



## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #75 — FEB. 16, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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### **Important Stuff: How We Got to Where We Are, Part 2**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Feb. 16, 2012)

This article is a continuation of yesterday's history of America's decline. I hope it is not too late to employ the lessons we should have learned.

"The Imperial Way: American Decline in Perspective, Part 2" by Noam Chomsky, TomDispatch/Nation of Change

Feb. 15, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/imperial-way-1329323857>)

In the years of conscious, self-inflicted decline at home, "losses" continued to mount elsewhere. In the past decade, for the first time in 500 years, South America has taken successful steps to free itself from western domination, another serious loss. The region has moved towards integration, and has begun to address some of the terrible internal problems of societies ruled by mostly Europeanized elites, tiny islands of extreme wealth in a sea of misery. They have also rid themselves of all U.S. military bases and of IMF controls. A newly formed organization, CELAC, includes all countries of the hemisphere apart from the U.S. and Canada. If it actually functions, that would be another step in American decline, in this case in what has always been regarded as "the backyard."

Even more serious would be the loss of the MENA countries -- Middle East/North Africa -- which have been regarded by planners since the 1940s as "a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history." Control of MENA energy reserves would yield "substantial control of the world," in the words of the influential Roosevelt advisor A.A. Berle.

To be sure, if the projections of a century of U.S. energy independence based on North American energy resources turn out to be realistic, the significance of controlling MENA would decline somewhat, though probably not by much: the main concern has always been control more than access. However, the likely consequences to the planet's equilibrium are so ominous that discussion may be largely an academic exercise.

The Arab Spring, another development of historic importance, might portend at least a partial "loss" of MENA. The US and its allies have tried hard to prevent that outcome -- so far, with considerable success. Their policy towards the popular uprisings has kept closely to the standard guidelines: support the forces most amenable to U.S. influence and control.

Favored dictators are supported as long as they can maintain control (as in the major oil states). When that is no longer possible, then discard them and try to restore the old regime as fully as possible (as in Tunisia and Egypt). The general pattern is familiar: Somoza, Marcos, Duvalier, Mobutu, Suharto, and many others. In one case, Libya,

the three traditional imperial powers intervened by force to participate in a rebellion to overthrow a mercurial and unreliable dictator, opening the way, it is expected, to more efficient control over Libya's rich resources (oil primarily, but also water, of particular interest to French corporations), to a possible base for the U.S. Africa Command (so far restricted to Germany), and to the reversal of growing Chinese penetration. As far as policy goes, there have been few surprises.

Crucially, it is important to reduce the threat of functioning democracy, in which popular opinion will significantly influence policy. That again is routine, and quite understandable. A look at the studies of public opinion undertaken by U.S. polling agencies in the MENA countries easily explains the western fear of authentic democracy, in which public opinion will significantly influence policy.

### Israel and the Republican Party

Similar considerations carry over directly to the second major concern addressed in the issue of *Foreign Affairs* cited in part one of this piece: the Israel-Palestine conflict. Fear of democracy could hardly be more clearly exhibited than in this case. In January 2006, an election took place in Palestine, pronounced free and fair by international monitors. The instant reaction of the U.S. (and of course Israel), with Europe following along politely, was to impose harsh penalties on Palestinians for voting the wrong way.

That is no innovation. It is quite in accord with the general and unsurprising principle recognized by mainstream scholarship: the U.S. supports democracy if, and only if, the outcomes accord with its strategic and economic objectives, the rueful conclusion of neo-Reaganite Thomas Carothers, the most careful and respected scholarly analyst of "democracy promotion" initiatives.

More broadly, for 35 years the U.S. has led the rejectionist camp on Israel-Palestine, blocking an international consensus calling for a political settlement in terms too well known to require repetition. The western mantra is that Israel seeks negotiations without preconditions, while the Palestinians refuse. The opposite is more accurate. The U.S. and Israel demand strict preconditions, which are, furthermore, designed to ensure that negotiations will lead either to Palestinian capitulation on crucial issues, or nowhere.

The first precondition is that the negotiations must be supervised by Washington, which makes about as much sense as demanding that Iran supervise the negotiation of Sunni-Shia conflicts in Iraq. Serious negotiations would have to be under the auspices of some neutral party, preferably one that commands some international respect, perhaps Brazil. The negotiations would seek to resolve the conflicts between the two antagonists: the U.S.-Israel on one side, most of the world on the other.

The second precondition is that Israel must be free to expand its illegal settlements in the West Bank. Theoretically, the U.S. opposes these actions, but with a very light tap on the wrist, while continuing to provide economic, diplomatic, and military support. When the U.S. does have some limited objections, it very easily bars the actions, as in the case of the E-1 project linking Greater Jerusalem to the town of Ma'aleh Adumim, virtually bisecting the West Bank, a very high priority for Israeli planners (across the spectrum), but raising some objections in Washington, so that Israel has had to resort to devious measures to chip away at the project.

The pretense of opposition reached the level of farce last February when Obama vetoed a Security Council resolution calling for implementation of official U.S. policy (also adding the uncontroversial observation that the settlements themselves are illegal, quite apart from expansion). Since that time there has been little talk about ending settlement expansion, which continues, with studied provocation.

Thus, as Israeli and Palestinian representatives prepared to meet in Jordan in January 2011, Israel announced new construction in Pisgat Ze'ev and Har Homa, West Bank areas that it has declared to be within the greatly expanded area of Jerusalem, annexed, settled, and constructed as Israel's capital, all in violation of direct Security Council orders. Other moves carry forward the grander design of separating whatever West Bank enclaves will be left to Palestinian administration from the cultural, commercial, political center of Palestinian life in the former Jerusalem.

It is understandable that Palestinian rights should be marginalized in U.S. policy and discourse. Palestinians have no wealth or power. They offer virtually nothing to U.S. policy concerns; in fact, they have negative value, as a nuisance that stirs up "the Arab street."

Israel, in contrast, is a valuable ally. It is a rich society with a sophisticated, largely militarized high-tech industry. For decades, it has been a highly valued military and strategic ally, particularly since 1967, when it performed a great service to the U.S. and its Saudi ally by destroying the Nasserite "virus," establishing the "special relationship" with Washington in the form that has persisted since. It is also a growing center for U.S. high-tech investment. In fact, high tech and particularly military industries in the two countries are closely linked.

Apart from such elementary considerations of great power politics as these, there are cultural factors that should not be ignored. Christian Zionism in Britain and the U.S. long preceded Jewish Zionism, and has been a significant elite phenomenon with clear policy implications (including the Balfour Declaration, which drew from it). When General Allenby conquered Jerusalem during World War I, he was hailed in the American press as Richard the Lion-Hearted, who had at last won the Crusades and driven the pagans out of the Holy Land.

The next step was for the Chosen People to return to the land promised to them by the Lord. Articulating a common elite view, President Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes described Jewish colonization of Palestine as an achievement "without comparison in the history of the human race." Such attitudes find their place easily within the Providentialist doctrines that have been a strong element in popular and elite culture since the country's origins: the belief that God has a plan for the world and the U.S. is carrying it forward under divine guidance, as articulated by a long list of leading figures.

Moreover, evangelical Christianity is a major popular force in the U.S. Further toward the extremes, End Times evangelical Christianity also has enormous popular outreach, invigorated by the establishment of Israel in 1948, revitalized even more by the conquest of the rest of Palestine in 1967 -- all signs that End Times and the Second Coming are approaching.

These forces have become particularly significant since the Reagan years, as the Republicans have abandoned the pretense of being a political party in the traditional sense, while devoting themselves in virtual lockstep uniformity to servicing a tiny percentage of the super-rich and the corporate sector. However, the small constituency that is primarily served by the reconstructed party cannot provide votes, so they have to turn elsewhere.

The only choice is to mobilize tendencies that have always been present, though rarely as an organized political force: primarily nativists trembling in fear and hatred, and religious elements that are extremists by international standards but not in the U.S. One outcome is reverence for alleged Biblical prophecies, hence not only support for Israel and its conquests and expansion, but passionate love for Israel, another core part of the catechism that must be intoned by Republican candidates -- with Democrats, again, not too far behind.

These factors aside, it should not be forgotten that the "Anglosphere" -- Britain and its offshoots -- consists of settler-colonial societies, which rose on the ashes of indigenous populations, suppressed or virtually exterminated. Past practices must have been basically correct, in the U.S. case even ordained by Divine Providence. Accordingly there is often an intuitive sympathy for the children of Israel when they follow a similar course. But primarily, geostrategic and economic interests prevail, and policy is not graven in stone.

### The Iranian "Threat" and the Nuclear Issue

Let us turn finally to the third of the leading issues addressed in the establishment journals cited earlier, the "threat of Iran." Among elites and the political class this is generally taken to be the primary threat to world order -- though not among populations. In Europe, polls show that Israel is regarded as the leading threat to peace. In the MENA countries, that status is shared with the U.S., to the extent that in Egypt, on the eve of the Tahrir Square uprising, 80% felt that the region would be more secure if Iran had nuclear weapons. The same polls found that only 10% regard Iran as a threat -- unlike the ruling dictators, who have their own concerns.

In the United States, before the massive propaganda campaigns of the past few years, a majority of the population agreed with most of the world that, as a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran has a right to carry out

uranium enrichment. And even today, a large majority favors peaceful means for dealing with Iran. There is even strong opposition to military engagement if Iran and Israel are at war. Only a quarter regard Iran as an important concern for the U.S. altogether. But it is not unusual for there to be a gap, often a chasm, dividing public opinion and policy.

Why exactly is Iran regarded as such a colossal threat? The question is rarely discussed, but it is not hard to find a serious answer -- though not, as usual, in the fevered pronouncements. The most authoritative answer is provided by the Pentagon and the intelligence services in their regular reports to Congress on global security. They report that Iran does not pose a military threat. Its military spending is very low even by the standards of the region, minuscule of course in comparison with the U.S.

Iran has little capacity to deploy force. Its strategic doctrines are defensive, designed to deter invasion long enough for diplomacy to set it. If Iran is developing nuclear weapons capability, they report, that would be part of its deterrence strategy. No serious analyst believes that the ruling clerics are eager to see their country and possessions vaporized, the immediate consequence of their coming even close to initiating a nuclear war. And it is hardly necessary to spell out the reasons why any Iranian leadership would be concerned with deterrence, under existing circumstances.

The regime is doubtless a serious threat to much of its own population -- and regrettably, is hardly unique on that score. But the primary threat to the U.S. and Israel is that Iran might deter their free exercise of violence. A further threat is that the Iranians clearly seek to extend their influence to neighboring Iraq and Afghanistan, and beyond as well. Those "illegitimate" acts are called "destabilizing" (or worse). In contrast, forceful imposition of U.S. influence halfway around the world contributes to "stability" and order, in accord with traditional doctrine about who owns the world.

It makes very good sense to try to prevent Iran from joining the nuclear weapons states, including the three that have refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty -- Israel, India, and Pakistan, all of which have been assisted in developing nuclear weapons by the U.S., and are still being assisted by them. It is not impossible to approach that goal by peaceful diplomatic means. One approach, which enjoys overwhelming international support, is to undertake meaningful steps towards establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East, including Iran and Israel (and applying as well to U.S. forces deployed there), better still extending to South Asia.

Support for such efforts is so strong that the Obama administration has been compelled to formally agree, but with reservations: crucially, that Israel's nuclear program must not be placed under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Association, and that no state (meaning the U.S.) should be required to release information about "Israeli nuclear facilities and activities, including information pertaining to previous nuclear transfers to Israel." Obama also accepts Israel's position that any such proposal must be conditional on a comprehensive peace settlement, which the U.S. and Israel can continue to delay indefinitely.

This survey comes nowhere near being exhaustive, needless to say. Among major topics not addressed is the shift of U.S. military policy towards the Asia-Pacific region, with new additions to the huge military base system underway right now, in Jeju Island off South Korea and Northwest Australia, all elements of the policy of "containment of China." Closely related is the issue of U.S. bases in Okinawa, bitterly opposed by the population for many years, and a continual crisis in U.S.-Tokyo-Okinawa relations.

Revealing how little fundamental assumptions have changed, U.S. strategic analysts describe the result of China's military programs as a "classic 'security dilemma,' whereby military programs and national strategies deemed defensive by their planners are viewed as threatening by the other side," writes Paul Godwin of the Foreign Policy Research Institute. The security dilemma arises over control of the seas off China's coasts. The U.S. regards its policies of controlling these waters as "defensive," while China regards them as threatening; correspondingly, China regards its actions in nearby areas as "defensive" while the U.S. regards them as threatening. No such debate is even imaginable concerning U.S. coastal waters. This "classic security dilemma" makes sense, again, on the assumption that the U.S. has a right to control most of the world, and that U.S. security requires something approaching absolute global control.

While the principles of imperial domination have undergone little change, the capacity to implement them has markedly declined as power has become more broadly distributed in a diversifying world. Consequences are many. It is, however, very important to bear in mind that -- unfortunately -- none lifts the two dark clouds that hover over all consideration of global order: nuclear war and environmental catastrophe, both literally threatening the decent survival of the species.

Quite the contrary. Both threats are ominous, and increasing.

(Noam Chomsky is Institute Professor emeritus in the MIT Department of Linguistics and Philosophy. He is the author of numerous best-selling political works. His latest books are *Making the Future: Occupations, Intervention, Empire, and Resistance*, *The Essential Chomsky* (edited by Anthony Arno), a collection of his writings on politics and language from the 1950s to the present, *Gaza in Crisis*, with Ilan Pappé, and *Hopes and Prospects*.)

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<a href="#">20120215-08</a>	15:21	Dennis	Re: Examples of Political Stubbornness (reply to SteveB, above)
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<a href="#">20120215-18</a>	23:01	SteveG	"Before Current Birth-Control Fight, Republicans Backed Mandates"
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<a href="#">20120215-01</a>	11:35	SteveB	Examples of Political Stubbornness
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REPUBLICAN STUBBORNNESS

Without studying economics (a 2-bit novelist, Ayn Rand, is their lead theorist) or economic data ("figures can lie", "consider the source" they say), the Right wants to implement (further) an economic theory that has nearly wrecked us—wars, huge deficits, unemployment, "free" trade, deregulation, loss of freedom, unions, and the social safety net, the Housing Bubble, the Crash of 2008, the bail-outs to the banks, outsourcing, privatization, the tarnishing of our image, the rising inequality of income and opportunity, the cheapening and inequality of education, creationism...the list goes on.

DEMOCRATIC STUBBORNNESS

I invite you all to give me examples for either party. These would be fun to publish as they come up, which they seem to do incessantly.

<a href="#">20120215-03</a>	11:47	Pam	Re: Examples of Political Stubbornness (reply to SteveB, above)
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I don't know if you'd call this stubbornness, but here is a list of things I imagine people on the right would say about Democrats:

## DEMOCRATIC STUBBORNNESS

They want to legislate what you consume--fat, sugar, cigarettes, not marijuana, calories.

They are godless, secular haters of religion.

They are not patriotic.

They want a welfare/nanny state so individuals won't have to assume responsibility for themselves.

They use bad language.

They think Europe can teach us something.

They want to destroy the nuclear family.

They think the state is more important than the individual.

They think taxes are a way to increase national revenue.

They want to deny parents the right to decide what schools teach their children.

They want to make owning a gun, any gun, illegal.

They want to allow women and their doctors to decide what a woman should do with her own body.

They don't want to legislate morality--quite different from the 1960s when they did want to, by passing civil rights legislation.

I can't think of any more at the moment. Feel free to add to this list.

20120215-08 15:21 Dennis Re: Examples of Political Stubbornness (reply to SteveB, above)

While studying the data of numerous economists, the Democrats put together thoughtful multiple-point policy statements that bore even their base. No wonder fallacies and lies that appeal to the emotions of the ignorant electorate cause them to lose elections.

20120215-10 16:23 SteveB Re: Examples of Political Stubbornness (reply to Dennis, above)

Yes, very well said.

20120215-02 11:36 SteveG "The Long History Of The War Against Contraception" & More

What is going on in Michigan?

"Defense: Feds 'Manipulated' Facts About Militia" by AP

Feb. 14, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/article/defense-feds-manipulated-facts-about-militia>)

"A Partisan Power Play Won't Redeem Bishops" by Gene Lyons, Roosevelt Institute/National Memo

Feb. 15, 2012 (<http://nationalmemo.com/content/partisan-power-play-wont-redeem-bishops>)

"The Long History Of The War Against Contraception" by Ellen Chesler, National Memo

Feb. 14, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/article/long-history-war-against-contraception>)

For those surprised about the recent fervor over Obama's contraception coverage decision, a look at its deep roots.

Republicans for Planned Parenthood last week issued a call for nominations for the 2012 Barry Goldwater award, an annual prize awarded to a Republican legislator who has acted to protect women's health and rights. Past recipients include Maine Senator Olympia Snowe, who this week endorsed President Obama's solution for insuring full coverage of the cost of contraception without exceptions, even for employees of religiously affiliated institutions. And that may tell us all we need to know about why President Obama has the upper hand in a debate over insurance that congressional Tea Partiers have now widened to include anyone who seeks an exemption.

It's a long time ago, but it is worth remembering that conservative avatar Goldwater was in his day an outspoken supporter of women's reproductive freedom — a freethinker who voted his conscience over the protests of Catholic bishops and all others who tried to claim these matters as questions of conscientious liberty and not sensible social policy. With Goldwater on his side, Obama sees a clear opening for skeptics wary of the extremism that has captured Republican hopefuls in thrall to the fundamentalist base that controls the GOP presidential primary today. Holding firm on family planning — even if it means taking on the Catholic hierarchy and other naysayers by offering a technical fix that would have insurers cover costs instead of the churches themselves — is a calculated political strategy by the Obama campaign, not a blunder as it has been characterized by many high powered pundits, including progressives like Mark Shields of PBS and E.J. Dionne of the *Washington Post*.

Recent public opinion polling on the subject is worth reconsidering. For years, it has been perfectly clear that a substantial majority of Americans see the value of expanding access to contraception and reliable sex education as essential tools to prevent unwanted pregnancy and abortion and to help women balance the competing demands of work and family. But unlike a zealous minority on the other side, these moderates have not necessarily privileged these social concerns over important questions of economics or national security that mattered more to them at election time.

That's what seems to be changing. With his now-famous "nope, zero" response last spring, President Obama simply shut down Republicans in Congress who wanted to defund family planning as part of a deal to reduce the federal deficit. The action elicited a sudden surge in his popularity, especially in the highly contested demographic of women voters between the ages of 30 and 49 who voted for him in 2008 but wound up frustrated by failed promises and disappointing economic policies. Campaign polling has since uncovered a big opening for Obama with this group because they are furious over Republican social extremism. An astonishing 80 percent of them disapproved of congressional efforts to defund Planned Parenthood last spring. Polling among Catholics in response to last week's controversy shows identical patterns, with 57 percent overall supporting the Obama "compromise" to ensure full coverage of contraception, according to reporting by Joe Conason in *The National Memo*, and cross-tabs demonstrating much higher margins of support from Catholic women, Latinos, and independent Catholic voters — all prime Obama election targets.

If the numbers are so persuasive, why then have Republican conservatives strayed so far from the greater tolerance of the Goldwater age? Why have they allowed the family planning issue to tie their candidates up in knots in 2012? The answer is in just how outsized the influence of a minority viewpoint can be on a political party, so long as it represents the base of that party's support.

A bit of history going all the way back to Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal is instructive. Back then, birth control was still illegal in this country, still defined as obscene under federal statutes that remained as a legacy of the Victorian era, even though many states had reformed local laws and were allowing physicians to prescribe contraception to married women with broadly defined "medical" reasons to plan and space their childbearing.

The movement's pioneer, Margaret Sanger, went to Washington during the Great Depression, anticipating that Franklin Roosevelt, whose wife Eleanor was her friend and neighbor in New York, would address the problem and



incorporate a public subsidy of contraception for poor women into the safety net the New Deal was constructing. What Sanger failed to anticipate, however, was the force of the opposition this idea would continue to generate from the coalition of religious conservatives, including urban Catholics and rural fundamentalist Protestants who held Roosevelt Democrats captive, much as they have today captured the GOP. It was Catholic priests, and not the still slightly scandalous friend of the First Lady, who wound up having tea at the Roosevelt White House.

The U.S. government would not overcome moral and religious objections until the Supreme Court protected contraceptive use under the privacy doctrine created in 1965 under *Griswold v. Connecticut*. That freed President Lyndon Johnson to incorporate family planning programs into the country's international development programs and into anti-poverty efforts at home. As a Democrat still especially dependent on Catholic votes, however, Johnson only agreed to act once he had the strong bipartisan support of his arch rival Barry Goldwater's endorsement and also the intense loyalty and deft maneuvering of Republican moderates like Robert Packwood of Oregon in the Senate. Packwood, in turn, worked alongside Ohio's Robert Taft, Jr. in the House and a newcomer from Texas by the name of George H. W. Bush. Bush would remain a staunch advocate of reproductive freedom for women until political considerations during the 1980 presidential elections, when he was on the ticket with Ronald Reagan, accounted for one of the most dramatic and cynical public policy reversals in modern American politics.

Reagan had supported California's liberal policies on contraception and abortion as governor, and Bush as Richard Nixon's Ambassador to the United Nations had helped shape the UN's population programs. But Republican operatives in 1980 saw a potential fissure in the traditional New Deal coalition among Catholics uncomfortable with the new legitimacy given to abortion after *Roe v. Wade* and white southern Christians being lured away from the Democrats around the issue of affirmative action and other racial preferences. Opposition to abortion instantly became a GOP litmus test, and both presidential hopefuls officially changed stripes.

Fast forward to 1992 and the election of Bill Clinton as America's first pro-choice president, coupled with the Supreme Court's crafting of a compromise decision in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* that put some limits on access to abortion but essentially preserved the core privacy doctrine of *Roe v. Wade*. The perceived double threat of these political and judicial developments unleashed a new and even more powerful conservative backlash that took aim not only at abortion, but at contraception and sex education as well.

Exploiting inevitable tensions in the wake of profound social and economic changes occurring across the country as the result of altered gender roles and expectations — changes symbolized and made all the more palpable by Hillary Clinton's activist role as First Lady — conservatives, with the support of powerful right-wing foundations and think tanks, poured millions of dollars into research and propaganda promoting family values and demonizing reproductive freedom, including emotional television ads that ran for years on major media outlets. A relentless stigmatizing of abortion, along with campaigns of intimidation and outright violence against Planned Parenthood and other providers, had a chilling effect on politicians generally shy of social controversy. And Bill Clinton's vulnerability to charges of sexual misconduct left his administration and his party all the more defensive.

Since the welfare reform legislation of 1996, aptly labeled a "Personal Responsibility Act," not only has access to abortion been curtailed, but funds for family planning programs at home and abroad have been capped. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been allocated to the teaching of sexual abstinence, rather than more comprehensive approaches to sex education. Just as tragically, U.S. programs addressing the crisis of HIV/AIDS — admirably expanded during the presidency of George W. Bush — were nonetheless made to counsel abstinence and oppose the use of condoms and other safe sex strategies, leaving women and young people all the more vulnerable to the ravages of the epidemic.

Empirically grounded studies over and over again undermined the efficacy of these approaches, which also flew in the face of mainstream American viewpoints and basic common sense. With Barack Obama's election they have largely been revoked, enflaming the conservative base that put them in place and has lived off the salaries supported by government funding for faith-based social policy.

Even more disheartening to conservative true believers is the promise that the Affordable Care Act will vastly expand access to contraception by providing insurance coverage for oral contraceptives. This guarantee, endorsed by all mainstream health advocates, also includes emergency contraception, popularly known as the morning-after pill, that holds the promise of further reducing unwanted pregnancy and abortion and was meant to offer common

ground in an abortion debate long defined by a clash of absolutes. The strong dose of ordinary hormones in emergency contraception act primarily by preventing fertilization, just like daily contraceptive pills, but in rare instances may also disable a fertilized egg from implanting by weakening the uterine lining that it needs for sustenance, causing opponents to vilify it as an abortifacient.

Supporting the Obama policy changes, on the other hand, is a new generation of progressive activists in reproductive health and rights organizations, energized by the intensity of the assaults against them, and now well-armed to educate and activate their own supporters by using traditional grassroots strategies and more sophisticated social networking. No institution has been more important in this effort than Planned Parenthood, with its vast networks of affiliates and supporters in every state, millions more supporters online, and a powerful national political and advocacy operation based in Washington D.C. that has been put to use to great effect in recent months.

The strength of the Planned Parenthood brand, coupled with the organization's demonstrated ability to rally hundreds of thousands of supporters when it is attacked, has helped overcome traditional political reticence on reproductive justice issues. The Planned Parenthood Action Fund is already out with a strong new appeal warning politicians that women are watching. "Enough is enough. Back off on birth control," is the new advocacy mantra.

Mindful of the numbers — and with the added ballast of what now amounts to a daily drumbeat of progressive television talk and comedy that delights in pillorying Republican prudery — Democrats are intensifying their resolve to take on this fight. Two things we can be sure of: Whoever emerges from the bloodbath of the GOP contest will try and backtrack from the birth control extremism of the primary. And Obama supporters, backed up by the advocacy community, will in turn stand ready to pounce on this inevitable flip-flopping.

Both sides may well summon the spirit and words of Barry Goldwater, who cautioned against allowing faith-based extremism to gain control of the Republican Party. "Politics and governing demand compromise," he told John Dean, who reports on the conversation in his 2006 book, *Conservatives Without Conscience*. "But these Christians believe they are acting in the name of God, so they can't and won't compromise. I know. I've tried to deal with them."

(Ellen Chesler is a Senior Fellow at the Roosevelt Institute and author of *Woman of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America*.)

20120215-04	12:27	Art	Climate Change
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Just finished a pretty good book on global warming, *Six Degrees* by Mark Lynas, that I recommend strongly, especially if you have children and/or grandchildren. It was first published in 2008, so perhaps many of you have already read it. In my opinion it ought to be mandatory reading in every school and if possible for anyone running for political (of course that's assuming they can read) office.

It is written by a climatologist and scientist with all sorts of caveats on models etc, but it also pretty well sums up in readable language where we are heading.

I won't try to repeat the finding but some interesting facts, at least to me.

During the height of the last Ice Age, average earth temperatures were just 6 degrees Celsius cooler than today.

We are currently using a million years of fossil fuel production each year.

At about 2 degrees C increase we reach the tipping point where, a cascading effect begins to occur and at that point we can no longer affect the outcome. Think of ice fields, which reflect sunlight, being drastically reduced. Now the sunlight as energy is absorbed, as opposed to being reflected, melting more water reducing more ice fields. It is at least partially why we are already seeing the impact in the Arctic more than elsewhere.

The earth has seen all this before and so, through science, we know what happens. The only difference this time is we are causing it and it is happening very rapidly.

Scientists believe we are already in the early stages of the 6th mass extinction.

We are already at 1 plus degrees C increase and we have very little time to level off adding more carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. Probably won't happen but there are things we can do.

If we do nothing we will be at 4 degrees plus by 2100 (your grandchildren's time) and humanity is probably finished, although it will be happening much sooner.

All a bit gloomy I admit but bad news doesn't get better with age. Why do we have scientists, if we don't listen to them? Read the book.

Drill baby, drill. (Oops)

<a href="#">20120215-05</a>	14:06	SteveB	Re: Climate Change / Energy (reply to SteveG, above) & "\$2.50-a-Gallon-Gas & Energy Independence"
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But why take the long view when you can just as easily take the short view? Try it! Come on! You used to be a Republican. Read along with Newt, below. Drill, baby, drill!

I'm forwarding this reply to Art from Newt Gingrich (at least someone on the Right can write, but then, we don't really know if Newt is on the Right or not). I can get Newt to do things like this because, as he says below, he is my "friend". Let's have \$2.50 gas now and screw the future!

#### "\$2.50-a-Gallon-Gas and Energy Independence" by Newt Gingrich

Dear Fellow Conservative, [Haha. I'm a spy in the House of Newt. -SteveB]

\$2.50-a-gallon gasoline and energy independence: An action plan to make it real America needs three goals in energy:

- Independence from dictatorships so no American President ever again bows to a Saudi king.
- Enough energy that Iranian efforts to disrupt the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz have no impact on America.
- Enough production to bring down the cost of gasoline for American motorists.

All three goals can be achieved with an all of the above American energy plan.

During the four years I was Speaker, the average price for a gallon of gasoline was \$1.13. When President Barack Obama took office in January 2009, the average price nationwide was \$1.89 a gallon. Three years into the Obama presidency, the average is \$3.47 a gallon.

Today, prices like those we enjoyed three years ago seem like a fantasy—and under the president's current policies, they are. But, these were prices Americans paid in the relatively recent past. Many Americans used to pay just \$35 to fill up the very same cars that are today costing them over \$60.

While some of the increase in gas prices comes from growing demand, the demand pressures on price can and should be offset by increasing domestic supplies. Yet the Obama administration's ideological refusal to expand American energy production continues to block the development of resources which could lower prices dramatically. As we saw most recently with the administration's rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline, the president is more interested in playing favorites with environmental extremists rather than embracing the "all-of-the-above" strategy that could achieve energy independence and help all Americans now.

The fact that Americans must cope with ballooning gas prices and energy vulnerability, while living in a country with some of the richest untapped energy resources on the planet is an absurdity that can only be accomplished by bad government.

By unleashing the American people from regulations and bureaucracy designed to promote the agenda of radical environmentalists, we can tap our enormous oil and natural gas supplies to drive fuel prices down.

Most Americans have no idea that the United States is sitting on enough technically recoverable oil to power us at current rates of consumption for over 250 years. We are estimated to have 1.4 trillion barrels of oil—or 1.7 trillion, adding in the resources of Canada and Mexico.

That amount of oil, as a report from the Institute for Energy Research recently explained, is "more than the world has used since the first oil well was drilled over 150 years ago in Titusville, Pennsylvania" and 6 ½ times the proved oil reserves of Saudi Arabia.

The true size of the oil supply could be even larger still than these estimates suggest. In many cases, far more oil has been recovered than was predicted to be available when development began. In 1985, for instance, the Minerals Management Service estimated the Gulf of Mexico had nine billion barrels of undiscovered oil. Twenty-seven years later, after many billions of barrels have been pumped, the federal government estimates there are 45 billion undiscovered barrels.

In another example, the estimate of the Bakken formation in North Dakota has jumped an astonishing 2,500 percent since 1995 due to new technology. The Bakken along with other emerging unconventional oil and gas "plays" in Texas, New Mexico, Ohio, West Virginia, Louisiana, California, Colorado, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, New York, and in other states, have allowed the U.S. to begin increasing oil production after 40 years of steady production declines. Unlocked by the new technologies of hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling, the full potential of these new resource plays is yet to be fully comprehended or realized.

Without opening up more areas to drilling, we have no way of knowing how many more Bakken-sized discoveries are waiting for us. But we do know this. The potential to increase American oil and gas supplies dramatically and become energy secure and independent is real. Increasing oil supplies will lower fuel prices significantly. And the biggest thing standing in the way is government obstruction.

A recent analysis by Goldman Sachs projects that the United States could become the world leader in oil production by 2017. But if the President continues his assault on American energy, including his proposals to raise taxes on domestic oil and gas and his own EPA's attempts to regulate hydraulic fracturing, that future will be arbitrarily and unnecessarily upended.

The administration is determined to ban additional development of America's most promising oil and gas resources, such as offshore Alaska in the Beaufort and Chuckchi Seas, and off the East and West Coasts of the lower 48 on the Outer Continental Shelf. Overall, there is an estimated 88.6 billion barrels of oil, but only 2.2 percent of federal offshore land is currently being leased for production, and the president is refusing to allow more.

On land, the administration's obstruction is just as damaging. Among the 30.5 billion barrels of oil located onshore on Federal lands (not including oil shale), 92 percent of them are inaccessible or under restrictions above and beyond standard regulatory and administrative hurdles, according to the most recent assessment by the Bureau of Land Management.

New production from oil and gas resources has come overwhelmingly from private lands, such as the huge increases from oil and gas in shale. These achievements did not come because the government decided to permit more leases, but rather because the lands were privately held. Yet even when the government does not own the land, government can still aid obstruction America's energy potential. The gigantic Monterey shale oil field in California, for instance, which the Energy Information Administration estimates holds 64 percent of the recoverable shale oil in the U.S., has been slowed dramatically by environmentalist lawsuits California's go-it-alone global warming law.

The federal government owns most of the world's oil shale reserves, located in the Green River Basin in Utah, Colorado and Wyoming. This immense source of future oil supply is being held off-limits to leasing by Obama's Bureau of Land Management. Recoverable U.S. oil shale reserves are estimated to approach if not exceed 1 *trillion* barrels of American oil.

A stunningly small percentage of the enormous federal land, which is owned by the American people, is available for energy exploration that could yield new discoveries. Eight-six percent of Nevada is owned by the federal government. That is almost 40 percent the area of Texas. If these lands were properly marketed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, opening even half this promising acreage to exploration, we'd add an area a fifth the size of Texas for oil and gas prospecting.

What's even more baffling is that these lands are potentially a huge source of revenue for the federal government -- revenue that doesn't involve raising taxes on the American people. Experts in the private-sector royalties industry estimate that implementing commercial standards in federal leasing of oil and gas royalties could bring over \$100 billion into the federal treasury over the next decade. Harold Hamm, who discovered the Bakken formation, recently told the *Wall Street Journal* that with expanded drilling for oil and gas on federal lands, onshore and offshore, "I truly believe the federal government could over time raise \$18 trillion in royalties." That's more than the U.S. national debt, \$15.4 trillion.

Rather than leasing programs expanding as gasoline prices rose, oil and natural gas production on federal lands under the Obama administration oil and natural gas production on federal lands has diminished by 40 percent. With so much unused potential and gasoline approaching \$4 a gallon nationwide, the president's failure to tap the energy we have here in America is inexcusable. Considering the abundance of our energy resources and their potential to drive down prices, create jobs, stimulate economic growth and a sustainable manufacturing boom, provide a steady source of state and federal revenue, and bolster national security, the administration's refusal to permit development borders on insanity.

Not content to confine its hostilities to curtailing new leases, the administration frequently demonizes energy companies for political purposes and advocates new taxes and fees on producers. But the United States is already one of the worst places in the world for oil and gas companies to do business. As the American Enterprise Institute's Steve Hayward writes, "when compared properly with the royalty and tax systems of 29 other nations, only Venezuela extracts a higher take from oil and gas production than the United States." New taxes will just drive producers abroad even further.

We must embrace an all-of-the-above energy strategy of oil, natural gas, coal, nuclear, biofuels, wind, and oil shale if we are to achieve energy independence, lower gasoline prices, power a renewed boom in American manufacturing and raise government revenues with no new taxes.

Pursuant to this plan, we should take eight steps immediately to address these skyrocketing gas prices and jumpstart production of American energy:

1. Approve the Keystone XL pipeline.
2. Replace the EPA with a new economically rational Environmental Solutions Agency.
3. Condense regulations to make it easier to build new refineries. We haven't built a major new refinery in the U.S. since 1977, in part because federal restrictions and regulatory uncertainty make it so difficult.
4. Overhaul the Department of Interior processes to expedite approval of leases.
5. Move to 100 percent expensing for all new equipment so companies could write it off in one year, making it easier for companies to build new extraction sites.
6. Eliminate the capital gains tax to promote investment.
7. Adopt a 12.5 percent corporate tax rate to make America the best country in the world to do business.
8. Abolish the death tax.

Gas at \$2.50 a gallon gas is not a dream. It's achievable with the right policies. If we take these steps, we can quickly and dramatically reduce the price of gas by tapping America's incredible oil and gas resources to increase



at home, allowing them to jack up their prices\*. No surprise then that the Big Five gasoline makers enjoyed record prices\*\* in 2011."

\* a record high of \$3.52 a gallon as mentioned by Newt.

\*\* according to today's *NY Times* they made \$137 billion at the same time that they received \$4 billion in taxpayer subsidies.

[20120215-13](#) 18:00 Pam Re: Climate Change / Energy (reply to all, above)

Why doesn't someone call Newt out on this? He lies like a rug.

[20120215-15](#) 18:37 Dennis Re: Climate Change / Energy (reply to Pam, above)

What's the point, Pam? Newt's pretend facts just put most Repub primary voters in a coma, except for the ones who think he's a frickin' genius.

[20120215-14](#) 18:04 Art Re: Climate Change / Energy (reply to all, above)

If by 2030 the Chinese use oil at the same rate as Americans do now, they will need 100 Million barrels of oil a day. Since current world production is only 80 million barrels a day, maybe Newt is right. Not!!!

Sadly, I fear many Americans are so stupid they really don't understand and worse, they don't want to.

[20120215-17](#) 20:08 MathaH Re: Climate Change / Energy (reply to all, above) & "Leaked: A Plan to Teach Climate Change Skepticism in \$chools"

"Leaked: A Plan to Teach Climate Change Skepticism in \$chools" by Bill Dedman, MSNBC

Feb. 15, 2012, (<http://openchannel.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/02/15/10415410-leaked-a-plan-to-teach-climate-change-skepticism-in-schools>)

The Heartland Institute says the documents referred to below were obtained through "pretexting," in which a person posing as a board member sent an e-mail asking a staffer to "resend" documents from board meetings. The Institute says one of the documents, a "climate strategy" memo, "is a total fake," and the institute says it has not had a chance to reach its president, who is traveling, to determine whether any of the other documents were altered. See the full statement from Heartland below. The group later said that the president had returned, that one document is definitely faked, and that it would not comment on the rest.

Internal documents have been leaked from the Heartland Institute, a Chicago nonprofit think tank, showing its funding of leading skeptics of global warming and a plan to teach climate change skepticism in schools. An anonymous person leaked the documents to several publications and activists supporting the science of climate change.

"The heart of the climate denial machine relies on huge corporate and foundation funding from U.S. businesses, including Microsoft, Koch Industries, Altria (parent company of Philip Morris) RJR Tobacco and more," reports the DeSmogBlog, which published the documents on Tuesday. The blog opposes what it calls the "climate denial machine." (Disclosure: msnbc.com is a joint venture of Microsoft and NBC Universal.)

The first batch of documents is on DeSmogBlog, and a second batch dealing with fundraising:

<http://www.desmogblog.com/heartland-institute-exposed-internal-documents-unmask-heart-climate-denial-machine>

<http://www.desmogblog.com/heartland-insider-exposes-institute-s-budget-and-strategy>

The documents show a plan to develop a curriculum for teaching about climate change in K-12 schools:

### Global Warming Curriculum for K-12 Schools

Many people lament the absence of educational material suitable for K-12 students on global warming that isn't alarmist or overtly political. Heartland has tried to make material available to teachers, but has had only limited success. Principals and teachers are heavily biased toward the alarmist perspective. Moreover, material for classroom use must be carefully written to meet curriculum guidelines, and the amount of time teachers have for supplemental material is steadily shrinking due to the spread of standardized tests in K-12 education.

Dr. David Wojick has presented Heartland a proposal to produce a global warming curriculum for K-12 schools that appears to have great potential for success. Dr. Wojick is a consultant with the Office of Scientific and Technical Information at the U.S. Department of Energy in the area of information and communication science. He has a Ph.D. in the philosophy of science and mathematical logic from the University of Pittsburgh and a B.S. in civil engineering from Carnegie Tech. He has been on the faculty of Carnegie Mellon and the staffs of the U.S. Office of Naval Research and the Naval Research Lab.

Dr. Wojick has conducted extensive research on environmental and science education for the Department of Energy. In the course of this research, he has identified what subjects and concepts teachers must teach, and in what order (year by year), in order to harmonize with national test requirements. He has contacts at virtually all the national organizations involved in producing, certifying, and promoting science curricula.

Dr. Wojick proposes to begin work on "modules" for grades 10-12 on climate change ("whether humans are changing the climate is a major scientific controversy"), climate models ("models are used to explore various hypotheses about how climate works. Their reliability is controversial"), and air pollution ("whether CO<sub>2</sub> is a pollutant is controversial. It is the global food supply and natural emissions are 20 times higher than human emissions").

Wojick would produce modules for Grades 7-9 on environmental impact ("environmental impact is often difficult to determine. For example there is a major controversy over whether or not humans are changing the weather"), for Grade 6 on water resources and weather systems, and so on.

We tentatively plan to pay Dr. Wojick \$5,000 per module, about \$25,000 a quarter, starting in the second quarter of 2012, for this work. The Anonymous Donor has pledged the first \$100,000 for this project, and we will circulate a proposal to match and then expand upon that investment.

Here's a copy of the group's fundraising plan, with a list of donors:

[http://www.desmogblog.com/sites/beta.desmogblog.com/files/\(1-15-2012\)%202012%20Fundraising%20Plan.pdf](http://www.desmogblog.com/sites/beta.desmogblog.com/files/(1-15-2012)%202012%20Fundraising%20Plan.pdf)

The documents also show funding of leading voices among the opponents of the idea of global warming: "At the moment, this funding goes primarily to Craig Idso (\$11,600 per month), Fred Singer (\$5,000 per month, plus expenses), Robert Carter (\$1,667 per month), and a number of other individuals, but we will consider expanding it, if funding can be found."

About its funders, the group refers to a single anonymous donor: "Our climate work is attractive to funders, especially our key Anonymous Donor (whose contribution dropped from \$1,664,150 in 2010 to \$979,000 in 2011 - about 20% of our total 2011 revenue). He has promised an increase in 2012..."



Other donors are named: "We will also pursue additional support from the Charles G. Koch Foundation. They returned as a Heartland donor in 2011 with a contribution of \$200,000. We expect to push up their level of support in 2012 and gain access to their network of philanthropists, if our focus continues to align with their interests. Other contributions will be pursued for this work, especially from corporations whose interests are threatened by climate policies."

20120215-16

19:48

MarthaH

Keystone XL Pipeline from Indiana Perspective (to Sen. Richard Lugar) & "Lugar Defends Taxpayer-Funded Lobbying for Keystone XL Pipeline"

Dear Senator Richard Lugar:

With the below map of the pipeline and the wording of the re-election ad put out for you by the C of C, please explain how jobs are being lost in Indiana???? I am embarrassed for you and disappointed in you for allowing this misrepresenting to drum up excitement with lies. Please resort to telling the truth. You can't "stand up to Obama about this" as stated--there are no Indiana jobs!

[Unfortunately, the map MarthH emailed didn't make it. I have included one and an article that should shed light on this important issue. --SteveB



"Lugar Defends Taxpayer-Funded Lobbying for Keystone XL Pipeline" by Brian Kanowsky, BrianKanowsky.com

Feb. 6th, 2012, (<http://www.briankanowsky.com/tags/lobbyists/>)

Indiana Senator Richard Lugar responded to Representative Henry Waxman's letter, inquiring into why the state of Indiana was spending taxpayer money to lobby for the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Lugar, who has embraced this right-wing cause du jour as he faces a serious primary challenger, writes that the expense is "fully justified" (PDF), citing Indiana companies that could be hired to work on the project:

On January 18, for example, I visited with women and men working at Endress+Hauser in Greenwood where they manufacture instruments that will be sold to Keystone XL. In South Bend, Hoosiers at Koontz-Wagner Electric build controls for Siemens pumps that will move the oil along the pipeline.

Lugar also cites Caterpillar, who build engines that are used on large trucks, like the ones used in the Alberta oil sand fields, and who has a plant in Lafayette. (In similar news, I fix computers, and some companies in Canada use computers, and those computers could be used to send emails about Keystone XL, which means I should be included in the Keystone XL job numbers.)

A quick search revealed that while Lugar has been repeating these Indiana connections to the Keystone XL Pipeline, he seems to be the only one citing them. I couldn't find a single mention of them that came from any source other than the Senator's office. In fact, the companies he names don't seem to mention the project at all.

Lugar is also quick to trot out the "20,000 private sector jobs" canard, which is the number that has been used by the GOP – but only when they're not claiming 100,000 jobs, or 250,000 jobs, or even a million jobs.

However, TransCanada – the company that's actually building the pipeline – has claimed only 13,000 jobs, and a Washington Post investigation using TransCanada's numbers found that it would be only half of that. In fact, independent researchers have found that Keystone XL could create as few as 50 permanent full-time jobs (PDF). And despite confused media reports, the State Department found "the project would not have a significant impact on long-term employment in the United States".

20120215-18	23:01	SteveG	"Before Current Birth-Control Fight, Republicans Backed Mandates"
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What a difference a few years make.

"Before Current Birth-Control Fight, Republicans Backed Mandates" by Kim Geiger and Noam N. Levey, *LA Times*

Feb. 15, 2012, (<http://www.latimes.com/health/la-na-gop-contraceptives-20120216,0,3392996.story>)

(Republicans are fighting a birth-control rule in President Obama's healthcare law, but several states have enacted contraceptive mandates with the support of GOP lawmakers and governors.)

"How Did We Forget About Mutually Assured Destruction?" by Tom de Castella, BBC News Magazine

Feb. 15, 2012, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17026538>)

(Fifty years ago this week the idea of mutually assured nuclear destruction was outlined in a major speech. But how did this frightening concept of the Cold War fade from people's psyches?)



I never thought I could love anything cold-blooded, but this guy...is just the sweetest...

[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/46388892/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-science/t/some-spot-color-meet-worlds-tiniest-chameleon/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/46388892/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/some-spot-color-meet-worlds-tiniest-chameleon/)

A juvenile of the tiniest chameleon species ever discovered perches atop a fingertip. (PLoS One)



—Friends of the Middle,  
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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