

# Dissing George Washington for Reagan

**Exclusive:** Was Ronald Reagan a greater American leader than George Washington? That is the impression one gets when historic “Washington National Airport” is redubbed “Reagan National.” Are Americans really that anti-historical to have forgotten Washington’s significance, asks Robert Parry on the first President’s 284<sup>th</sup> birthday.

By Robert Parry

Arguably, George Washington was the one indispensable American. He was commander-in-chief during the American Revolution holding the embattled Continental Army together sometimes by his sheer force of will; at another key turning point, he presided at the Constitutional Convention giving the nation its governing framework; he then served as the first President placing his personal stamp of legitimacy on the fragile, young Republic.

While other Founders played important historical roles John Adams organizing the Revolution, James Madison devising the Constitution, Alexander Hamilton giving substance to the new federal government, etc. it was Washington whose temperament and stature made the entire experiment work.

Later, other American leaders stepped forward to guide the nation through grave crises, such as Abraham Lincoln in the Civil War and Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression and World War II, but Washington was truly the Father of the Country giving the nation life on battlefields up and down the length of the Thirteen Colonies, inside the contentious Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, and in the establishment of a truly unified nation by serving two terms as the first President.

Surely, Washington was not a person without flaws and contradictions, but without him it is hard to imagine what would have happened to the American colonies in the late 1770s or assuming that independence was won to the squabbling states under the ineffectual Articles of Confederation in the 1780s.

At every key turning point in those early years, Washington was there sacrificing for the new nation. He suffered with his troops at Valley Forge; he collaborated with Madison and Hamilton overcoming the national disunion that followed military victory; he agreed to leave his beloved Mount Vernon to serve as the first U.S. President of the United States but then retired after two terms showing that no one person was bigger than “We the People” enshrined in the Constitution’s Preamble.

So, it is fitting that Americans honor this great early leader of the American Republic. But what is odd and to me troubling is the ahistorical attitude that essentially expunges Washington's name from what had been "Washington National Airport" to rename it, in effect, "Reagan National" or simply "Reagan."

Whatever one thinks of Ronald Reagan and I rate him one of America's worst presidents for his profligate fiscal policies, his excessive militarism, his atrocious actions on human rights and his contempt for the Constitution as demonstrated by the Iran-Contra scandal it is hard to believe that even dyed-in-the-wool Republicans and conservatives would rate Reagan as a greater president than George Washington.

Yet, since Reagan's name was shoehorned into the airport's title after Republicans seized control of Congress in 1995 a change signed into law by Democratic President Bill Clinton many U.S. airlines have dropped Washington's name altogether when referring to what had long been "Washington National Airport." It's now referred to commonly as "Reagan National" or "Reagan."

### **Bizarre and Confusing**

Beyond the bizarre suggestion that Ronald Reagan was a more important historical figure than George Washington, there is the practical concern that many people visiting Washington D.C. find it confusing that its airport, which was once named after Washington (who incidentally lived close by at Mount Vernon), is now identified as "Reagan," who spent most of his adult life in California and only lived in Washington during his time in the White House (and then only when he wasn't vacationing back in California).

So, doesn't it make more sense both historically and practically to again refer to National Airport as "Washington National"? And, even if it is currently politically impossible to restore the traditional name given how the reversion would infuriate many Republicans can't we, as a flying public, demand that the airlines go back to combining Washington and National rather than demeaning America's Founding Father by dropping him in favor of Ronald Reagan?

I know my suggestion may be deemed petty by some and quixotic by others, but there is meaning in historical symbolism. That is, after all, why Republicans insisted on elbowing Washington aside in the first place and elevating their recent hero Reagan to such an august position.

But are Americans so historically ignorant that we actually believe that Ronald Reagan was a more important figure in our national existence than George Washington? Do Americans really not know or appreciate how the Republic was created? Are the heroic sacrifices of Washington and his Continental Army so

forgotten and disrespected that an actor-turned-politician is given top billing? Do conservatives who call themselves “constitutionalists” have so little regard for Washington and others who crafted the actual Constitution that they relegate them to a subordinate position? Have Republicans forgotten how the Republic got started and who started it?

Really! Regardless of our political persuasions, don't we care enough about America's Founders and America's Founding to tell the commercial airline companies that it's not “Reagan National,” it's “Washington National”!

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).**

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## The GOP's ‘Pitchfork’ Rebellion

**Exclusive:** As Democrats show signs of falling in line behind the party's establishment candidate (Hillary Clinton), the Republicans remain in rebellion casting aside one establishment favorite after another and making populist-billionaire Donald Trump the frontrunner, writes James W Carden.

By James W Carden

In spring 2003, the journalist and former George W. Bush speechwriter David Frum published a [controversial essay](#) in the pages of the conservative house organ, *National Review*. In the frenzied run-up to the Iraq War, Frum, branded a number of antiwar conservatives like Patrick Buchanan, the columnist Robert Novak and the libertarian journalist Justin Raimondo as “unpatriotic conservatives.”

Indeed, Frum went so far as to write that, “They deny and excuse terror. They espouse a potentially self-fulfilling defeatism. They publicize wild conspiracy theories. And some of them explicitly yearn for the victory of their nation's enemies.”

The venue in which Frum's hit piece appeared was fitting. Under the stewardship of William F Buckley, Jr. *NR* had long functioned as a kind of ideological referee for the conservative movement. Buckley (eventually) earned the respect of both the Republican and Liberal establishments for – in effect – purging the movement of anti-Semitic cranks, Birchers, and even some of the more doctrinaire libertarians in its ranks.

NR even took on Ayn Rand, publishing a blistering review of *Atlas Shrugged* by Whittaker Chambers in which the ex-Soviet agent turned evangelical anti-communist denounced the novel as a “remarkably silly book” that could only be called a novel “by devaluing the term.”

Nevertheless, Frum’s rant was more than simply (yet another) instance of a youngish neocon on the make, seeking renown by pandering to the prejudices of those in power – though it certainly was that as well. Frum’s essay served a similar function to Buckley’s purges of years past and in effect expelled conservatives of an antiwar (in foreign policy) and autarkic (in trade policy) bent from the larger conservative movement, thereby helping to solidify neocon control over the Republican Party. That is, until now. [See Consortiumnews.com’s “How Neocons Banished Realism.”]

With his lopsided victories in the New Hampshire and South Carolina Republican primaries, it is inarguable that Donald J Trump will be the likely Republican presidential nominee, and it is starting to dawn on a panicked GOP establishment that the old order is about to be swept away.

Some impute Trump’s astonishing success to the fact that he, unlike his opponents, has been famous for close to 40 years and his take-no-prisoners, quasi-authoritarian pronouncements on immigration and torture speak to an electorate that – because it is largely jobless – is rather more than a little fed up with “business as usual” in Washington.

Consider the following: while Obama partisans have endlessly touted the fact that the unemployment rate has fallen during the course of the President’s term, the labor force participation rate is still near the lowest it has been in over three decades at 62.7 percent and it is *this* number that explains, more than anything else, Trump’s success thus far.

Yet it should be noted that Trump’s victories owe more than a little to the two Republican primary campaigns which were waged by the journalist (and former Nixon speechwriter and Reagan communications director) Pat Buchanan in 1992 and 1996. In the latter campaign Buchanan finished a close second in Iowa and emerged victorious in New Hampshire, Missouri, Alaska and Louisiana collecting over one-fifth of the Republican primary votes overall.

“Pitchfork” Pat’s signature issue was the North American Free Trade agreement. His prescient prediction that American jobs and industry would “be sacrificed on the altar of NAFTA” went unheeded, and now the voter’s revolt which his campaigns anticipated has materialized and will, in short order, tear the GOP asunder. Trump owes his rise largely to the fact that the Republican Party has, for 25 years and counting, embraced neoliberal economic policies that have

impoverish the American people.

This should serve as a cautionary tale for the Democrats, who shouldn't feel too smug over the GOP's declining fortunes: pitchfork wielders may emerge in their own camp if the Democratic establishment continues its tight embrace of free trade policies which do little but beggar their own most impassioned constituencies.

So while it seems likely that in the aftermath of Hillary Clinton's convincing win in Nevada that Sanders is more or less finished, the Democratic Party's pursuit of neoliberal trade policies may soon give rise to a populist movement from within the ranks. Trump's success shows that the days of Rubinomics are numbered. Will a responsible statesman like Sen. Elizabeth Warren capitalize on this down the road, or is the Trump boom a harbinger of worse to come?

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## Slouching Down a March of Folly

The threats from Turkey and Saudi Arabia to mount a full-scale invasion of Syria create the potential for a modern-day "march of folly" into World War III by drawing NATO and the U.S. into a direct military confrontation with Russia and Iran, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar explains.

By Paul R. Pillar

The centenary in 2014 of the outbreak of World War I elicited comparisons between the circumstances of the European crisis that touched off that horrendous conflict and conditions that surround current international conflicts. Many such comparisons focused on how confrontations involving an increasingly assertive China might spin out of control.

Graham Allison, for example, wrote of how a possible confrontation in the East China Sea involving Japan could carry such a danger. A rising China throwing its increasing weight around the Far East does indeed offer some of the most plausible scenarios for escalation of local crises into much bigger war. But so does the multifaceted civil war in Syria, as underscored by some of the most recent developments in the northwest of that country.

The prospect of the Syrian conflict remaining unsettled for years and thus providing many opportunities for it to grow into something bigger is the starting point for spinning out escalatory scenarios. But some more specific attributes of that conflict have greater and more disturbing similarities to the 1914 crisis.

One is the multiplicity of players, from outside as well as inside Syria and the region, who perceive themselves as having a stake in the conflict. That perception is fuel for possible escalation. Atop a recent [article](#) describing the diverse players participating in fighting in Syria's Aleppo province, the *Washington Post* used a headline about a "mini world war" there.

Related to the perceptions about stakes is the tendency to view the war in Syria as part of a larger conflict between large coalitions. This view amplifies the perceived stakes ever further and also brings into play a sense of obligation to friends and allies. The line-ups relevant to the Syria conflict actually are messier and more complicated than that, but they often have come to be treated as if the line-ups were as well defined as the Entente and the Central Powers at the start of World War I.

The outlook involved is readily apparent in the tendency in the United States to see anything that Russia or Iran is doing in Syria as by definition contrary to U.S. interests, whether it actually is or not.

The most disturbing correspondence with the situation in Europe a century ago is the active role played by second-order powers that have become obsessed with the local outcome in Syria, are driven partly by internal political neuroses, and are positioned to drag more deeply into the conflict major powers from which they demand support. This description applies to two second-order powers in particular.

One is Saudi Arabia. Its policies are being made by the latest claimants to leadership in an archaic family-run enterprise that is trying to throw its own regional weight around and feels obliged to assert forcefully the Sunni cause in sectarian conflicts. The overthrow of Bashar Assad has become an *idée fixe* for the Saudi regime, at the cost of exacerbation of the conflict in Syria and ignoring or exacerbating the problems of Sunni extremism there.

Recently the Saudis have talked about upping the external involvement in the conflict even more, with an insistence that the United States lead the way in doing so.

The other player that has become a major problem in Syria is Turkey. A few years ago Turkey looked like more of a solution than a problem in the Middle East. But

that has changed.

A formerly promising effort to deal constructively with Turkey's perpetual Kurdish issue has died, and the current top Turkish obsession is to oppose the activities of armed Syrian Kurds, although most of what those fighters have been doing in the Syrian war is favorable as far as U.S. interests are concerned.

The megalomania and domestic political frustrations of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have led to greater Turkish risk-taking, as demonstrated by the shooting down of a Russian warplane that had incidentally strayed for only seconds into Turkish airspace. The potential for Turkey dragging the United States into bigger trouble is made all the greater by its status as a party to the North Atlantic Treaty. Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu recently stated, "The only thing we expect from our U.S. ally is to support Turkey with no ifs or buts."□

Assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne lit the match that led to the great conflagration that was World War I. Terrorism also could play a role in escalation of the Syrian mess, and not only because of the major part that ISIS plays in that mess. Instructive in that regard is a recent bombing against a military convoy in Ankara that killed 28 people. Turkish authorities insist that the Syrian Kurdish militia that has been fighting in northwest Syria was responsible, although that militia strongly denies any involvement and a completely separate Kurdish group in Turkey has claimed responsibility.

We on the outside are left to guess, but this affair sounds a lot like the Turkish government manipulating attributions of responsibility to try to support its campaign to oppose the Syrian Kurds.

The Turkish-Russian line of conflict, which underlay multiple Russo-Turkish wars across several centuries, could be at the center of escalation and expansion of the Syrian conflict. If so, there would be shades again of World War I, in which the Russian and Ottoman Empires were on opposite sides.

If the Syrian conflict were to escalate and expand greatly, it would not be because any one player intended that to happen. What happened in 1914 was not intended either.

The tragic possibilities would involve lesser steps leading to unforeseen larger results. Nor would catastrophic escalation require us now to foresee and spell out in advance a particular scenario for that happening.

Allison wrote in his piece two years ago, "Claims that war is 'inconceivable' are not statements about what is possible in the world, but rather, about what our limited minds can conceive."□ Perhaps relevant in this regard is that the leader of one of the major players involved, President Vladimir Putin of Russia,

has shown himself to be a better short-term tactician than a long-term strategist.

A repeat of 1914 and the outbreak of another Great War is very unlikely. But it is a risk. Even small risks need to be taken account of in policy-making if the risked contingency would be extremely harmful. Remember Dick Cheney's "One Percent Doctrine"? The outbreak of another Great War would be many times more harmful than somebody's unconventional weapons program.

Taking account of this or any other risk should not be the sole consideration as far as policy decisions are concerned. This is one factor among many.

In the case of Syria, this risk is an additional reason among other reasons, including avoiding lesser harms and curtailing the human suffering from the war, to work to deescalate and defuse rather than to escalate and expand. It is a reason to give high priority to efforts to secure cease-fires and to realize that tamping down this still-local war is more important than prosecuting the war to obtain a particular local result.

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## Kosovo Chaos Undercuts Clinton 'Success'

**Exclusive:** President Bill Clinton's Kosovo war of 1999 was loved by neocons and liberal hawks the forerunner for Iraq, Libya, Syria and other conflicts this century but Kosovo's political violence and lawlessness today underscore the grim consequences of those strategies even when they "succeed," writes Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

The insatiable appetite of America's bipartisan foreign policy elites for military intervention, despite its record of creating failing states in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen, traces back to the marriage of liberal and neoconservative interventionists during the Clinton administration's 78-day bombing of Serbia to create the break-away state of Kosovo in 1999.

One scholar-advocate has [called](#) NATO's campaign "The most important precedent



supporting the legitimacy of unilateral humanitarian intervention.” Even Sen. Bernie Sanders was proud to support that use of American power, ostensibly “to prevent further genocide.”

But Kosovo, which is still not recognized as an independent state by nearly half of all UN members, and which still relies on 4,600 NATO troops to maintain order, is hardly a showcase for the benefits of military intervention. With an unemployment rate of 35 percent, Kosovo is wracked by persistent outbreaks of terrorism, crime, and political violence.

Following a series of violent street protests and wild disruptions of parliament, the leader of the radical nationalist party, VetÅ«vendosje, announced on Feb. 19, “This regime is now is in its final days. They will not last long.”

That day, members of VetÅ«vendosje set off tear gas canisters in parliament and tussled with police in the latest of their many protests against an agreement reached by the government last summer to grant limited powers to the country’s Serbian minority, in return for Serbia’s recognition of Kosovo. Opposition lawmakers also rail against endemic corruption and the country’s under-performing economy.

Two days earlier, at least 15,000 Kosovars gathered in the central square of Pristina, the country’s capital, to demand the government’s resignation. In January, thousands of protesters clashed with police, hurling Molotov cocktails, setting a major government building and armored police cars on fire, and wounding 24 police officers.

“The aim of this protest was to overthrow the government with violence,” the government said in a statement. The U.S. ambassador chimed in, “Political violence threatens democracy and all that Kosovo has achieved since independence.”

This violence gets little attention from the American media in part because, unlike the Ukrainian demonstrators who overthrew their democratically elected government in 2014, Kosovo’s protesters are targeting a pro-Western government that eagerly seeks membership in the European Union.

But it’s no wonder that Kosovo’s political fabric is so rent by violent confrontations. The rump state was created by a violent secessionist movement led by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). That guerrilla band of Albanian nationalists was covertly backed by the German secret service to weaken Serbia. Its terrorist attacks on Serbian villages and government personnel in the mid-1990s prompted a brutal military crackdown by Serbia, followed by NATO’s

decisive intervention in 1999.

During the fighting the KLA drove tens of thousands of ethnic Serbs from Kosovo as part of an ethnic cleansing campaign to promote independence for the majority Albanian population. It recruited Islamist militants, including followers of Osama Bin Laden, from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Afghanistan and other countries.

President Bill Clinton's special envoy to the Balkans, Robert Gelbard, called the KLA "without any question, a terrorist group," and a Council on Foreign Relations backgrounder added, "most of its activities were funded by drug running."

None of that, however, stopped Washington from embracing the KLA's cause against Serbia, a policy spearheaded by the liberal interventionist First Lady Hillary Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Without authorization from the United Nations, NATO began bombing Serbia in March 1999, killing some 500 civilians, demolishing billions of dollars' worth of industrial plants, bridges, schools, libraries and hospitals, and even hitting the Chinese embassy. ("It should be lights out in Belgrade," demanded *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman. "Every power grid, water pipe, bridge, road and war-related factory has to be targeted. Like it or not, we are at war with the Serbian nation.")

Following Serbia's capitulation, according to Human Rights Watch, "elements of the KLA" engaged in "widespread and systematic burning and looting of homes belonging to Serbs, Roma, and other minorities and the destruction of Orthodox churches and monasteries. This destruction was combined with harassment and intimidation designed to force people from their homes and communities. By late-2000 more than 210,000 Serbs had fled the province . . . The desire for revenge provides a partial explanation, but there is also a clear political goal in many of these attacks: the removal from Kosovo of non-ethnic Albanians in order to better justify an independent state."

Former KLA leaders, including its political head Hashim Thaçi, went on to dominate the new Kosovo state. A 2010 report by the Council of Europe declared that Thaçi, who was then Kosovo's prime minister, headed a "mafia-like" group that smuggled drugs, guns and human organs on a grand scale through Eastern Europe. The report's author accused the international community of turning a blind eye while Thaçi's group of KLA veterans engaged in "assassinations, detentions, beatings and interrogations" to maintain power and profit from their criminal activities.

Prime Minister Thaçi and the Kosovo government strenuously denied the allegations and succeeded for years in resisting accountability. Their American friends were eager to put the past behind as well. In 2012, Madeleine Albright

and a former Clinton special envoy to the Balkans bid to take control of the country's state-owned telecommunications company despite widespread allegations of corruption, the attempted assassination of the telecommunications regulatory chief, and the murder of the state privatization agency's chief.

No one seemed immune from corruption. A study of the European Union's own legal mission to Kosovo suggested that its members may have taken bribes to drop investigations of senior Kosovo politicians for rampant criminal activity.

In 2014, a three-year E.U. investigation concluded that "senior officials of the former Kosovo Liberation Army" should be indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including "unlawful killings, abductions, enforced disappearances, illegal detentions in camps in Kosovo and Albania, sexual violence, other forms of inhumane treatment, forced displacements of individuals from their homes and communities, and desecration and destruction of churches and other religious sites."

Under tough pressure from the United States and E.U., Kosovo's parliament finally agreed last summer to permit a special court to prosecute former KLA leaders for war crimes. The court will begin operating this year in The Hague.

"The sad thing is that the United States and European countries knew 10 years ago that Thaçi and his men were engaged in drug smuggling and creating a mafia state," said one European ambassador last year. "The attitude was, 'He's a bastard, but he's our bastard.'"

Whether delayed justice will clean up Kosovo's "mafia state," and whether belated granting of rights to the Serbian minority will ease or aggravate Kosovo's explosive ethnic tensions, remain to be seen. One thing's for sure: a great many people have died in the name of this great "humanitarian intervention," and many more are still suffering for it. Kosovo is no Libya or Syria, but neither is it any kind of showcase for the benefits of U.S. armed intervention.

**Jonathan Marshall is author or co-author of five books on international affairs, including The Lebanese Connection: Corruption, Civil War and the International Drug Traffic (Stanford University Press, 2012). Some of his previous articles for Consortiumnews were "Risky Blowback from Russian Sanctions"; "Neocons Want Regime Change in Iran"; "Saudi Cash Wins France's Favor"; "The Saudis' Hurt Feelings"; "Saudi Arabia's Nuclear Bluster"; "The US Hand in the Syrian Mess"; and "Hidden Origins of Syria's Civil War." ]**

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# KLA Country (A Forewarning from Kosovo)

**From the Archive:** President Clinton's 1999 air war on Serbia supposedly to stop genocide in Kosovo became the model for neocon/liberal hawk "humanitarian" wars this century. But as Kosovo descends again into political violence the war also foreshadowed what can go wrong, as Don North reported in this prescient story from 1999.

By Don North (Originally published on Aug. 12, 1999)

Serbia was the NATO's victory in Kosovo expelled the Serb military and stopped the brutal "ethnic cleansing" of the province's Albanian majority. But in a post-war inspection, I found that the pro-Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army is quickly establishing itself as the real power on the ground, sowing the seeds for more violence and corruption ahead.

In effect, the ethnic Albanian guerrilla force emerged from hiding after the Serb withdrawal in June 1999 to claim the spoils of a war in which the KLA never won a battle. Ignoring commitments to disband as a military force, the KLA instead asserted its power by dividing the province into seven KLA regions. The KLA set up roadblocks in areas supposedly under the control of NATO's "KFOR" occupation troops, a clear message to Serbs that the KLA was the province's new master.

Since then, the KLA has been blamed for a new round of "ethnic cleansing," a systematic campaign to transform Kosovo into an ethnic Albanian territory by terrorizing Serbs and Gypsies and driving them into exile. The revenge attacks have included mass murders, destruction of property and the razing of Serb religious shrines.

Even as 37,000 NATO peacekeepers fanned out across Kosovo, the scene on the ground suggested that little could be done to preserve Kosovo as a multi-ethnic home for both Serbs and Albanians. Tens of thousands of Serbs fled with the retreating Serb army and many others have left since the NATO troops arrived. The present Serb population may be fewer than 30,000, down from a pre-war estimate of about 200,000.

The emerging reality is far removed from President Bill Clinton's soaring rhetoric about his hopes for a land free from "anyone who seeks to use racial, religious or ethnic differences to promote hatred." From the moment I arrived in the provincial capital of Pristina on June 14, 1999, it was clear that Kosovo was headed in the opposite direction.

Like other provinces of the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo fast was becoming a place controlled by an intolerant ethnic organization seething with nationalism and revenge. In effect, NATO's air war had created a new Albanian Republic of Kosovo to take its place beside the Balkans' other ethnic territories: Croatian Bosnia, Muslim Bosnia and the Serb Republic.

NATO found the KLA militants willing to give lip service to the rules of the international occupation but grudging in their follow through, if not outright defiant. In some areas, Russian KFOR troops considered friendly to the Serbs – have come under sniper fire.

In the French-patrolled town of Mitrovica, about 50 miles north of Pristina, a KLA-backed mob stormed across a bridge toward a Serb neighborhood. The mob was pushed back by French troops, with one French soldier seriously injured. Angered by the failed march, KLA leader Hashim Thaci denounced the French troops as “undemocratic and arrogant.”

I witnessed another typical confrontation between a young KLA leader and a U.S. Army colonel in the small village of Kacanik, about 50 miles south of Pristina. The KLA had set up illegal checkpoints on the road, prompting Col. Joe Anderson of New York City, the 82nd Airborne commander in the area, to complain to the young KLA commander, Xhabir Zharku.

“I'll make it simple for you,” Anderson declared. “If we find anymore checkpoints here, we're going to apprehend your people. I'm telling you as commander in this zone, it's not authorized. So we can do it easy or do it hard. But the next checkpoint we come across of any kind, we will apprehend your people. Understand what I'm saying?”

But Xhabir Zharku appeared unfazed by Anderson's threat. Sitting behind a large desk under the red Albanian flag with a black double-headed eagle crest, the KLA commander defended the use of roadblocks. “These checkpoints are only to register returning residents for health reasons,” Zharku argued.

“That role is not authorized,” Anderson countered.

“I took the mines,” Zharku responded. “Nobody gave us help, and we fought in the mountains. These are our people and this is our country and that means we control it.”

“But you don't control it,” said Anderson. “For the fifth time, you have no authority for checkpoints. And if I don't have your cooperation, I'll move you out, too. I'll say it one more time, you can assist your people, but security and law enforcement is KFOR's job.”

In the weeks that followed, KLA militants only continued to stir up more trouble. On July 23, 1999, unidentified gunmen believed to be KLA guerrillas massacred 14 Serb farmers, ages 18 to 63, who were harvesting a field near Gracko, a small farming village just south of Pristina. Overall, about 30 Serbs a week were dying at the hands of revenge-seeking Albanian Kosovars, human rights observers estimated.

In early August, Human Rights Watch blamed KLA members for a string of murders, kidnappings and beatings directed against Serbs and Gypsies. Though Human Rights Watch did not accuse the KLA leadership of directing the violence, the group condemned the KLA high command for not taking action to stop it.

Beyond the evaporating hopes for a multi-ethnic Kosovo, chances also are disappearing for a multi-party democracy in an Albanian-run Kosovo. The KLA has begun asserting broad authority over the province's economy, politics and security. The KLA seems intent on establishing a one-party Kosovo not unlike the old communist regimes of Serbia and Albania.

As the KLA's consolidates its control, non-violent Albanian Kosovar leader Ibrahim Rugova reportedly fears for his life because of threats from the KLA. The KLA's new dominance could make the idea of free elections in the future a farce.

Since the June cease-fire, an open border with lawless Albania also has allowed organized-crime gangs to relocate in Kosovo, where new opportunities exist because of the shattered society and the prospects of a golden shower of international aid.

The chaos has allowed KLA warlords to expand heroin smuggling routes that run from the Middle East through Kosovo to Europe. Interpol estimated that 40 percent of the heroin traffic into Europe transits Kosovo, a figure that is expected to increase.

The very thin blue line of United Nations police totaling only about 300 in mid-August (1999) with the eventual goal of about 3,000 is arriving to find a Kosovo already in the grip of KLA-connected criminal gangs.

Even Albanian journalists are appalled by what the KLA is doing.

In an interview with *The New York Times*, Baton Haxhiu, editor of *Koha Detore*, an Albanian-language daily, said, "The only political group with any structure is the KLA. They use it to take power, backed by a police they alone will control. It will be hard to turn Albania into Kosovo, but I expect very easy to turn Kosovo into Albania. Each day it is becoming more dangerous to think and speak independently." [NYT, July 29, 1999]

Besides foreshadowing more trouble in the region, the KLA's actions have undercut one of President Clinton's chief arguments for U.S. policy in the troubled region, a determination to end the region's ethnic violence.

Even as this new reality becomes apparent, however, Clinton has continued to single out Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic as the villain responsible for the region's "ethnic cleansing."

"I do not believe we should give reconstruction aid to Serbia as long as it rejects democracy and as long as Mr. Milosevic is in power," Clinton asserted on July 30, 1999, during a visit to Sarajevo, the capital of nearby Bosnia. "We have had enough of ethnic cleansing. I did not involve the United States in Bosnia or in Kosovo to hurt Serbian people. We took a stand for the humanity of all people, and against anyone who seeks to use racial, religious or ethnic differences to promote hatred."

But NATO leaders have failed to condemn the ethnic Albanian attacks on Serbs with the same vigor. Taking a more philosophical view after the 14 Serb farmers were killed, British KFOR commander, Gen. Mike Jackson, explained that "attitudes or thinking can't be changed with a soldier."

Since the early 1990s, Milosevic and the Serbs earned themselves the role as the region's "black hats," blamed for the bulk of ethnic violence in the historically divided Balkans. But there was always plenty of blame to go around for the tit-for-tat ethnic fighting.

Still, the prevailing anti-Serb attitude within the international community helped explain why there was so little protest in 1995 when the Croatian Army marched through U.N. lines and expelled several hundred thousand ethnic Serbs from a Serb enclave in Croatia. Thousands of Serb civilians were killed in that round of "ethnic cleansing."

Milosevic and the Serbs became the heavies again when they confronted a rebellious Albanian majority in Kosovo.

Fearing the loss of another piece of historic Serb territory, Milosevic cracked down on the province's autonomy and appealed stridently to Serb nationalism. As tensions mounted, the ethnic Albanians, who had become the overwhelming majority of Kosovo's population, resisted Serb authority.

By early 1998, the KLA had emerged as a troublesome guerrilla force best known for its tendency toward terrorism and its connections to the heroin trade. During 1998, I traveled with KLA forces and felt sympathy toward their resistance to Serb repression, though troubled by many of their tactics.

The KLA's chief accomplishment was to provoke a harsh counterinsurgency campaign by the Serb army and police forces that sent the KLA reeling in a string of bloody confrontations. But the Serbs also took aim at suspected KLA supporters. In some of the worst abuses, Serb soldiers stepped aside and allowed Serb paramilitary thugs to terrorize the Albanian Kosovars.

By spring 1998, villages considered sympathetic to the KLA were put to the torch, with civilians suffering rape, torture and executions. KLA guerrillas fled into Albania and into the mountains. An uneasy truce existed through the winter, but the KLA regrouped in early 1999. The Serbs retaliated with more brutality.

Led by the United States, NATO demanded the right to intervene inside Yugoslavia and issued what amounted to an ultimatum to Milosevic. When Milosevic balked, NATO launched an air campaign on March 24 against Serb targets in Kosovo and throughout Serbia.

NATO's bombings raised Serbia's nationalistic passions even higher. On the ground, Serb forces inflicted widespread atrocities against ethnic Albanians, while NATO jets accidentally killed thousands of civilians as "collateral damage." All told, about one million Kosovars fled as refugees, roughly one-half of the province's pre-war population.

Faced with unrelenting NATO air attacks and political pressure from his Moscow allies, Milosevic finally capitulated in June, winning only NATO's assurance that Kosovo would remain part of Serbia. Yet, as Milosevic's forces retreated, the KLA quickly advanced toward strategic towns and roadways.

Though considered ineffective in waging guerrilla warfare or when matching up against the regular Serb army, the KLA finally was benefiting from more professional leadership. The KLA had come under the command of a U.S.-trained Croatian Army general, Agim Ceku, who had assisted the 1995 ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Croatia. Besides sharing his experience with the KLA, Gen. Ceku organized a purge of moderate Albanians from the KLA's ranks.

NATO troops also rushed to take up peacekeeping positions, supposedly to protect the civilian populations, both Serb and Albanian. When I reached Kosovo on June 14, 1999, British Gen. Mike Jackson was touring the Serb neighborhoods of Pristina, urging the residents to stay. But many Serbs doubted that NATO could protect them from KLA revenge, a suspicion that was grounded in reality.

Crisscrossing Kosovo, I found that the pattern of law and order in NATO's five occupation zones varied depending on the nationality of the KFOR troops. There were frequent reports of Italian and German troops virtually ignoring their



peacekeeping duties in favor of the KLA.

In the southwestern town of Prizren, thousands of armed KLA troops marched in from Albania as the small 200-man force of the German 12th Panzer Division stood aside. In film clips shown on TV in Pristina, some German soldiers were seen embracing the KLA guerrillas. When Albanian youths stoned a busload of fleeing Serb civilians, the Panzer troops did not unshoulder their rifles.

A BBC-TV crew told me that Albanians torched 20 Serb homes in the western city of Pec as Italian KFOR troops, resplendent in their parrot-feather plumes, looked on. Half of a group of 200 Serb refugees returning from Montenegro immediately decided to turn back.

The British seemed sincere in their peacekeeping efforts but less than aggressive. In Pristina, British troops tried to disarm about 50 KLA fighters holed up in one apartment building. Three hours of negotiations led to a standoff with the KLA guerrillas allowed to keep their AK-47s and the British explaining that the goal was to "disarm" the KLA's "command and control," rather than just collect guns.

South of Pristina, near Gnjilane, the U.S. Marines from the 26th Expeditionary Force took "disarming" more literally. They stopped a force of 160 KLA guerrillas heading to the village of Zegra. The Marines seized more than 100 AK-47s and assorted other weapons. In another incident, Marines confiscated KLA weapons prompting a torrent of insults from nearby Albanians.

In the 82nd Airborne's territory, Col. Anderson deployed his 4,000 troops with a clear goal of establishing law and order and grabbing as many of the KLA's guns as possible. He showed me a large warehouse where his troops had stacked a motley collection of weapons taken from the KLA. But many rifles were rusted and the AK-47s were in disrepair, suggesting that the KLA was keeping its best weapons.

One KLA sub-commander promised to deliver his weapons to the warehouse but had second thoughts. "He decided he would keep his guns against the orders of his senior commanders and mine," Anderson said. "It's an indication that discipline within the KLA ranks is beginning to break down, when subordinates decide to buck their commanders' orders."

Or it was a sign that the KLA commanders were willing to surrender only their old and useless weapons. Other times, NATO succeeded in forcing only cosmetic changes on the KLA. For instance, KFOR's rules prohibited KLA forces from swaggering around villages in their combat fatigues. But many KLA guerrillas simply switched to wearing civilian black shirts, trousers and berets, making

them look a bit like a Hitler youth group and still very intimidating.

Whatever the sincerity of NATO's peacekeeping, however, KLA-backed Albanian revenge swept across Kosovo, with widespread reports of beatings, murders and destruction of ancient Serb monasteries. In Vetina, in the American sector, Capt. Mat McFarlane of Burke, Virginia, said the revenge begins after dark.

"It starts about nightfall," McFarlane told me. "Homes or barns burning, and shootings. We respond with mobile or foot patrols and try to apprehend the lawbreakers and seize their weapons. There's really no pattern to it, just Serbs and Albanians staking claims to territory and blaming each other for the violence. They seem to have grown up in an environment of threats and killings as a way of life."

In Pristina, a few blocks from my apartment, a prominent Serb economic professor and two colleagues were brutally murdered, even as British paratroops patrolled the streets in armored personnel carriers and on foot. The three victims were tied up with duct tape and bludgeoned to death with a hammer.

Other times, the reprisals targeted the small businesses and media outlets that hold a community together. The Vocar market, near Pristina's Grand Hotel, was run by friendly Serbs who sold groceries at a fair price. But in early July, the store closed after a rock was hurled through its plate-glass window.

The Serb-run Media Centar at the Grand Hotel was another target. Computers and fax machines were stolen. KLA hooligans took over the hotel lobby, got drunk and began looting. The Media Centar's director, Radovan Urosevic, soon left for Greece, while his partner, Milivoje Mihalovic, editor of Radio Pristina, turned off the mikes and headed north to Serbia.

Another facet of the Albanian revenge has been to target Serb religious sites. British troops found the Fourteenth Century Monastery of Svete Trojice in Suva Reka completely destroyed. Serbian Orthodox priest Sava Jajic led me to another ancient monastery, a 15th Century structure in Devik, that had suffered KLA looting.

One of the nuns, Sister Anastasia, described how guerrillas from the local KLA chapter smashed religious icons that were several hundred years old. She pointed to a large oil painting of a favorite Orthodox saint which had been defaced by a KLA activist who had carved the group's initials in Albanian "UCK" into the painting with a bayonet.

Father Sava, known as the "cyber-monk" for his informative e-mails sent around the world, protected Albanians in his own monastery in Decani during the Serb "ethnic cleansing" campaigns. Because of that, he has seen Albanians return the

favor by defending the monastery from retaliation.

"If they [the KLA] are going to kill the monks, they [the KLA] must kill us first," said Shaban Bruqi, an Albanian villager. "They [the monks] saved us."

On July 2, 1999, Father Sava joined with a small group of Serb and Albanian leaders issuing a joint statement seeking reconciliation.

"We want to realize our joint goal of a civil society in Kosovo, a society where no one has to fear for his life, his family, his job or his home because of his ethnicity or belief," the communique read. "The road to reconciliation will be long and difficult. There is no such thing as natural hatred among people in Kosovo."

But that night, a less-forgiving attitude was on display in Pristina. Celebrating the ninth anniversary of an Albanian declaration of independence for Kosovo, thousands of Albanian Kosovar youths drove through the streets waving Albanian flags and firing AK-47s. The shooting continued until 3 a.m.

Despite the best hopes of many well-intentioned citizens from both ethnic groups and the brave peacekeeping efforts of some NATO troops, the future of Kosovo seems headed in a very different direction than Father Sava or President Clinton might hope.

Rather than a multi-cultural society living in peace, Kosovo likely will be dominated by KLA gunmen determined to purge the province's centuries-old Serb ethnic presence. As a consequence of NATO's military intervention, Kosovo appears to have traded the brutality of Serb paramilitary thugs for the brutality of like-minded Albanians.

With corrupt warlords vying for control, Kosovo seems headed for a future that resembles more Albania or Chechnya than some Western-style democracy.

**Don North is a veteran war correspondent who covered the Vietnam War and many other conflicts around the world. He is the author of a new book, *Inappropriate Conduct*, the story of a World War II correspondent whose career was crushed by the intrigue he uncovered.**

Other historic reporting on the Kosovo crisis from Consortiumnews.com:

"Why Kosovo?" by Don North. Originally published Nov. 6, 1998. The early days of the war and what the two sides were fighting over.

"Irony at Racak: Tainted U.S. Diplomat Condemns Massacre" by Don North. Originally published Jan. 26, 1999. An American condemnation of a Serb massacre in Kosovo recalls U.S. ambivalence about massacres in Central America.

“Wag the Dog in Reverse” by Mollie Dickenson, Originally published May 4, 1999. Bill Clinton’s political crisis over sex distracts from a real war in the Balkans.

“Television Wars” by Don North, Originally published May 4, 1999. NATO intentionally bombs a Serb TV station.

“Target Yugoslavia” by Robert Parry, Originally published May 4, 1999. The Clinton administration tries out high-tech info-war tactics on the Serbs.

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## Fearing Sanders as ‘Closet Realist’

**Exclusive:** To Washington’s neocons like David Ignatius, Sen. Sanders should be disqualified as a presidential candidate for being a “closet realist.” Sanders seems not to accept their forced “regime change” in Syria, nor their plans for more “nation building” like the neocon handiwork in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

How little Official Washington’s neocon-dominated foreign policy elite has learned from the past couple of decades can be measured by reading the last line of Friday’s Washington Post op-ed by David Ignatius, supposedly one of the deeper thinkers from the American pundit class.

Ignatius writes, regarding the Syrian mess, “It’s never too late for the United States to do the right thing, which is to build, carefully, the political and military framework for a new Syria.”

Reading Ignatius and other neocon-oriented policy prescribers, it’s as if Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya not to mention other failed states following U.S. interventions never happened. Just like Iraq was a cakewalk, Syria will be one of those child puzzles with only 24 pieces, easy to assemble and reassemble.

Though Ignatius doesn’t get into the nitty-gritty of his nation-building scheme, it should be obvious that for President Barack Obama to “do the right thing” in Ignatius’s way of thinking, the U.S. military would first have to invade and occupy Syria, killing any Syrians, Iranians, Russians and others who might get in the way. Then there would be the tricky process of “carefully” putting Syria back together again amid the predictable IEDs, suicide bombings and sectarian strife.

One is tempted to simply dismiss Ignatius as not a serious person, but he is considered part of the crème de la crème of Official Washington's current foreign-policy establishment. He's sought after to moderate foreign policy conferences and he pontificates regularly from the well-read pages of The Washington Post.

But he is really just another example of how dangerous it was for the American people to exact no accountability from the hubristic neoconservatives and their "liberal interventionist" sidekicks for their many disastrous miscalculations and war crimes.

If Americans still had pitchforks, they should have chased down this arrogant elite for inflicting so much pain and bloodshed on both the people of these tragic countries and on the U.S. soldiers who were dispatched so casually to make the benighted policies work. There's also the little issue of the trillions of dollars in taxpayers' money wasted.

But the neocons are impervious to criticism from the "little people." Within the neocon "bubble," the Syrian crisis is just the result of President Obama not intervening earlier and bigger by shipping even more weapons to Syria's mythical "moderate" rebels.

No one ever wants to admit that these "moderates" were always dominated by Sunni jihadists and by 2012 had become essentially their front men for receiving sophisticated U.S. weapons before passing the hardware on, willingly or not, to Al Qaeda's Nusra Front, Islamic State and other extremist groups.

Read, for instance, a remarkable account from veteran foreign affairs writer Stephen Kinzer, who describes in [a Boston Globe op-ed](#) the reign of terror that the Syrian rebels have inflicted on the people of Aleppo, while the mainstream U.S. news media painted pretty pictures about these noble insurrectionists.

Kinzer scolds his media colleagues for their malfeasance in reporting on the Syrian crisis, writing: "Coverage of the Syrian war will be remembered as one of the most shameful episodes in the history of the American press. Reporting about carnage in the ancient city of Aleppo is the latest reason why."

Another inconvenient truth is that the "moderate" rebels of Aleppo operate hand in glove with Al Qaeda's Nusra Front. So much so that a proposal for a partial Syrian cease-fire failed because U.S. diplomats wanted to extend its protections to Al Qaeda's forces, also known inside Syria as Jabhat al-Nusra.

As The Washington Post's Karen DeYoung nonchalantly mentioned deep inside [a story](#) on Saturday, "Jabhat al-Nusra, whose forces are intermingled with moderate rebel groups in the northwest near the Turkish border, is particularly

problematic. Russia was said to have rejected a U.S. proposal to leave Jabhat al-Nusra off-limits to bombing as part of the cease-fire, at least temporarily, until the groups can be sorted out.”

In other words, the cease-fire plan is being delayed – and possibly killed – because the Obama administration doesn’t want the Syrian army and the Russian air force attacking Al Qaeda.

This strange reality underscores reporting by Mideast expert Gareth Porter who [wrote](#) that “Information from a wide range of sources, including some of those the United States has been explicitly supporting, makes it clear that every armed anti-Assad organization unit in those provinces [around Aleppo] is engaged in a military structure controlled by Nusra militants. All of these rebel groups fight alongside the Nusra Front and coordinate their military activities with it.” [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Risking Nuclear War for Al Qaeda.”](#)]

### **Believing in Unicorns**

However, to be accepted in Official Washington as a profound thinker, you must believe in the unicorns of “moderate” Syrian rebels, just like earlier you had to accept as “flat fact” that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was lying when he denied having weapons of mass destruction and that Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was lying when he claimed to be under attack by terrorists.

But what is truly remarkable about these Washington “wise men and women” who are so unwise is that they simply move from one catastrophe to the next. The journalists and columnists among them routinely get basic facts wrong but are never fired by their editors and publishers, presumably because the editors and publishers are kindred ideologues.

And the neocon/liberal-hawk politicians also float above any meaningful accountability for their grotesque misjudgments and for their contributions to war crimes. On the Republican side, all the establishment candidates the likes of Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush and John Kasich favor doubling down on neoconservative foreign policies as they prove how “serious” they are.

On the Democratic side, the reputed frontrunner, Hillary Clinton, not only voted for the Iraq War but promoted similar warmongering as Secretary of State, pushing for a senseless escalation in Afghanistan, masterminding the mindless Libyan operation, and blocking any timely peace initiatives in Syria.

Her supporters may call her a “liberal” or “humanitarian” interventionist but there is no discernible difference between her policies and those of the neocons. [For details, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“Hillary Clinton and the Dogs of War.”](#)]

There may be some hope from the anti-establishment candidates Donald Trump on the Republican side and Bernie Sanders in the Democratic race but that's mostly because they have steered clear of precise foreign policy prescriptions. They have, however, decried the Iraq War and suggested that collaboration with Russia makes more sense than confrontation.

Not surprisingly then, Washington's neocon-dominated foreign policy elite has been scathing toward both men, seeking to marginalize them so far from the mainstream that aspiring pundits and academics with hopes for professional advancement will obsequiously vouch for the diplomatic chops of Hillary Clinton and the seriousness of the GOP establishment contenders.

### **Sniffing Out 'Realism'**

As for Sanders, David Ignatius has detected a clearly disqualifying characteristic, that the Vermont senator may be, gasp, a "closet realist."

On Feb. 12, Ignatius raised that shocking possibility in another Washington Post column: "Is Bernie Sanders a closet foreign policy 'realist'? Reading his few pronouncements on foreign policy, you sense that he embraces the realists' deep skepticism about U.S. military intervention."

Having sniffed out this foul odor of "realism," Ignatius further asks, "Now that Sanders has nearly tied Clinton in Iowa and won New Hampshire, there's a real possibility that he may emerge as the Democratic nominee. And the question is: How scared should mainstream Democrats be about Sanders as a foreign policy president?"

That's right, how scary would it be if there was a "realist" in the White House?

But Ignatius observes that President Obama already has demonstrated some of the same disturbing "realist" traits although Sanders might be even worse. The pundit prognosticates, "If I had to guess, I'd say that Sanders would continue and reinforce President Obama's wary approach to using force, whereas Clinton would be more hawkish. But that's just a guess. Perhaps Sanders would be far more dovish."

Like a hapless Inspector Clouseau, Ignatius then presses ahead trying to determine exactly how bad or "realistic" Sanders would be:

"Sanders's statements on Syria suggest that he would take a position embraced by many self-described realists. His first priority, he has said, would be a 'broad coalition, including Russia,' to defeat the Islamic State. 'Our second priority must be getting rid of [President Bashar al-Assad] through some political settlement, working with Iran, working with Russia.'"

Ignatius, of course, finds Sanders's priorities troubling and pulls out an old canard to make the point, reviving the long-discredited claim that Assad was responsible for the lethal sarin gas attack outside Damascus on Aug. 21, 2013. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Was Turkey Behind Syria-Sarin Attack?](#)" and "[A Call for Proof on Syria-Sarin Attack.](#)"]

Ignoring the lack of evidence against Assad, Ignatius writes: "Some critics would argue that it's immoral to make replacing a leader who used chemical weapons a secondary concern."

Yes, in neocon land, the moral thing is to accuse someone of a heinous crime without any verifiable evidence and indeed with the evidence going in the opposite direction and then invading and occupying the country in defiance of international law, killing hundreds of thousands of its people, much like neocon policymakers did with Iraq as Ignatius and other foreign policy "moralists" cheered them on.

However, with Syria, Ignatius tells us, it would be so simple to follow up the invasion and occupation with a plan "to build, carefully, the political and military framework for a new Syria." No wonder Ignatius and other neocons are so hostile to "realism" and to Bernie Sanders.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).**

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## Turkey's Perilous Crossroad

Turkey is at a dangerous crossroad, having plunged down the bloody route of "regime change" in Syria and getting drawn deeper into conflicts with Kurds, Iran and Russia. Can President Erdogan return to the more peaceful path he once followed, asks ex-CIA official Graham E. Fuller.

By Graham E. Fuller

What does Turkey need to do to overcome its present foreign policy fiasco, one of the worst in modern Turkish history? The irony of all this is that those directly responsible for this mess, the team of Recep Tayyip Erdogan (now president) and Ahmet Davutoglu, (former foreign minister and now prime minister), is exactly the team that one decade ago had made extraordinary steps in creating a new, creative and successful foreign policy.



What went wrong? And how can Ankara now climb back out of the deep hole that it has dug for itself? The answer is simple: Erdogan and Davutoglu should return to their original successful principles of a decade ago, now recklessly abandoned. The overwhelmingly most urgent task is for Ankara to get out of Syria.

Turkey's Syrian policy has done more to destroy Turkey's international position than any other single factor. But let's be clear: Ankara is not primarily responsible for the present disaster in Syria. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is. But Erdogan has hugely exacerbated the problem, encouraged radical jihadist elements fighting in Syria, helped stir up sectarian passions, and mishandled the Syrian Kurds.

All these policies have damaged relations with countries that really matter for Turkey: Iran, Iraq, Russia, China, the U.S., the European Union, Kurdish communities, and of course relations with Syria itself. Instead Ankara has opened a dubious, dangerous and futureless coalition with Saudi Arabia. And it has created a damaging confrontation with Russia in which Turkey is already the loser.

What should Ankara now do?

1. Acknowledge the reality that Assad is not going to fall anytime soon, even though that was a reasonable assumption after the outbreak of an uprising against him in 2011. Turkey must abandon the obsessive effort to overthrow him. Russia, the U.S., the E.U., China, Egypt and even large numbers of Syrians now correctly believe that what might come after Assad is likely to be far worse than Assad. Turkey has little to gain and much to lose in continuing this fruitless struggle.
2. Work with the major powers to bring about a peaceful solution in Syria: working with the U.S., Russia and the E.U., and rejecting Saudi Arabia's absurd vision of a massive international Sunni army seizing control of Damascus.
3. Return to Ankara's earlier policy of standing *above sectarian struggle* in the region. Turkey is predominantly Sunni, but it has large Shiite and Alevi (quasi-Shiite) populations. Turkey has not really sought to be the champion of Sunni Islam for several hundred years. Indeed, Turkey gained respect and clout when it sought to act impartially between Sunni and Shia groups a decade ago. It should play no favorites in that capacity now.
4. Work to improve its relations with *Iran*. Iran's role in the region is growing steadily. It is vital to Turkey strategically and economically. It is a democracy in the making. Relations were seriously damaged when Turkey went all out to overthrow Assad, an ally of Tehran.

5. Work closely with *Iraq* to help overcome sectarian problems, not simply as a supporter of Sunnis in Iraq. Turkey does not benefit from a divided Iraq. Nor does Iran, which would prefer to exert its influence in a united and stable Iraq. Turkey is well equipped to help bring sectarian reconciliation about in Iraq, with its excellent economic relations with Baghdad and shared interests in the wellbeing of Iraqi Kurdistan.
6. Back away from strategic ties with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia rejects everything that Turkey claims to value: moderate Islam, religious and ethnic tolerance, non-sectarianism, non-intervention, democracy, globalizing markets, cultural attractiveness and soft power. Saudi Arabia, however, seeks only to draw Ankara in to be a Sunni champion and ally against Assad, against Iran, against the Iraqi Shiites and the Zaydi Shiites in Yemen.
7. Cooperate with the other Gulf States, as long as it is on a *non-sectarian basis*. Ties with Qatar, in particular, could be productive.
8. Place priority on restoring Turkish relations with Russia. Stop trying to drag NATO into unwise confrontations with Russia. The reality is that Moscow's entry into the Syrian equation has all but eliminated Ankara's options and freedom of action there. And Ankara cannot defeat Russia diplomatically. Furthermore, like it or not, Moscow is in fact well-positioned to forge a political settlement in Syria.

If Turkey undertakes the policy shifts outlined above, its relations with Moscow will automatically improve.

9. Devote priority to close relations with *all Kurdish elements* in the region. Turkey, through the wisdom of its earlier policies, had won over the Iraqi Kurds as a close ally. But Erdogan has allowed his earlier path-breaking rapprochement with the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey, the PKK, to collapse. Ankara has refused to deal with the Syrian Kurdish movement, one of the few effective fighting groups against ISIS in Syria. It may be sliding into a general war against the Kurds which it might be able win on the battlefield but will assuredly lose politically.

Growing Kurdish power in the entire region is a reality, it has been on an upward curve for the last 25 years, invariably benefiting from each regional conflict to achieve greater de facto autonomy and world awareness. If Ankara is determined to stop Kurdish progress towards greater autonomy, anywhere in the region, it will only alienate the Kurds; above all such a posture will only *hasten* the emergence of greater Kurdish political, economic and cultural demands. Efforts to block this process of Kurdish emergence will not only fail, but will guarantee an uglier and more dangerous relationship for Turkey and the entire regional Kurdish reality long into the future.

Ironically, handled right and granted broader autonomy, most Kurds will inevitably look to Turkey as a regional protector, economic entrepôt and cultural magnet, as long as Ankara does not alienate them. Where else could the Kurds look for valuable geopolitical ties in the region?

Ankara deserves great credit for having moved generously and humanely to accommodate more than 2½ million Syrian refugees inside Turkey. When Syrian domestic violence finally begins to end, many Syrians will go back home, but not all. This could be a problem for Turkey, but also a benefit.

The Ottoman tradition included an important role for Arabs within imperial rule. Today Turkey can only be enriched and strengthened through the acquisition of new Turkish Syrian citizens who can facilitate Turkish entree into the Arab world. Turkey is, after all, multinational already with huge numbers of other ethnic groups, from the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans. A stronger Arab voice and expertise will only add to Turkey's regional clout, economic access, and skills.

Finally Turkey should cooperate with Washington where it can, but only to the extent that Washington's own policies in the region are wise and productive. Since 9/11 (and arguably even much before) U.S. policies in the Middle East have been disastrously bad, failing and destructive. Ankara would not cooperate.

President Obama in recent times, however, has dialed back the level of U.S. intervention and aggressiveness, especially now in Syria. If Ankara can undertake all these policy shifts its relations with Washington will much improve. That is assuming the next American president approaches the Middle East with wisdom, for which there is little guarantee.

All this also assumes that Erdogan will act wisely and not sacrifice Turkey's foreign policy interests to his own reckless and divisive drive for greater personal power. Erdogan's personal interests are not synonymous with the Turkish national interest.

Erdogan had once embraced and implemented Ataturk's wise adage: Peace at home and peace abroad. Now he has abandoned those principles and is left with neither.

**Graham E. Fuller is a former senior CIA official, author of numerous books on the Muslim World; his latest book is *Breaking Faith: A novel of espionage and an American's crisis of conscience in Pakistan*. (Amazon, Kindle) [grahamefuller.com](http://grahamefuller.com)**

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# America's Slide toward Failed State

The blanket refusal of Senate Republican leaders to consider President Obama's choice to succeed Justice Scalia reflects a descent of the United States toward the kind of dysfunctional failed state that Washington normally upbraids, says ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

We Americans, usually quick to judge other societies by American standards, can become more self-aware by reversing the direction of the comparison and thinking of what the attributes of other nations might highlight about our own deficiencies.

Such comparisons can work in either of two ways. One is to observe how far the United States has fallen behind others in endeavors at which others excel and set the standards. Investment in transportation infrastructure, for example. Ride a train in Switzerland after riding one in the United States and the point becomes clear.

The other sort of comparison is to examine the troubles of other countries that are deeply troubled, with an eye toward identifying underlying problems that might also be found in the United States even though the United States has not gone as far down the troubled path, at least not yet. There is no shortage of countries, from Syria to Somalia to South Sudan, that we commonly label as politically unstable and that present grief for their own citizens, challenges for U.S. policymakers, and fodder for foreign policy pundits.

An attempt to identify underlying problems can come up with many things, involving the structure of civil society, ethnic divisions, and the like. But two very fundamental necessities for stable liberal democracy are in short supply in those trouble lands. One is the acceptance as legitimate of interests and viewpoints different from one's own. Such acceptance does not preclude continued sharp differences. Recognized legitimacy is not the same as agreement.

Opposing political positions can grow out of different interests or different views about the best way of pursuing a shared interest. Either way, what is required is acknowledgment that one's own side in a political contest does not necessarily have a monopoly on what is just, wise or moral, and that those on the other side have as much right to be part of the contest and of the give-and-take that feeds into national policy.

The other big necessity is a commitment to the entire political system that is

greater than commitment to any of the particular interests or objectives that get pursued through that system. This does not just mean an avowing of patriotism; expressions of nationalist sentiment are easy to come by even in troubled and unstable nations. What is needed is acknowledgment and genuine belief that the health and smooth functioning of the entire system are of paramount importance and that without them those more parochial interests could not be effectively pursued anyway.

The Republican posture of keeping the U.S. Supreme Court short-handed for a year, and thereby screwing up not just one but two terms of the court, solely to deny an appointment to the incumbent president and to try to hand that power to a hoped-for Republican successor, is the latest and most salient of several episodes that indicate a growing shortfall in the United States of these two essential conditions for stable liberal democracy.

There have been other episodes occurring with increasing frequency in recent years. These include blanket rejection, begun even before Justice Antonin Scalia's death, of anyone Barack Obama would nominate as an appellate judge. They include automatic opposition to the President's most important legislative initiatives, as seen most vividly with health care, on which the opposition has become an obsession pursued without regard to the conceptual origins of the particular legislation or its actual effects once enacted. And they include the use of extortion, with threats involving default on debt or shutdown of government, in pursuit of some matter involving the budget or a social issue.

This pattern exhibits a lack of the first requirement involving an acceptance of the opposing side's legitimacy. The outlook involved has been clear on an issue such as abortion, in which an opposing side get defined as not just wrong but as immoral. The outlook also has been applied personally to Barack Obama more than to any other U.S. president in modern times.

Suffusing through much of the reflexive opposition to his policies, and punctuated by the birther nonsense, has been a sense that he is somehow, well, not quite one of us and not quite a real American, that he is less a legitimate occupant of the Oval Office and more of a transient interloper there. To what extent this attitude is due, as many African-American supporters of Mr. Obama believe, to his race is impossible to determine definitively, but the attitude is too obvious to ignore.

The pattern also exhibits a shortfall in the second key requirement of stable liberal democracy, the greater value that must be placed on the political whole than on any more parochial interests. This shortfall is obviously present with the extortionate tactics involving damage to the nation's credit rating or to the operation of the entire government, as it is now with tactics threatening to

cripple the Supreme Court.

All of this goes beyond the damage that is due to intensified partisanship, which also has become worse in the United States over the past couple of decades and is bad enough just by itself. We are talking here about something more fundamental, and something that is alike in kind to what underlies the instability in any number of politically unstable countries on other continents.

The corresponding problem in the United States, though alike in kind, has not become alike in degree to those archetypical unstable countries from the Third World, again, not yet. But the trend is in the wrong direction, and those who care about the health of American democracy ought to be worried about that trend.

American citizens who do care, and at least as much, those who have been participating in some of the disturbing episodes mentioned above, ought to look at those unstable countries abroad and think the following thoughts.

First, there but for the grace of wise forefathers and other lucky circumstances of America go we.

Second, the critical ingredients of successful and stable liberal democracy are precious, not all that common in the world, and vulnerable to being lost. It may sound oxymoronic but is nevertheless true that political stability is fragile.

And finally, we need to ask ourselves continually what is more important: whatever specific policy issue has gotten people's dander up at the moment, or having a political system, healthy and effective as well as free, that enables us to argue and compete about such issues at all.

**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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## How the Democratic Party Got Lost

Though the political odds still favor Hillary Clinton, her stumbling candidacy and dependence on vast sums of special-interest money reflect the weaknesses of the Democratic Party, which lost its way in the 1980s and 1990s, forgetting its historic role as defender of the little guy, as Michael Brenner explains.

By Michael Brenner

The Clinton juggernaut is losing traction. Powered by the full weight of the Democratic Establishment, it was designed to smoothly carry its idol across America and into the White House. It still may get there. But now it must traverse a far more treacherous and uncertain route than Hillary Clinton and her entourage ever imagined.

The course is lined with the pundits, operatives and analysts who will cover the spectacle with their usual attention to trivia and a faith in their own perspicacity which matches that of the heroine herself.

This was all predictable. For it conforms to the parochialism and inbreeding that for so long has infirmed the Democratic Party's leadership as well as the punditocracy. Fortunes could be made betting against the "Washington consensus" whose singular talent for getting it wrong extends from the country's endless skein of foreign misadventures to electoral politics.

They give the impression of all sipping out of each other's double-lattes at Starbucks in Dupont Circle. The resulting damage done to the party's traditional constituents, to the integrity of national discourse and to America's interests in the world is incalculable and may well be irreparable.

Still, it is worth recording the pathologies that this latest bruising encounter with reality reveal. Most obvious is the disconnect between political elites and the country they presume to know or aspire to govern. The success of Bernie Sanders makes that transparently clear. His greatest asset is simply that (even though he has served in the Senate as an Independent) he ran as a "Democrat" – that is, as representative of the party as forged in the mid-Twentieth Century and whose precepts conform to the socio-economic interests and philosophical truths typically held by most Americans today.

Sanders is the first presidential candidate to do so since Walter Mondale in 1984. Mondale's defeat convinced many pols that the future lay with the Reagan smorgasbord of discredited nostrums and myths repackaged by skillful political craftsmen as the new Revelation. Market fundamentalist economic models, a cartoonish version of American individualism a la Ayn Rand, financial libertinism, muscle-flexing abroad in the mantle of democratic proselytizing, and anti-government demagoguery were fashioned into an intoxicating cocktail.

It worked to the extent that the cheap high that it produced tapped latent racism, jingoism, evangelical Christian passions, and a new-found greedy selfishness which was the mutant offspring of 1960s liberation.

Disoriented Democrats badly miscalculated the danger, and in the process lost

sight of who they were. Most damaging, many found a comfortable niche in this new world of hallucination. Among them are the careerists, the trendy intellectuals\*, and the ambitious politicians who thought that they had discovered the one route to recouping power and glory.

Together, they reshaped the Democratic Party into a me-too auxiliary to a waxing conservative movement. Today, it is radical reactionary Republicans who sweep elections at state and local levels, who hold an iron grip on the Congress, who have used their power to ruthlessly transform the judiciary into an active ally.

True, Democrats have won the White House twice. Bill Clinton did thanks to Ross Perot and then retained it against feeble opposition. In the process, he moved progressively to the Right in policy and philosophy ("the era of Big Government is over"). Republican ascendancy followed.

Only the Bush era collapse into disaster abroad and at home made possible Barack Obama who presented himself not as the embodiment of Democratic values but as a transcendent bipartisan healer – with just a few vermilion strokes. A prophet without message or mission. Whatever liberal ideas he had sounded were swiftly abandoned in what is surely the most shameless bait-and-switch in American political history.

This was predictable. After all, he thrice cited Ronald Reagan as the man who most influenced his view of the Presidency. His administrations arguably were oriented to the Right of Richard Nixon on civil liberties as well as on economic and social programs. Look it up.

His White House actually took delight in maligning "Progressives" as made manifest in Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel's cursing out of their representatives personally within its walls. That was the administration of which Hillary Clinton, the born-again "progressive," was a mainstay.

The cause already was abandoned in his first months in office when the Democrats held majorities in both houses of Congress. Indeed, Obama's embrace of the Wall Street barons was what allowed the Tea Party to channel popular anger and fear into a well-financed anti-government, know-nothing movement which nowadays dominates the political landscape. Hence, Obama drove the final nails into the coffin of the old Democratic Party.

This evolution of American politics in effect disenfranchised something like 20 percent of the electorate. They are Bernie Sanders's constituency. It's as simple as that. Personalities do play a role, but it is a secondary one. Sanders as a person stands out for his integrity, his earnestness, for his truth-telling, for his transparent decency. It is the message, though, that counts



above all.

An old Brooklyn Jew who advertises himself as a “Socialist” is not a compelling figure on the political stage. Intelligent and well-informed on domestic matters, he is not a phrase-maker, not verbally nimble, an incurably respectful gentleman, and largely disengaged from foreign policy where Hillary was custodian of ACT II in the pageant of American failure and fiasco in the Middle East.

In addition, Sanders feels inhibited about attacking the misdeeds of the Obama years out of a concern for estranging black voters, and turning the President from Hillary’s tacit ally into an active ally. Yet, he has made history with unprecedented accomplishments in the teeth of implacable opposition from the entire political and media establishment. At the moment, Sanders nearly has caught Hillary in the national polls and actually performs marginally better in hypothetical contests against the major Republican contenders.

*Clinton’s shortcomings* and failures are aggravated by the widespread distrust that she engenders. That was evident a year ago. She has had higher “negatives” in polls than any serious candidate ever. So why was she crowned even before the contest began? Why did no other candidates present themselves? Why did Democratic bigwigs feel so complacent at the prospect of another electoral setback?

One common answer is that there was nobody else. Decimated at the state level, and lacking fresh blood in the Senate, they have a very thin squad. For the better part of a decade, Harry Reid has been the face of the Democratic Party outside of the White House and during Obama’s romantic non-partisanship phases, its face country-wide.

Still, someone like former Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley could have been promoted as a credible candidate had the party leaders the will to do so. Compare him to George W. Bush in 2000. The Republicans molded that non-entity into a winner with relative ease. Democrats had much more to work with in O’Malley.

Or, they could have rallied behind Elizabeth Warren. Admittedly, she wasn’t interested. Just think, though, of what could have happened had she been persuaded to run. For one thing, she quickly would have eclipsed Hillary as the frontrunner. Razor sharp, personable, with a blue-steel edge to her words, and resolute she likely would have delivered the Last Rites to Clinton by Super Tuesday.

And then imagine her against any of the Republicans hopefuls whose only chance

of winning turns on Clinton's negatives. A Warren Republican X contest, moreover, would have raised the prospect of a Democratic comeback across the board that is utterly beyond Clinton's capabilities.

The principal reason the Democratic Establishment lined up behind Hillary Clinton in lockstep is their lack of conviction and a political timidity that arises from 1) capture by the big donors, and 2) past failures that have sapped self-confidence. Their uniform commitment to a flaccid orthodoxy has been evident for all to see these past few weeks as Hillary Clinton's supporters hit the panic button. It has not been a pretty performance.

From the Editors of *The New York Times* and Paul Krugman (who now sees Hillary Clinton as the heir to Obama whom he hagiographically refers to as "one of the most consequential and successful Presidents in American history") to the feminist brigade headed by Gloria Steinem and Madeleine Albright, Democratic stalwarts have embarrassed themselves by their contrived and specious arguments for Clinton.

This is not to say that there isn't a reasonable and logical case to be made for voting for her. It is the falsity of the presentation by those eminences that reveals the hollowness at the party's core. Its leaders never miss an opportunity to display their political obtuseness and fearfulness about leaving their very narrow, personal comfort zone.

The blunt truth is that the Democratic leadership has been meek and fearful for decades. They can't stand the sight of blood especially if it's their opponents. It took Newt Gingrich in 2012 to make an issue of predatory hedge funds and private equity. Reluctantly picked up by Obama, it resonated well so well that a gaggle of Wall Street operatives led by Steven Ratner called the White House to express vehemently their displeasure. Obama pulled the ads. (Jane Meyer *Dark Money*).

Now it is Donald Trump who boldly steps forth to declare that the intervention in Iraq was based on lies, and that it is the source of our current troubles in the region. No Democrat, including Sanders, is ready to make that case with equal force. None has since 2008. One can go on and on. It's a loser's mentality. You don't get to the White House by walking on eggshells.

In the end, Hillary Clinton in all likelihood will be the nominee. Equally true, she will arrive at the convention in Philadelphia D.O.A. That is to say, D.O.A. if the Republicans somehow free themselves from their adrenalin-soaked tantrum to nominate a sensible candidate. For the Democrats' one hope is that the opposition continue on its suicidal track that runs parallel to their own. Such is the state of American politics.

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## The Big Issue Is Big Money

The biggest falsehood of Hillary Clinton's campaign is to call Bernie Sanders a "single-issue" candidate, since he has actually addressed many issues. But Michael Winship says there's some truth in the charge because Sanders has identified Big Money as the root of many problems and that is true.

By Michael Winship

Maybe it's that 50,000-year-old, Neanderthal DNA scientists say a lot of us possess, but this feels like the most brutal, vicious and mendacious political year since the days when politicians traded jugs of corn whiskey for votes, fought duels, and flagellated opponents to near death with canes.

In last Saturday night's Republican debate, the words "lie," "lying" and "liar" were fired off by the candidates against each other like volleys in a paintball tournament. On the other hand, statements that were, in fact, true were greeted with booing. Booing.

In one of his rare, stopped-watch-is-right-twice-a-day moments, Donald Trump said, "Obviously the war in Iraq was a big, fat mistake, all right? George Bush made a mistake, we can make mistakes. But that one was a beauty." Who could argue with that? Boos.

Trump continued, "They lied. They said there were weapons of mass destruction there were none. And they knew there were none. There were no weapons of mass destruction." More and louder boos.

Jeb Bush protested and Trump threw in, "The World Trade Center came down during your brother's reign, remember that. That's not keeping us safe." The boos turned into roars of anger.

Even debate moderator John Dickerson came under attack. Just hours after Antonin Scalia's death had been revealed, Ted Cruz claimed, "We have 80 years of precedent of not confirming Supreme Court justices in an election year." Dickerson corrected him, pointing out that Justice Anthony Kennedy was confirmed 28 years ago in an election year, 1988. The GOP crowd booted as if Dickerson had just announced that the national anthem was being changed to "Midnight at the Oasis."

Have we so lost touch that the truth no longer sets us free but inspires braying derision? Have so-called “reality television,” and social media plagued with trolling and conspiracy theories so melted our brains that when facts get in the way of whatever nonsense we prefer to believe, we bellow like wounded beasts?

In comparison, two nights earlier, the Democratic debate co-sponsored by the *PBS NewsHour* was more *Downton Abbey* than *Duck Dynasty*. (Truth: While different members of the *Duck Dynasty* clan actually have endorsed Trump and Cruz, the aristocrats at *Downton* are still debating primogeniture and the three-field system.)

Although tempers flared between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, and the discussion of Henry Kissinger’s role in U.S. diplomatic history veered toward Cloud Cuckooland, about as heated as it got was the moment Sanders told Clinton she had leveled “a low blow” when she accused him of not loving Barack Obama and his administration as much as she does.

“Last I heard we lived in a democratic society.” Sanders replied. “Last I heard, a United States senator had the right to disagree with the president, including a president who has done such an extraordinary job.” Not much was made of the derision Hillary and Bill Clinton cast toward Barack Obama during the 2008 primary campaign.

But the major falsehood of the evening happened at the very end of the debate in Hillary Clinton’s closing remarks. “You know,” she began, “we agree that we’ve got to get unaccountable money out of politics. We agree that Wall Street should never be allowed to wreck Main Street again.” So far, so good.

“But here’s the point I want to make tonight,” she continued. “I am not a single-issue candidate,” she declared, “and I do not believe we live in a single-issue country.” She was accusing Sanders of ignoring all the other troubles facing America at home and abroad by fixating on Wall Street and money in politics.

Having tried it out on the debate stage, this has become Secretary Clinton’s campaign theme ever since; that Sanders’ vision is too tunnel-like for him to be president. But note first that she focuses that argument on Sanders’ desire to punish the financial industry while almost completely ignoring his position on the corrosive influence of money on all aspects of politics and government. Maybe because she is the beneficiary of so much of it.

In Nevada last Saturday she asked, “If we broke up the big banks tomorrow, would that end racism? Would that end sexism? Would that end discrimination against the L.G.B.T. community? Would that make people feel more welcoming to immigrants

overnight?"

And in Harlem on Tuesday she declared, "I am absolutely committed to ensuring that no bank is too big to fail, and no executive too powerful to jail. But Flint reminds us, my friends, there's a lot more going on in our country that we should be concerned about."

To which Sanders replied, as he told reporters last weekend, "The American people understand that we are the only major nation on earth that doesn't guarantee health care for all people. The American people understand that we have got to aggressively deal with climate change, in order to give our children and our grandchildren a planet that is healthy and habitable. The idea in terms of education that we must make public colleges and universities tuition free. We have got to raise the minimum wage to a living wage. It's not one issue."

But in a way, it is, and Sanders sort of sells himself short when he argues too much in the other direction. For in fact, until the door is slammed shut on money in politics and until the banks are pummeled into line, most of our other problems aren't going away any time soon. What's more, everything stems from one bigger issue that affects and overwhelms all else.

First, let's run through some of the aforementioned problems. Flint? Environmental and institutional racism to be sure, but perpetrated by the administration of Rick Snyder, a rich Republican governor, his election funded by his plutocrat pals, committed to cutting back government as he raised taxes on the poor and slashed corporate taxes by \$1.7 billion a year.

"The tragedy in Flint was a choice," United Steelworkers President Leo Gerard recently wrote at *In These Times* magazine. "This was a values decision about what was important. Giving a break to big business was the top priority for venture capitalist Snyder. Operating a shoddy government, over-taxing pensioners and poisoning Flint's children was the result."

Nor is real, significant progress going to be made on climate change until we do something about the \$31.8 million given to candidates by energy and natural resource interests in 2015-16. (Top recipients: Ted Cruz, Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski, Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton.)

The notions of free college tuition (which Clinton opposes) and a living wage are fiercely fought against by lobbyists overseeing millions in campaign contributions. The growth of Hillary Clinton's opposition to Medicare-for-all seems correlated to the cash donations received, David Sirota at *International Business Times* reports, "Clinton has vacuumed in roughly \$13.2 million from sources in the health sector, according to data compiled by the nonpartisan

Center for Responsive Politics. That includes \$11.2 million from the sector when Clinton was a senator and \$2 million from health industry sources during her 2016 presidential campaign.”

Even when discussing institutional racism, as happened on Chris Hayes’ MSNBC talk show Monday night, Clinton spokesperson Karen Finney started talking about “housing and redlining and access to capital” all things that are part of the stranglehold on financing for people of color perpetrated by the very financial institutions Bernie Sanders has pledged to punish.

Ultimately, deep down, no matter the candidate, the fact is there is only one true issue here in these United States. As a banker says in *The Mark and the Void*, Paul Murray’s recent novel, “What’s the one reliable area of growth in the twenty-first century? Inequality.”

Now let the booing commence.

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