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 102-231; Arlington VA 22201.

For readers wanting to use PayPal, you can address contributions to our account, which is named after our e-mail address: "consortnew@aol.com". We are also registered with PayPal's Giving Fund under the name Consortium for Independent Journalism. (Since we are a 501-c-3 non-profit, donations by American taxpayers may be tax-deductible.)

Donations of any size are appreciated. But we also are offering a choice of thank-you gifts for those who can give \$125, \$150 or more.

For donations of \$125 or more, you can receive the new edition of my first book, *Fooling America*, which was originally published in 1992 and has been out of print for many years. Along with it, we'll include a CD of a book talk that I gave in Los Angeles, explaining what was then a little understood phenomenon, the corruption of the mainstream media.

Or for donations of \$150 or more, we can send you the DVD of the movie, "Kill the Messenger," recalling the mainstream media's betrayal of the late investigative reporter Gary Webb who was punished for his work exposing the Contra-cocaine scandal plus a CD of Webb and me discussing the topic before a crowd in Santa Monica, California, in 1996.

If you wish to get one of the thank-you gifts, just follow up your donation with an e-mail to us at consortnew@aol.com with instructions on where to mail it. We'll pay the shipping charges. (To save you time, we'll assume that any

donations of \$125 are for *Fooling America* and the related CD, and that if you donate \$150, you want "Kill the Messenger" and that CD and we'll send them to the address attached to your credit card.).

Another way to help Consortiumnews survive is to buy my three-book trilogy on the Bush dynasty *Secrecy & Privilege*, *Neck Deep* and *America's Stolen Narrative* for the discount price of only \$34, less than half the cover price. Given Jeb Bush's presidential run, it contains important history that Americans should know.

To get the trilogy, just go to Consortiumnews.com's "[Donate](#)" button and make a \$34 "donation" using Visa, Mastercard, American Express or Discover. We will read a "donation" of that amount as an order for the trilogy. If your mailing address is the same as your credit card billing address, we will ship the books to that address. If your mailing address is different, just send us an e-mail at [consortnew@aol.com](mailto:consortnew@aol.com) and we will make the adjustment.

You can also take advantage of this trilogy offer by mailing a check for \$34 to The Media Consortium; 2200 Wilson Blvd.; Suite 102-231; Arlington VA 22201. Or you can use our PayPal account, "consortnew @ aol.com." Just make sure you include your mailing address in the message. (A portion of each sale will go to support our investigative journalism.)

For U.S. orders of the trilogy, we will pay for the shipping. **(If you are outside the United States, please add \$20 for the additional postage that is a total of \$54 and e-mail us the precise mailing address.)**

Another contribution option is to donate stock or other equities, which can offer a tax advantage to you if the stock has appreciated in value. If this stock-donation option appeals to you, I suggest you discuss it with your broker and then contact me at [consortnew@aol.com](mailto:consortnew@aol.com) for specific instructions on how to transfer the stock.

Again, thanks for your support and for making our nearly two decades of honest journalism possible.

**Robert Parry is a longtime investigative reporter who broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for the Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 to create an outlet for well-reported journalism that was being squeezed out of an increasingly trivialized U.S. news media.**

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# A Prized Iran-Nuke Myth Unraveling

Once an Official Washington “group think” gets going it’s very hard to stop because the mainstream U.S. media will adjust the narrative so as not to debunk what all the Important People “know” to be true, such as shoring up a beloved Iran nuclear myth that is starting to fall apart, as Gareth Porter notes.

By Gareth Porter

For well over three years, heavy doses of propaganda have created a myth about a purported steel cylinder for testing explosives located on a site at Iran’s Parchin military testing reservation. According to that storyline, Iran was refusing to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect the site while it sought to hide its past nuclear weapons-related work.

Now Iran has agreed to allow the IAEA to visit the site at Parchin and environmental samples have already been collected at the site. However, the politically charged tale of the bomb test chamber of Parchin is beginning to unravel. IAEA director general Yukiya Amano entered the building in which the explosives chamber had supposedly been located on Monday and announced afterward that he found “no equipment” in the building.

That is surely a major story, in light of how much has been made of the alleged presence of the chamber at that location. But you may have missed that news, unless you happened to read the story by Jonathan Tirone of Bloomberg Business News, who was the only journalist for a significant news outlet who chose to lead with the story in his coverage of Amano’s Monday visit.

The rest of the news media buried that fact far down in their stories, focusing almost entirely on the fact that the Iranians have been allowed to physically gather environmental samples at the site under the gaze of IAEA technicians rather than IAEA inspectors carrying out that function.

The main storyline associated with the purported bomb cylinder since early 2012 has been that Iran has been removing evidence from the site for years in anticipation of an eventual IAEA inspection in order to hide the evidence of past experiments using the purported chamber. But the full story of that mysterious chamber makes it clear that it was highly dubious from the start.

The first description of an explosive chamber at Parchin appeared in an IAEA report published in early November 2011. But less than two weeks after the story of the cylinder was reported in the media, Associated Press reporter George Jahn published a report that an official of an unidentified state had “cited intelligence from his home country, saying it appears that Iran is trying to

cover its tracks by sanitizing the site and removing any evidence of nuclear research and development.”

The official provided an “intelligence summary” from which Jahn quoted: “Freight trucks, special haulage vehicles and cranes were seen entering and leaving” the site on Nov. 4-5, 2011, it said, and “some equipment and dangerous materials were removed from the site.”

### **Disputed intelligence**

The purpose of that language was clearly to suggest that Iran had actually removed the cylinder and the nuclear materials that it had been testing. If true, it would have been very incriminating evidence of Iran’s nuclear deception. But there was a problem with that claim. Officials of two other IAEA member states that were obviously following the aerial photography of the Parchin site closely denied that the story being peddled to Jahn by the unnamed state was true.

It was true that there was more activity than normal at the site on those days, they told Jahn, but nothing resembling the activities claimed by the unidentified state’s “intelligence summary.” One of those two countries denying the story was clearly the United States. Pentagon spokesman Captain John Kirby told Jahn he had “seen nothing to indicate that those concerns are warranted.”

The episode of the AP story begs the obvious question: Why was the state that could not be named so intent on planting a false story of Iranian removal of the purported cylinder? The obvious purpose of such a story would be to prepare government and public opinion for a possible IAEA visit to the site in the future, and the subsequent discovery that there was nothing incriminating at the site.

That, in turn, indicates that the state in question was the same one that had provided the original story of the explosive cylinder to the IAEA and that it already knew that no cylinder would be found there because the original story had been a fabrication.

### **Israeli-supplied Documents**

The IAEA member state that had provided the information about a purported bomb cylinder was never identified by the IAEA. But IAEA director-general Mohamed El Baradei asserts in his memoirs that in the summer of 2009 Israel turned over to the IAEA a number of intelligence documents purporting to show that Iran had carried out nuclear weapons work “until at least 2007,” most of which consisted of purported Iranian official documents whose authenticity had been questioned by some of the agency’s technical experts.

El Baradei refused to bow to diplomatic pressures from Israel's allies, coordinated by the head of Israel's Atomic Energy Commission, to publish a compendium of those documents, including the claim in an intelligence report of the Parchin explosives cylinder. The Israelis and the Obama administration had to wait until Amano succeeded El Baradei and agreed to do exactly that.

The episode of the AP story isn't the only evidence that the unidentified state had concocted an intelligence document on Parchin that was a complete falsehood. In August 2012, an IAEA report stated that the agency had acquired the satellite imagery available on the Parchin site for the entire period from February 2005 to January 2012.

The report revealed that the imagery showed "virtually no activity at or near the building housing the containment vessel" during that entire period. The imagery clearly suggested that Iran had not been using the site for any sensitive activities, much less the activities suggested by the IAEA in its report, during the seven years, nor had they engaged in any cleanup of the site.

And an earlier episode sheds further light on the issue. In 2004, John Bolton, then President George W. Bush's Iran policymaker, leaked satellite imagery of sites at Parchin that had features someone believed might be high explosives testing facilities.

After a few months of bullying by Bolton, the IAEA asked to visit Parchin. Iran not only agreed to an inspection in February 2005 but allowed the IAEA to choose any five sites in any one of the four Parchin quadrants after the inspection team's arrival – and take environmental samples anywhere at the sites. And in November 2005, after El Baradei requested a second inspection, Iran again gave the IAEA the choice of five more sites at which to take samples.

The significance of those two 2005 IAEA inspections is not merely that the environmental samples all came back negative. More important, Iran would never have allowed the IAEA to choose to take environmental samples anywhere it chose at Parchin if it had carried out nuclear-weapons related experiments as claimed later by the unidentified state.

Beginning in spring 2012 and continuing right up to the Vienna round of Iran nuclear negotiations last summer, the IAEA, Western diplomats and David Albright of the Institute for Science and International Security generated many dozens of stories about Iran's "stonewalling" the IAEA on Parchin while it sought to remove evidence of its purported nuclear-related testing at the site. Those stories invariably used the term "sanitizing" the same word the Israeli official used in passing on the false story to AP.

Those stories were just as dishonest as the original Israeli story because the IAEA and Western diplomats assigned to it know very well that there is no way to remove all traces of nuclear material from a site. In 2013, Stephan Vogt, the head of the IAEA's environmental sample laboratory, declared in a 2013 interview: "You cannot get rid of them by cleaning, you cannot dilute them to the extent that we will not be able to pick them up."

Strangely, however, even after that interview was published, the Parchin stories continued as if Vogt had not revealed the impossibility of "sanitizing" a site that had held nuclear material.

We are now only a few weeks away from the release of the environmental sampling results at Parchin. It will be amusing to this writer to see how the governments and news media who pushed the Parchin myth manage that story.

**Gareth Porter is an independent investigative journalist and winner of the 2012 Gellhorn Prize for journalism. He is the author of the newly published *Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare*. [This article first appeared at Middle East Eye, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/parchin-myth-begins-unravel-1441311523#sthash.D1zWNM80.dpuf>**

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## GOP Vexed over Pope on Climate Change

In the pocket of the oil industry, key Republicans continue to sow doubts about the science on climate change, an attitude that may extend to their annoyance with Pope Francis if he raises the issue when he addresses Congress, as Michael Winship describes.

By Michael Winship

The funniest line of the last few days came from Arizona's Republican Congressman Paul Gosar. Resentful that Pope Francis might blaspheme the sacred chamber of the World's Greatest Deliberative Body with some inconvenient truth about global warming, Gosar announced he would boycott the Holy Father's visit to Capitol Hill.

He then declared, "If the Pope wants to devote his life to fighting climate change then he can do so in his personal time."

Now that's funny. Not intentionally funny because this is a member of the House of Representatives who says many silly things and actually means them. Like the

time earlier this year when he told a town hall that the cash from Social Security and other government benefits that undocumented immigrants allegedly were sending home made up the second largest component of Mexico's gross domestic product. Who told the White Mountain Apache tribe, "You're still wards of the federal government." A man who, though Catholic, won't give the pope the time of day but once accepted the endorsement of controversial Sheriff Joe Arpaio and drove to Nevada to declare his support for right-wing lawbreaker and racist Cliven Bundy.

Also, I wonder, what exactly does Rep. Gosar imagine the pope usually does with "his personal time?" Catch up on his Netflix? Chow down at Olive Garden with his Never Ending Pasta Pass? Head to the rifle range for some target practice? Instead, I'm guessing thoughtful prayer and meditation. (And come to think of it, WHAT personal time?)

You can argue that a joint session of Congress is an inappropriate speaking venue for a world religious leader, violation of church and state and so forth. And many of us have big, big issues with the Roman Catholic Church.

As journalist and climate activist Wen Stephenson writes in the current issue of *The Nation*, "However sincere and compassionate he may be (and he appears to be both), in his role as the pope he's a politician, a world leader at the head of a rich, powerfully influential, and entirely human, that is, deeply fallible, global institution.

"And he presides over a conservative theological tradition whose teachings on gender, sexuality, marriage, contraception, and abortion are, to many of us, and women in particular, not only wrong but oppressive. For these and other reasons, his ability to single-handedly reshape climate politics, especially in this country, is limited, to say the least

"Nevertheless, what is surprising and undeniably significant about Francis's message is the forceful way he foregrounds a radical systemic analysis of the deep structural causes of the climate and ecological crisis, the kind of radical response required, and the political and economic forces standing in the way."

Frankly, despite the separation of church and state argument, this is no time for business, or politics, as usual. And months before his Capitol Hill address, the pontiff demonstrated that he had Congress' number.

"We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations," he wrote in his June encyclical *Laudato si'* (*On Care for Our Common Home*).

“The failure of global summits on the environment make it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance. There are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected.”

Example: last week’s revelations from the Pulitzer Prize-winning website *Inside Climate News*. Their eight-month investigation, including extensive interviews and access to internal documents demonstrates that as early as 1977, Exxon Corporation was warned that “carbon dioxide from the world’s use of fossil fuels would warm the planet and could eventually endanger humanity.”

The petrochemical giant “assembled a brain trust that would spend more than a decade deepening the company’s understanding of an environmental problem that posed an existential threat to the oil business.” They seem to have been decent corporate citizens especially compared to today.

The head of theoretical sciences at Exxon Corporate Research Laboratories even wrote, in 1982, that their “ethical responsibility is to permit the publication of our research in the scientific literature. Indeed to do otherwise would be a breach of Exxon’s public position and ethical credo on honesty and integrity.”

And so they did publish, but then, according to the *Inside Climate News* investigative team, “Toward the end of the 1980s, Exxon curtailed its carbon dioxide research. In the decades that followed, Exxon worked instead at the forefront of climate denial. It put its muscle behind efforts to manufacture doubt about the reality of global warming its own scientists had once confirmed. It lobbied to block federal and international action to control greenhouse gas emissions. It helped to erect a vast edifice of misinformation that stands to this day.”

And so it goes. “The alliance between the economy and technology ends up sidelining anything unrelated to its immediate interests,” the pope wrote in his climate encyclical. “Consequently the most one can expect is superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy and perfunctory expressions of concern for the environment, whereas any genuine attempt by groups within society to introduce change is viewed as a nuisance based on romantic illusions or an obstacle to be circumvented.”

An obstacle to be circumvented which brings us back around to the GOP of Paul Gosar and his ilk. Just two weeks ago, *Politico’s Andrew Restuccia reported*, “Top Republican lawmakers are planning a wide-ranging offensive, including outreach to foreign officials by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s office, to undermine President Barack Obama’s hopes of reaching an international climate change agreement that would cement his environmental legacy.”



“The GOP strategy, emerging after months of quiet discussions, includes sowing doubts about Obama’s climate policies at home and abroad, trying to block key environmental regulations in Congress, and challenging the legitimacy of the president’s attempts to craft a global agreement without submitting a treaty to the Senate.”

It is not for nothing that since 1989, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, the gas and oil industry has contributed more than \$1.8 million to McConnell (and it’s not for nothing that in the short time since 2010, when he was first elected to the House, Paul Gosar has collected nearly \$200,000 from the energy and natural resources sector).

Joe Romm of the indispensable *Climate Progress* blog wrote, “McConnell’s actions end the pretense that the GOP leadership has any interest whatsoever in trying to globally address the gravest preventable threat America faces. I’m not sure a major political leader has ever pursued a strategy that is so directly counter to the health and well-being of all Americans, their children, and the next 50 generations.”

It is cynical, hypocritical, mercenary, and willfully destructive: many things this pope seems not to be. By all means, let him speak to Congress. When it comes to climate change, he will be a breath of fresh, unpolluted air.

**Michael Winship is the Emmy Award-winning senior writer of *Moyers & Company* and *BillMoyers.com*, and a former senior writing fellow at the policy and advocacy group Demos. Follow him on Twitter at @MichaelWinship. [This story first appeared at <http://billmoyers.com/2015/09/23/the-pope-smokes-out-congress-on-climate-change/>]**

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## The ‘Tempest-tost’ Syrian Refugees

Like its predecessor in Iraq, the “regime change” war in Syria has killed hundreds of thousands and uprooted millions more, with many now seeking refuge in the West. But political forces have resisted providing safe haven, an affront to international law, writes Marjorie Cohn at Truthdig.

By Marjorie Cohn

Many of us are familiar with the Emma Lazarus poem on a plaque at the base of the Statue of Liberty: “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these,

the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

These words, written in the late Nineteenth Century, depicted the United States as a refuge for people who had crossed the Atlantic seeking a new home and a better life than they experienced in the places they left behind. The current massive humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, which has created a flood of refugees exiting Syria, obliges our country to live up to the welcome promised in that poem.

With President George W. Bush's invasion and occupation of Iraq, which led to the birth of Islamic State, the U.S. government played a significant role in destabilizing the Middle East. The United States and its allies, including Saudi Arabia and Turkey, have trained, financed and supplied weapons to forces fighting the government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. This has exacerbated the refugee crisis we are now witnessing.

History professor and author Juan Cole wrote that the U.S. invasion of Iraq created 4 million refugees, about one-sixth of Iraq's population. But "the U.S. took in only a few thousand Iraqi refugees after causing all that trouble," he noted. The United States must do better with the Syrian refugees.

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell, speaking about the U.S. invasion of Iraq, famously said, "If you break it, you own it."

Yet President Barack Obama pledged to lift the U.S. lamp to only 10,000 of the 4 million refugees fleeing Syria. After fielding criticism of the United States for taking so few, Secretary of State John Kerry announced that the U.S. would accept 185,000 refugees over the next two years. But this figure reflects the total number from many countries; there is no indication the administration will accept more than 10,000 from Syria.

The United States has a moral obligation, and perhaps a legal one, to accept many of the Syrian refugees. Evolving international norms suggest that all the countries of the world have a duty to provide refuge to those who have fled their homeland to escape persecution or war.

Because the United States has 28 percent of the world's wealth, we should take at least 28 percent of the refugees, according to Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies. That would amount to about 350,000 people. And she says the United States should immediately pay 28 percent of the United Nations' refugee relief request, about \$5.5 billion, to support nearly 6 million refugees from Syria and nearby countries through the end of 2015.

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol define a refugee as someone outside his or her country who has a well-founded fear of persecution on account

of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. Due to the fear of persecution, he or she is unable or unwilling to remain in his or her country of origin.

Although many Syrian refugees may meet this definition, many others don't because they fled to escape the violence of the armed conflict ravaging their country, not necessarily to avoid persecution.

Some scholars, however, think a much broader definition of "refugee" is evolving under conventional and customary international law. For example, William Thomas Worster wrote in the Berkeley Journal of International Law that a refugee could be a person who has a well-founded fear of "a threat to life, security or liberty due to events seriously disturbing public order" throughout his or her country, and because of that fear is unable or unwilling to remain or return.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has defined "temporary protection" of refugees as "a means, in situations of large-scale influx and in view of the impracticality of conducting individual refugee status determination procedures, for providing protection to groups or categories of persons who are in need of international protection."

Temporary protection "is primarily conceived as an emergency protection measure of short duration in response to large-scale influxes, guaranteeing admission to safety, protection from non-refoulement and respect for an appropriate standard of treatment." The first time the UNHCR formally recommended the granting of temporary protection involved "persons fleeing the conflict and human rights abuses in the former Yugoslavia."

The principle of international law called non-refoulement is the prohibition of forced return. This means a country has a duty not to return an individual to a country where he or she will face persecution.

Article 33(1) of the Refugee Convention provides, "No Contracting State shall expel or return ('refouler') a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." Even if a country is not a party to the Refugee Convention, it is bound by the customary international law norm of non-refoulement.

As reported in a recent New York Times editorial, immigrants provide many more benefits than burdens, including paying more in taxes than they claim in government benefits and doing jobs that are hard to fill. As the Congressional Budget Office concluded in 2013, gross domestic product would rise by 5.4 percent and the federal budget deficit would fall by \$897 billion over the next

20 years if undocumented workers are given a path to citizenship and more work-based visas are made available to foreigners.

In accordance with its legal and moral duty, the United States should step up to the plate and welcome significant numbers of refugees. More than 20 former senior Democratic and Republican officials are urging the Obama administration to accept 100,000 Syrian refugees, and to contribute up to \$2 billion to finance their resettlement and help international refugee efforts. The United States has already accepted 1,500 Syrian refugees since the beginning of the hostilities and has contributed more than \$4 billion in humanitarian aid for them.

Instead of demanding regime change in Syria, the United States and its allies must stop providing weapons, training and funding to the violent opposition forces. They should enlist Russia and Iran in pursuing a diplomatic solution to this tragic conflict.

Up to this point, some of Syria's immediate neighbors, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt, have taken in 95 percent of the refugees, according to Amnesty International. Turkey has accepted nearly 2 million, followed by Lebanon, which has taken over 600,000. Jordan has taken half a million. Iraq has accepted almost 250,000. Egypt has accepted more than 130,000.

Germany agreed to take 800,000 refugees. Britain will take in 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020, at the rate of 4,000 per year. Canada will take 10,000; Australia will take 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees; Venezuela will take 20,000.

But Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait, the wealthiest nations in the region, have taken none of the refugees. Likewise, Iran and Russia, which support the Assad government, have refused permanent residency or asylum to the refugees.

Some of the Syrian refugees are Palestinians who first became refugees after the 1947-48 Nakba, when 80 percent of historic Palestine was ethnically cleansed to create Israel. They are "double refugees." But Israel has refused to take in any Syrian refugees.

Israel has apparently forgotten that in 1939, 937 Jewish refugees seeking to escape the Nazis made the perilous ocean voyage on the SS St. Louis, but the United States turned them away. Forced to return to Europe, hundreds of them were then killed by Hitler's forces. The nations of the world, and particularly the United States, must ensure the current refugees obtain the shelter to which they are entitled.

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of the National Lawyers Guild, and deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. Her most recent book is "Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral, and Geopolitical Issues." See [www.marjoriecohn.com](http://www.marjoriecohn.com). [This article was originally published on Truthdig [http://www.truthdig.com/report/print/us\\_has\\_a\\_duty\\_to\\_tempest-tost\\_syrians\\_20150922](http://www.truthdig.com/report/print/us_has_a_duty_to_tempest-tost_syrians_20150922)]

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## Blunting the Pope's Environmentalism

Pope Francis has challenged market economics to address the human cost of profit-making, especially global warming's threat to the future of the planet. But opponents of government regulation are set to spin whatever criticism the Pope delivers during his U.S. trip, writes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Anticipating this week's visit by Pope Francis, different political factions and interests in the United States hoped to hear words from the popular pontiff that are consistent with their own agendas. They also are poised to spin, or if necessary dismiss, any papal statements that are not particularly consistent with those agendas.

One set of issues sure to be subject to such treatment concerns the environment. Francis issued a powerful and cogent [encyclical](#) on that subject earlier this year, to which American political interests of the pro-pollution and climate-change-denying variety have already [had to use their spinning and dismissing skills](#) in response.

The Pope's statements on the environment have elicited debate on what his true views are on free markets. Scott Tong of the public radio program *Marketplace* had a useful [report](#) on this question the other day. To get the perspective from one extreme end of the continuum of views about this, Tong went to what is for market capitalism what the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is for Roman Catholicism, i.e., the economics department at the University of Chicago.

An assistant professor there named Steve Cicala said about the Pope's position on climate change and the role of markets, "It's sort of too far beyond the pale to even be engaged by serious people." That is an unfair and closed-minded comment.

A more accurate characterization of what the Pope has said comes from Carolyn Woo, who besides being the chief executive of Catholic Relief Services is also a

former business school dean. She observes that Francis is not anti-capitalism or anti-market but does see the need for regulation of markets, which is something that free market Western countries already do in numerous ways for numerous purposes.

As for the fundamental problem that underlies all this, included in Tong's report was the very plausible statement from Lord Nicholas Stern of the London School of Economics that climate change is "the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen." It is a simple matter of externalities; polluters do not have to pay for their use of the atmosphere as a dump, and thus there is not a market correction for the practice.

We should keep all of this in mind as we reflect on the outrageous conduct of executives at Volkswagen, who had diesel cars they have been selling in the United States and elsewhere intentionally programmed to cheat on emissions tests. Volkswagen almost got away with it. It took the combined efforts of U.S. government regulators and independent, non-profit testing groups to get the company to admit to the scheme.

For decision-makers at the company, the market imposed no discipline at all. The market was demanding what they were delivering: vehicles that offered good performance on the highway while still getting their owners a "pass" sticker on the windshield when they took the car in for a required emissions test.

The market does not even offer a corrective for the cars already on the road with the cheating software installed, now that the scheme has been exposed. Of course there are some unhappy VW owners, such as the environmentally conscious man the *New York Times* found in Sacramento who had considered buying a Toyota Prius but opted instead for a Volkswagen Jetta because it was peppier and more fun to drive.

But consider the incentives for most VW owners when deciding whether to bring their car in to the dealer once a recall notice finally is issued. Unlike most recalls, where bringing the vehicle in means correcting a safety defect, in this case bringing it in only offers to the car-owner, who does not pay for the externalities shooting out of his exhaust pipe, the prospect of a car that performs *worse* than it did before.

No, this does not call for a rejection of markets, by the Pope or anyone else. Socialized manufacture of autos is not the answer, as demonstrated by the East German-made Trabant, which was not only one of the worst polluters ever put on the road with its two-stroke engine, but also one of the worst cars overall.

The Volkswagen case demonstrates that Francis is right insofar as he is saying

that there are some important things that markets simply cannot do, at least not without the regulation that only governments can provide. Following the most rigid and doctrinaire views of high priests of market capitalism will not enable us to prevent ruin of the planet.

**Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as a blog post at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)**

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