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A New Generation of Conservative Thought

What's behind the embryonic stem-cell debate?

Britain's war on Savage • Europe's mafia state • The case against gay-marriage

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The conservative movement is in crisis. Modern conservatism was born in 1955 with the founding of *National Review*. Its editor, William F. Buckley Jr., said the publication's mission was to "stand athwart history, yelling stop!" But history has kept rolling along, smashing every traditional institution in its path. Family, faith, capitalism, our constitutional republic—they have all been shattered by modern liberalism. In the face of this ideological juggernaut, conservatives have offered sporadic and weak resistance. Their ideas have become stale. Too many prefer power to principles. The movement has become corrupt, lazy and ineffective. Having come to Washington to confront the political rot and moral decay, conservatives have become part of the establishment. In other words, they have become part of the problem.



The mission of *Reflections Magazine* is to launch a conservative moral and intellectual revival. We will bring together the finest minds and writers to defend the eternal principles of God, country and family. We seek to forge a reinvigorated conservative movement for the 21st century—one that champions a new nationalism, rooted in a culture of life, small government, a restoration of federalism and victory over Islamist terrorism. Capitol Building The time has come for a one-nation conservatism that reaches out to minorities and women, the unborn and the poor, workers and students. The movement must go beyond its traditional base or else suffer a slow, agonizing death. Our goal is unabashedly counter-revolutionary: to roll back the forces of progressivism. Since the 1960s, a destructive liberal revolution has swept across our land. Characterized by radical secular humanism, sexual permissiveness and milk-toast socialism, it is transforming America into something our Founding Fathers would not only find unrecognizable but repugnant. We stand for the real America, the historic America, the eternal America—an America based on moral traditionalism, an America of limited government, self-reliance and entrepreneurship, an America that won its independence from imperial British rule, triumphed over Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, and has shed precious blood and treasure to liberate hundreds of millions of people around the world, and an America that champions human rights and freedom, in which every individual—regardless of race, color, gender or religion—possesses innate dignity and equal value in the eyes of our creator. We ask like-minded Americans to join us in this struggle for the heart and soul of America.

Edmund Burke, the great philosopher and godfather of Western conservatism, once said: "All that's necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men to do nothing." We refuse to do nothing. We will fight for what is right, true and good. This is the rock upon which we take our stand.

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The Edmund Burke Institute for American Renewal

Mission

The Edmund Burke Institute for American Renewal was founded in June, 2005 in the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. We are a non-partisan, non-profit, education and outreach organization which aspires to engage and mobilize the millions of African Americans, Hispanics, women and other minorities in this country who share conservative values. We will inform conservative leaders about the needs and aspirations of minorities in order to make the latter feel welcome amongst us. Also, we want minorities to appreciate fully how conservatism is congruent with their values and goals. In short, we will build a steadfast alliance between conservative leaders and minority groups. We hope to preserve all those elements in the American republic that render us a strong and vibrant nation. Simultaneously, we are open to new ideas that will allow more citizens to enjoy the blessings of freedom, prosperity and moral renewal.



How We Differ From Other Conservative Organizations:

1. We seek to update conservative thought. We want to find original ideas on how to bolster timeless principles.
2. We are attentive to the needs of women and minorities. These are not peripheral but are a primary focus of our institute. We want the conservative movement to make adjustments in order to accommodate the unique aspirations of previously marginalized groups. We also want minorities to learn how the conservative movement can benefit them.
3. We are devoted to cultural issues, not just politics. The main battle of our time is to seize the initiative in the cultural arena.
4. We hope to foster a broad alliance with those who adhere to traditional moral principles. We seek to build bridges with individuals of all faiths in order to combat assaults on human dignity.
5. We write policy initiatives, opinion articles and monographs as well as organize symposiums and conferences that appeal to our audience. Hence we do not just think and write: we take action!
6. We do not focus exclusively on one group or on one issue. There are excellent minority conservative organizations across the United States that are currently working in isolation from one another. Instead, we bring these groups together on a variety of issues in order to find common ground and, thus, to be effective in achieving political and cultural change.

**Join us as we forge a new conservative movement for
the 21st century!**

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Debating God in stem cell research

By Michelle Laque Johnson

Four years ago, my husband was diagnosed with melanoma, one of the deadliest forms of cancer. Three years later, he began a second battle against cancer. This time, it was leukemia.

Cancer survivors know the fear a family experiences at such a diagnosis. When, as with melanoma, there is no “cure” beyond excising the tumor, most families begin to search for a scientific trial that will give them hope. In evaluating the trials, they look at statistics to tell them whether a particular trial is likely to increase their loved one’s odds for survival.

This approach makes intuitive sense. Yet, amazingly, it is not the approach being taken in the stem cell research debate.

Why?

In hailing President Obama’s decision to fund embryonic stem cell research, Democratic strategist Joe Trippi, who writes about his fears of going blind from diabetes, expressed his relief that “the greatest scientists in our country [would be able] to get back to work on finding cures.”

Mr. Trippi must get back to work. He obviously has not read the re-

search demonstrating the success of adult stem cell trials on the very disease he is worried about. Has he not worried about the failures resulting from the use of embryonic stem cells, which have not cured even one disease? There is a lot of hype about the potential of embryonic stem cells, which sounds fantastic and fills one with hope, but actual trials have produced truly scary results.

For example, the *New England Journal of*



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Medicine reported that implanted embryonic stem cells resulted in “absolutely devastating” consequences. “[Patients] chew constantly, their fingers go up and down, the wrists flex and distend,” said Mr. Paul E. Greene. “It’s a real nightmare. And we can’t selectively turn it off. No more fetal transplants. We are absolutely and adamantly convinced that this should be considered for research only.”

Normally, people who are diagnosed with a disease – at least educated people – research the disease, and they stay away from research with results like the above.

Mr. Mehmet Oz, the TV doctor endorsed by the goddess of the Left, Oprah Winfrey, recently told her that embryonic stem cell research is dead. You can still see that clip from the Ms. Winfrey’s show on YouTube. Mr. Oz touted the potential of induced pluripotent stem cells from skin cells, which he says are less than a decade away from curing all kinds of diseases without the consequences of embryonic stem cell research.

So with two such alternatives, why would anyone risk their health on the potential of embryonic stem cells?

The answer lies not in politics, but in something much deeper. In a March 9 online opinion piece in the *Huffington Post* entitled, “The Stem Cell Slippery Slope Fallacy,” Marty Kaplan, director of the Norman Lear Center and Profes-

sor at the USC Annenberg School, said: “Every American has the right to choose a God to believe in, or not. But no Americans have the right to impose their own theistic absolutes, or their own dark views of human nature, on anyone else.”

Get the picture? It’s not about the economy, politics, or health care – “it’s about God, stupid.”

How else to explain why someone would support an unproven alternative over alternatives that are already showing results—especially when the unproven alternative destroys an embryo, with its unique personal DNA signature, which many people quite reasonably believe is human life.

To succumb to this viewpoint—even for a scientific reason—would mean to bow to what secular humanists and atheists call “the Religious Right.” In their efforts to wipe out religious influence, these ideologues attempt to impose their atheistic absolutes by crushing any argument supported by those who believe in God—especially those “Bible-thumpin’ Christians” who believe in Jesus Christ – even when it makes scientific sense to do otherwise.

Of course, these new technologies with their life and death consequences have profound religious and ethical dimensions—dimensions which those who make science their God refuse to acknowledge.

In discussing his decision to fund embryonic stem cell research, President Barack Obama, who has shifted from calling himself a Christian to a “person of faith,” refused to acknowledge this. He concluded, at least in the case

of embryonic stem cell research, that the government cannot create a “false choice between sound science and moral values.” However, in almost the same breath, he told the country that human cloning, which apparently doesn’t represent such a false choice, is “dangerous, profoundly wrong and has no place in our society, or any society.”

“Profoundly wrong”? Isn’t that a moral evaluation, Mr. President? And may I be so bold as to ask upon whom or what you base that evaluation? What makes embryonic stem cell research right and human cloning wrong? Just imagine the lives that could be saved if we could take the organs from entire human beings rather than just embryos.

If Mr.Obama is basing his moral determination on his own opinion, is he not setting himself up as a god? How comfortable should any of us be with that? How many of us would be willing to bet that he will remain committed to the idea that human cloning is wrong next year? After all, if there are no moral absolutes, we are only left with opinion, and that can change.

Similarly disturbing is Mr. Kaplan’s denial of the logic of the “slippery slope” argument in the Huffington Post article mentioned earlier. Anyone who has ever been to journalism school has had to sit through classes on journalism law and ethics. Such classes go into great detail about First Amendment issues and the “slippery slope” upon which one embarks when such freedoms are infringed upon. Obviously, Mr. Kaplan and those of his ilk find such concerns absurd only when applied to moral issues.

The religious leader Pope Paul VI warned back in 1968 that widespread contraception would pave the way to marital infidelity and an exploding divorce rate, as well as a lowering of moral standards. He also predicted that abortion would become a backup to contraception and that governments (China anyone?) would begin to force contraception on their people. Isn’t this the very definition of the slippery slope—or have we once again replaced intellectual honesty with the sophisticated veneer of sarcasm?

Clearly, the stem cell “debate” is no longer about science. Every day, science is proving the efficacy of adult stem cells over embryonic stem cells – and now induced pluripotent stem cells are making headway, as well. Yet the secular humanists and the atheists, who are so afraid of “theists” pushing theology on the masses, are instead pushing their own ideology on the country, to the detriment of humankind.

The battle now shifts to the states, many of which are considering legislation to restrict embryonic stem cell research. It’s war alright. But the war is not political and, despite our economic woes, it’s not economic either. It’s as old as mankind – and far more profound. It’s all about God, stupid.

-Michelle Laque Johnson has spent more than 20 years working for publications as diverse as Investor’s Business Daily, where she was a reporter, and The Catholic Standard & Times, where she was editor-in-chief. She currently serves as director of communications for EWTN, the largest religious media network in the world.

Britain's war on Michael Savage

By Jeffrey Kuhner

The British government's recent blacklisting of conservative talk-radio host, Michael Savage, is an ominous sign—and should be of deep concern to all Americans, regardless of their political leanings. It reflects British society's surrender not only to the forces of political correctness, but Islamist intimidation.

Britain is targeting one of America's most popular hosts. Home Secretary Jacqui Smith released a blacklist with the names of 16 foreigners—including Mr. Savage—who are banned from entering Britain.

The average American might ask: So what? British society has been in decline for decades, plagued by soccer hooliganism, pervasive alcoholism, soaring crime, sexual permissiveness, growing ethnic and racial balkanization and overall social debauchery. If you combine this with the country's notoriously bad cuisine, weather and manners, then being banned may not seem like a punishment but a blessing. I for one always avoid visiting England whenever possible. Hence, what's the big deal? Mr. Savage is not missing much.

But the ban has profound societal repercussions. It is an assault on freedom of speech. Mr. Savage's name appeared alongside mass murderers, Islamic butchers and white supremacists: Russian skinheads serving prison sentences for killing 20 migrant workers, a leader of Hamas, a known Hezbollah terrorist, a prominent neo-Nazi and a former Ku Klux



Michael Savage.

Klan grand wizard.

“I think it's important that people understand the sorts of values and sorts of standards that we have here, the fact that it's a privilege to come and the sort of things that mean you won't be welcome in this country,” Ms. Smith said. “Coming to this country is a privilege.

If you can't live by the rules that we live by, the standards and the values that we live by, we should exclude you from this country and, what's more, now we will make public those people that we have excluded."

Ms. Smith is wrong. Mr. Savage is a peaceful, law-abiding citizen, who has never committed a violent act or crime. He has never called for violence or rationalized the use of force against innocent civilians. On the contrary, he believes in democracy and respects the rule of law and constitutional government. Mr. Savage embodies the very "standards" and "values" Ms. Smith claims she is so determined to enforce. To lump him with known gangsters, terrorist killers and neo-fascist thugs is grotesque. It also demonstrates a dangerous disconnect from reality. Islamic radicals and Russian skinheads champion death and destruction; violent extremism is their way of life—in fact, for them, it is the purpose and meaning of life. Mr. Savage, however, practices the very opposite: He makes his living by engaging in democratic debate, marshaling ideas and opinions through the public (and often raucous) medium of talk radio. Mr. Savage is being punished for no other reason than exercising his fundamental right to free speech.

In a pathetic attempt to justify her ban, Ms. Smith claimed that Mr. Savage is a far right-winger, who peddles bigotry and intolerance. Therefore, he presents a danger to public order. "This is someone who has fallen into the category of fomenting hatred, of such extreme views and expressing them in such a way that it is actually likely to cause inter-community tension or even violence if that person were allowed into the country," she told the British Broadcasting Corporation.

By this standard there are millions of Britons who would not qualify to enter other countries. East London has become a haven for Islamist clerics preaching the virtues of jihad and Sharia law. Moreover, prominent radio hosts, such as the fiery anti-war parliamentarian, George Galloway, not only regularly praise Hezbollah and Hamas, but spout vile anti-Semitic, anti-Zionist propaganda. Mr. Galloway was on Saddam Hussein's payroll, and openly rationalizes suicide bombing attacks on Israelis. He defends Iran's drive to acquire a nuclear bomb. He publicly supports Syria's fascist dictator, Bashar Assad. Yet, our government has refused to nix his frequent speaking tours to the U.S., despite the harmful impact his inflammatory, hate-filled rhetoric may have on the Jewish community. If Ms. Smith wants to crack down on those "fomenting hatred," then all she has to do is look across the aisle in the House of Commons. Instead, Mr. Galloway is hailed as a hero by large segments of the British liberal elite.

The double-standard is obvious—and odious: in their view, Mr. Galloway is a principled firebrand, while Mr. Savage is a dangerous lunatic. The very opposite is true. Mr. Galloway represents the civilizational self-loathing and nihilism at the heart of the modern Left. Anti-war liberals, like Mr. Galloway, are driven by ideological hatred—hatred of capitalism, America and Judeo-Christian morality. They argue the West is irredeemably racist, sexist and imperialist. Consumed by guilt and self-hatred, they champion the appeasement of Islamic fascism because deep down they believe the West deserves to be defeated; it is a culture that is not worth preserving or defending.

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The Savage ban is not simply about free speech. It is also an intellectual power grab by the Left, a deliberate effort to muzzle dissenting voices on the Right. Mr. Savage is a conservative populist, who believes in small government, low taxes and family values. More than any other major radio host, he understands that modern conservatism is based on the defense of national sovereignty, distinct cultural identity and Burkean traditionalism; that America is not only a special and unique country, but represents a special and unique civilization—one that must be protected at all costs. His flinty opposition to social liberalism, massive illegal immigration and Islamist radicalism enrages the Left for one basic reason: It seeks to sustain the West's historical and cultural core. It flies in the face of the post-modern, multicultural progressive worldview dominant among our elites. Mr. Savage's real crime is not "fomenting hatred"; it's fomenting a muscular conservatism.

Ms. Smith's actions are a blatant attempt to criminalize and delegitimize conservative ideas. The Left has been engaged in such repressive activities for decades—the latest manifestation in America being the attempt to restore the Fairness Doctrine. Today, it is Mr. Savage. Tomorrow, it will be Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity and maybe even FOX News and National Review. Liberals are seeking to define the parameters of "respectable" public discourse—and more conservatives will soon find themselves marginalized.

Leftists understand the key fact of politics: ideas matter. They determine how people behave—and how they vote. If one controls the terms of the debate, eventually one controls the argument. Since the 1960s, campus radi-

cals have embarked on a "long march through the institutions." Their goal has been to transform America by achieving cultural hegemony. Liberals have captured the universities, the public schools, the media, Hollywood, television and the arts. They now set the terms of debate, and are on the verge of fulfilling their revolutionary project. Our culture has become immersed in the acid of political correctness, which is slowly dissolving the West's social foundations. For the multicultural Left, Mr. Savage's traditionalist conservatism is an anathema. Therefore, he must be crushed.

Since the 9/11 attacks, there has emerged an unholy alliance between the secular Left and radical Islamists. Again, Mr. Galloway is a useful example. He is a trendy socialist, who supports abortion, gay rights and Cuba's atheist Marxist dictatorship. In other words, he stands for everything Islam is supposed to be against: He is anti-God, anti-family and anti-life. Yet, that has not stopped Islamists—in Britain and around the world—from embracing him. In the matters that count, he is one of them. From closing Guantanamo Bay to withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan to appeasing Iran's genocidal mullahs—Leftists, such as Mr. Galloway, George Soros or the Huffington Post crowd have formed a common front with Islamists: They want America to surrender in the war on terror.

Mr. Savage doesn't. He is willing to stand up to our mortal enemies—publicly, vociferously and unapologetically. For this, the Left and Islamist lobby groups, like the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), have been trying to destroy his career for years. Ms. Smith has allowed Britain's Home Office to be influenced by Islamic pressure groups. Her

ban on Mr. Savage is moral equivalency of the worst kind. She may think it will mollify Britain's vocal Muslim militants, but it will not.

The Home Secretary has now shown that the most fundamental principles—freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience—whose roots lie in the Magna Carta can be jettisoned in the name of appeasement. Her ban is a symptom of civilizational paralysis and moral decay. It signifies that Britain is no longer willing to uphold its

venerable, cherished principles; Britain prefers the false comforts of political correctness to the hard obligations of freedom. Mr. Savage is the latest victim, but he won't be the last.

Conservatives must rally to his side. His fight is our fight.

-Jeffrey T. Kuhner is president of the Edmund Burke Institute and a columnist at The Washington Times.

Obama's torture tactics

By Steve Malzberg



Dating all the way back to the battle for the democratic presidential nomination, we have known that President Barack Obama was against the “enhanced interrogation

techniques” that we now know helped prevent further terror attacks after September 11.

But ever since that time, and continuing right up through Mr. Obama's banning of those techniques, many on both the Left and the Right have been telling me not to worry. You see, Mr. Obama had left himself an out. If we ever were to confront the dreaded “ticking bomb scenario,” where we knew that a bomb or bombs were about to go off in one or more U.S. cities and we had a prisoner, or prisoners in custody who we felt might know where and when this would happen, Mr. Obama would make an exception and allow our interroga-

tors to do whatever it would take to get the information and prevent the attacks. After all, which U.S. president wouldn't want to protect American cities and save American lives? I have been asked this repeatedly. I now am certain that I have the answer: His name is Mr. Obama.

Although I always had my strong suspicions, I was left with no doubt after watching Obama's prime-time presser in celebration of his first 100 days in office. In responding to a question on torture, the president shockingly revealed just who he is, and just what he'd likely do to protect America, not under the “ticking bomb scenario,” but if we were in fact already under attack.

“I was struck by an article that I was reading the other day talking about the fact that the British, during World War II, when London was being bombed to smithereens, had 200 or so detainees, and Churchill said, ‘We

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don't torture'. When all of the British people were being subjected to unimaginable risk and threat. And then the reason was that Churchill understood you don't take shortcuts. Over time that corrodes what's best in a people. It corrodes the character of a country."

First, the historical accuracy of what Mr. Obama said has been called into question. There appears to be no reliable evidence that Churchill ever said any such thing and many historians will tell you that the British used many of the same "enhanced" techniques that Mr. Obama has recently banned. But let's put historical accuracy aside. It is far from the point.

That the Commander-In-Chief would marvel at a nation whose cities were being "bombed to smithereens" and opted not to do everything in its power to stop the destruction and save its citizens, should scare the living hell out of every American, as well as motivate every one of our enemies and potential enemies alike.

So forget about the opportunity to prevent an attack on the homeland by sticking some terrorists' head under water. I am convinced that Mr. Obama would sit by and watch your child and my child be "blown to smithereens" and still wouldn't wet the hair of the men in our custody who could possibly, maybe, somehow, give

us some clue on how to defeat what we were facing. Even though I have long known that Mr. Obama is an apologist for America who is willing to embrace our enemies like Iran and North Korea, while selling out our friends like Israel who is more interested in appealing to the Muslim world than he is in protecting his own nation, I could never have imagined that he would be willing to sacrifice an American city or two or three, in the name of, "maintaining the character of our country."

Mr. Obama maintains that his elimination of the interrogation techniques will take away a recruiting tool from terror organizations. Yet he is a master of contradiction. For while he makes it harder for the United States to protect herself, hoping to accomplish his goal, he gives our enemy a blueprint of the very techniques that were used which he calls "torture" and is about to release dozens of photos depicting U.S. abuse of prisoners in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It's as if Barack Obama has a mission—one that clearly is not in the best interest of keeping our country safe.

-Steve Malzberg is a nationally syndicated talk show host on the WOR Radio Network and a frequent guest on many of the television cable shows. He can be reached through www.worradionet.com

Specter's defection cleanses GOP

By Kerry W. McCarthy

Sen. Arlen Specter ended 29 years of speculation by finally leaving the GOP and joining the Democratic Party. The Pennsylvanian's career has swerved, turned, zigged and zagged, teetering back and forth between political parties over the years. But it appears that Mr. Specter has finally gone back to where he belongs.

Liberals in the Republican Party are caterwalling. The media, grimly declaring the "big tent" has vanished, predict the death of the Republican Party. Without moderates, they say, Republicans are doomed. In reality, the conservative people of Pennsylvania have accomplished a great deal by forcing Mr. Specter to change parties.

Defection is a difficult, risky, and costly move. While Republicans controlled the Senate, Mr. Specter's seniority entitled him to chairmanship of whatever committee he desired, and control of the agenda of that committee.

Senate committees work in an odd way: nominees or laws can be "bottled up in committee" as long as the minority party gives up no votes to the majority. As a member of the minority, Mr. Specter had the power to give up that one, all-important vote, allowing liberal laws and nominees to move onto the floor for affirmation. Whether committee chairman or member of the minority, he effectively drew attention, concern and power to himself as other Republicans modified their stands to mollify him. As a Democrat, he's now lost that power.

People sometimes vent their frustration with

existing politics by investing hope in the creation of a third party, but historically, third parties only divide the vote. A politician like Mr. Specter holds a party hostage to the exercise of his own power. Mr. Specter's jump to the Democrats loosens his grip on Republicans and may alleviate this frustration.

Ideas require physical space in which to operate. Limited government and freedom found their most perfect expression in America. The great ideological conflict we call the Civil War was based on the conflicting ideas of two major physical places.

Pennsylvania is thought of as a dependably liberal state. Republicans have difficulties winning elections there. It's one of the least likely locations of the resurgence of the conservative movement—making it even more remarkable that the people of Pennsylvania have taken the lead. No politician gives up power willingly; he must be made to walk the political plank. In these days of piracy, the Pennsylvanians have taken back their ship.

Mr. Specter will actually cause Democrats problems. He's been promised that his seniority in the Republican Party will be transferred intact, enabling him to displace established Democratic senators. Surely this will cause dissention among these power-seeking politicians. Mr. Specter did not move because he feels more comfortable in the Democratic Party but because conservative voters made him less comfortable in the Republican Party. Republican Pennsylvanians have effectively rid themselves of a manipulative and subversive

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politician.

Should Mr. Specter win the general election next year, he will continue to pose problems for Democrats. If he loses the nomination, then he's gone—good riddance. If, against conventional wisdom, Pat Toomey wins, a successful cleansing of the party will have begun. The Republicans as a “me, too” party will recede. If voters in other states take heart from Pennsylvanians and follow suit, a true opposition party will rise up.

Legitimate concerns have been raised. Republicans could continue as a minority. Losing an entire geographical region to the Democrats is not desirable. However, Republicans from the northeast have tended to go along with Democrats anyway. When Republicans were in the majority, politicians like Mr. Specter weakened conservative

principles, eventually undermining the party.

Like a woman who finally decides to rid herself of a faithless husband, rejecting advice from relatives and friends to try to work it out, Republicans need to move on. That woman may never find another man, but she's better off free of the negative association. Likewise, a Republican minority, secure in their own beliefs, are better off than a diffused majority constantly in danger of being overthrown.

Pennsylvanians can take pride in the fact that what may be the beginning of a return to limited government and renewed responsibility of politicians to their constituencies began with their ability and willingness to express their feelings clearly and forcefully.

-Kerry W. McCarthy is a writer living in Indiana.

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Europe's authoritarian regime

By *Natasha Srdoc*

The fact that I was called an “enemy of the state” would be amusing if it had not been relayed by Croatia’s finance minister and prime minister to a messenger who was assassinated in a car bomb explosion in October 2008.

Less than a week after I landed in Croatia during the first week of February 2009 and the day after a critical article on Croatia was published in the Washington Times, I received a call from Croatia’s tax authorities who wanted to review the books of Adriatic Institute for Public Policy—an independent and non-government funded free-market think tank. The Croatian authorities were interested in the 2007 records and the year 2008—some three weeks prior to the official deadline for the 2008 tax filings. Alarming, Croatia’s authorities inquired about Adriatic Institute’s donors, members and activities.

The Balkan region’s corrupt regime is hard at work in masking its international image, while democratic institutions, freedom of speech and liberty have come under assault in Croatia. The alarming trends in Croatia reveal public assassinations of prominent individuals, death threats, murder attempts and physical beatings of independent journalists investigating political corruption and political opponents and entrepreneurs who report about corruption.

Regrettably, the realities on the ground depict a Croatian state which is now considered worse than the days of President Franjo Tudj-

man who was Croatia’s authoritarian ruler in the 1990s. The twin legacies of communist rule and the Balkan wars created an underground power base comprised of organized crime, the intelligence service, military, corrupt government officials and their private partners in crime. Organized crime and criminal capitalism thrives in today’s Croatia under the ruling HDZ political party.

Last October, Ivana Hodak, the 26-year-old daughter of a lawyer defending General Vladimir Zagorec was **executed in front of her apartment, shot twice in the head.** The dead young lady’s mother, Ljerka Mintas Hodak, was a former deputy prime minister and her father is a prominent lawyer, Zvonimir Hodak.

Ms. Hodak’s father defended a former defense assistant minister and general indicted for embezzling diamonds worth \$5 million during the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Prior to his extradition from Austria to Croatia, the general had mentioned that there were over 80 secret foreign bank accounts of high-ranking HDZ officials who siphoned-off funds intended to buy arms during the region’s United Nation’s arms embargo. The regime recently arrested what it claims is Ms. Hodak’s killer—a homeless man, who supposedly shot the young lady after harboring a revenge for losing his job in 1995.

Shortly after Ms. Hodak’s murder, a bomb explosion in Croatia’s capital killed Ivo Pu-

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kanic, a prominent publisher and bold critic of Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader. This horrifying act raises questions about the security of independent voices that expose the regime's numerous scandals. Mr. Pukanic's popular magazine Nacional exposed Mr. Sanader's owning of \$200,000 worth of watches, his sordid act of illegally seizing private property and drew attention to Mr. Sanader's unexplained wealth. Mr. Pukanic was also one of the key witnesses in Zagorec's case.

When looking at the chronology of events in Croatia, both horrific killings followed shortly after Mr. Zagorec's extradition from Austria. Subsequently, Mr. Zagorec was sentenced to seven years in prison. A more troubling fact is that the issue of 80 secret foreign accounts of high-level HDZ politicians was never brought to light.

The criminal privatization of the 1990s has not been resolved. The HDZ-led government refuses to reveal the secret contract of public-private partnerships in Suncani Hvar (commercial hotel industry). Deutsche Telecom which is partly owned by the German government and the HDZ government have rejected calls to reveal the secret contract of "privatizing" Croatia's telecommunication company now known as T-HT.

One of the many still unresolved criminal cases involves a money laundry scheme in the amount of \$6 million, which was uncovered by the Austrian Interpol in 2006. If it had not been uncovered by the Interpol, this case would have most probably gone unnoticed in Croatia. The funds came and left Croatia's state-owned shipyard, Brodosplit, be-

fore any construction started. The money was even guaranteed by the state-owned Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (HBOR)—a recipient of funding by European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). This transaction took place under the watchful eyes of Branko Vukelic, then minister of economy, who served as president of the shipyard's supervisory board. Mr. Vukelic had been avoiding the court hearing until external pressure builds up.

Three additional HDZ cabinet ministers, including the finance minister, Ivan Suker, are supervisory members of the HBOR, and were responsible for issuing a state guarantee. The former minister of economy is now Croatia's minister of defence dealing with NATO-related issues and directing taxpayer funds intended for purchasing new military hardware.

A few weeks after Croatia's accession into NATO, an old scandal re-surfaced which involved acquiring a fleet of trucks for the military without a public tender. It was initiated by Finnish police investigating bribe-giving initiated through a Finnish company which was the seller. Under Croatia's two ministers of defence, Mr. Roncevic and Mr. Vukelic purchased vehicles amounting to €12 and €8 million respectively with significant loss to taxpayers.

For Croatia's politicians, the stakes in keeping their unexplained wealth are significantly high. Today, the international image of Croatia's tarnished government is being defended with millions of Croatian taxpayer dollars paid to public relations agencies and lobbying firms mostly in the United States and Europe's capitals. Those championing an authoritarian state

should be aware of complicity with evil.

How can an authoritarian regime silence the remaining few independent voices and pro-reform groups which spotlight the regime's wrongdoings? This attempt by the government conveys a similar tactic used in another country: Vladimir Putin's Moscow. Political intimidations, mafia-style killings, persecution of independent voices and threats should have no place in a country that aspires to participate in Euro-Atlantic institutions.

A Financial Times's editorial called Croatia a "criminal state." The 2009 Index of Economic Freedom published by The Heritage Foundation and the Wall Street Journal revealed that Croatia's world ranking has slipped over the years and that a key category, "property rights and the rule of law," is well below Africa's average. Croatia's regional ranking is at the bottom of Europe.

The European Union (EU) frequently raises issues about the absence of public tenders and the opaque system of government payments.

The Freedom House 2009 study on global press freedom shows that Croatia has dropped in the world rankings and the report cites grave concern about the region. The report highlights the assassinations of journalists in the region. This does not bode well for a nation that just joined NATO and is rushing to enter the EU.

The Croatian government's verbal attack on the BBC after it broadcast an investigative report called "Croatia Cursed by Crime and Corruption" in April 2009, reveals the nature of the beast. Mr. Sanader's domestic spin was

that BBC's radio producers were jealous of Croatia's tourism.

Mr. Sanader's government and the corruption-ridden HDZ party continue to test the limits. Conflicts of interest, money laundering, fixed public tenders and the embezzlement of public funds have become the most common means of amassing wealth and have led to the unexplained wealth by government cabinet ministers and HDZ politicians. The Croatian taxpayers' appeal for accountability and "checks and balances" has been ignored by unscrupulous individuals representing the authoritarian regime. These political figures are non-transparent in their dealings and not held accountable for their actions.

The most recent proclamation of golfing as an activity of strategic national interest opens the door for the confiscation of private property. With the lack of protection of property rights in Croatia and a backlog of nearly one million court cases for a nation of four million people, the government's new scheme will further undermine the protection of property rights. Tens of thousands of citizens in Croatia have been waiting to have property cases resolved—some cases have been stuck in the system for over 20 years.

This year's court decision dismissing the restitution/denationalization claim of a legitimate homeowner whose property was illegally seized by Mr. Sanader reveals a troubling trend. It proves that government officials live above the law and that the rights of citizens and taxpayers are discarded.

Croatia's judiciary is politically influenced. The state-owned media has become a mouth-

piece for the government's propaganda. In light of the recent global economic slowdown, Croatia's state-owned companies, together with their private cronies which are dominating Croatia's economy, are the only entities able to maintain their advertising spending and are keen to drive out the few remaining independent media.

Croatia's Minister of Justice is now asking foreign governments for an additional aid package of 42 million euros to reform the judiciary. In the past decade, U.S. taxpayers invested \$500 million into Croatia's reforms without any proven results. Now, over 430 million euros from EU member states are making their way to an unaccountable and corrupt state's treasury. Why should a corrupt Balkan government

be rewarded for stalled reforms and silencing independent voices calling for the rule of law and market reforms?

For the sake of safety, human rights and freedom of individuals in Croatia, the authoritarian regime's assault on democracy, freedom of speech and liberty itself should be raised through official hearings in Congress, EU buildings and NATO's halls. American and EU member state taxpayer funds are aiding a corrupt and vile regime. It is time to starve it and bring it to justice.

- Natasha Srdoc is co-founder and president of the Adriatic Institute for Public Policy, an independent think tank in Croatia. She is also an advisory board member of Balkan Investigative Reporting Network and Balkan Insight.

Russia's new perestroika

By Andrei Piontkovsky

Commentators in Russia and abroad are wondering if there is any hope of a Medvedev liberalization, a de-Putinization, a possible thaw and perestroika. If this were true, it would lead to people being allowed to criticize the authorities on television, to political prisoners being released and to investigating murders in which the special services were involved. If we really are to going to understand the current Russian regime and try to work out what it is going to do next, we need to recall the history of the evolution of the Soviet nomenclature.

Every day we are amazed, or actually no longer surprised, by the re-emergence of features

from our Soviet past. We are today ruled by that same, immortal Soviet nomenclature. It has become younger over the last 20 years and seriously shaken up its personnel (primarily by means of an enormous intake from the KGB/FSB). It has also acquired a colossal amount of property. In Soviet terminology, we would say that today's Central Committee members, secretaries of regional committees and KGB generals (whatever their titles may be now) have become multi-millionaires in economic terms. And modern 'politburo members' have become multi-billionaires.

So is this "new class" going to consider liberalizing the regime? In its almost 100-year

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history, the Soviet-Russian nomenclature has twice announced a thaw from the top. The first time was in 1953, after the death of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, and the second in 1985, after the collective death of the former politburo. In both cases, this enabled millions to take a real step towards freedom. The first thaw literally brought freedom to hundreds of thousands of people who were released from the camps.

But these were secondary, side effects of the perestroika. Each time, the elite were primarily concerned to address their own problems. The 1953-56 thaw proclaimed the first Magna Carta, as it were, for the nomenclature barons. They blackened Stalin's reputation (perhaps even killing him first), released political prisoners, cautiously opened the country's borders and introduced minimal freedoms. Thus they consolidated their right to life, ensuring at the same time that no new dictator could dispatch them to the camps. The newspaper Pravda noted smugly at the time that the prevailing atmosphere was one of "consideration towards the party cadres."

"Consideration" included such modest bourgeois charms as the closed distribution centers for food and goods accessible only to members of the party's Central or Regional Committee, a deerskin cap, a state dacha, an annual holiday at a Sochi sanatorium belonging to the Central or Regional, Committee. The most audacious also allowed themselves a little pilfering. These gentle pleasures lasted for 30 years until the young Komsomol-KGB members came of age. They had a clear idea of the Western standards of elite consumption, and demanded much more than "consideration." They became the driving force of perestroika and the triumphant thermidor of the Commu-

nist nomenclature.

Whatever the personal aspirations of the father of Perestroika may have been (and he would probably not be able to articulate them clearly today), objectively speaking it was the beginning of a gigantic operation to convert the absolute collective political power of the nomenclature into the enormous personal financial power of its individual representatives. The final stage of the operation (which we have seen recently) was their regaining of absolute political power.

The current generation of the ruling nomenclature owns enormous amounts of property. So they do not—nor cannot—have the remotest incentive to liberalize. On the contrary, they have far greater reason than their historical predecessors to fear even the slightest increase in freedom of information. This is because journalists, parliament and, finally, the courts would then immediately start investigating the origin, scale and structure of their wealth.

As they fight over the rapidly diminishing financial spoils, the various clans of today's kleptocracy may have different views on tactics for maintaining their control over society. However, the Kremlin's "liberals" and "siloviki" (security services or military personnel) are united in their fear of the Russian people, whom they have pillaged together. They will never allow freedom of information or real democracy.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's recent "liberal" gestures (the interview with Novaya Gazeta, the meeting with human rights advocates) all bear the hallmarks of a propaganda

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operation. He was, however, extremely frank in his interview with NTV on April 19, 2009: “I believe that during the crisis, we must concentrate on finding solutions to existing economic problems, rather than making political reforms of any kind.”

As for the release of Mikhail Khodorkovsky’s lawyer, Svetlana Bakhmina, who was imprisoned on false charges, my first reaction is to be glad her prolonged sufferings are at an end. But the last thing I want to do is thank her tormentors for this, whatever camp they belong to—“liberal” or “siloviki.” Their behavior towards Bakhmina during the last year has been particularly disgusting.

Initially, Medvedev was not allowed to pardon her, which demonstrated where he really belonged in the Kremlin hierarchy. He swallowed this obediently. Prolonged attempts

were evidently made to break this woman, who had recently given birth, and force her to give the evidence they required for Khodorkovsky’s second trial. They made her write in her statement that “she regretted her crimes and was now on the path of active repentance.”

In the end, even the stupidest sadists in the Russian political leadership realized that this performance was reminiscent of the Stalin show trials of the 1930s and could well have a reverse effect, with negative consequences for them.

So, unwillingly the executioners let their victim go. Optimists can call this Medvedev’s perestroika, if they like.

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Talk radio rallies for accused soldiers

By *Beowulf Rochlen*

Talk radio is proving to be the saving grace for accused soldiers.

On March 17, 2008, a military court in Washington DC, released a unanimous decision upholding the dismissal of charges against Marine Lt. Col. Jeffrey Chessani.

Mr. Chessani had been investigated and prosecuted for his involvement in the so called “Haditha Massacre.” But coming to his defense – and the defense of the other soldiers accused by the military of misdeeds in the

line of duty—has been the power of talk radio. Prominent talk radio hosts, such as Michael Savage, have taken up the cause of troops under legal fire.

In the case of Mr. Chessani, his prosecution stems from action taken by four marines under his command after they were ambushed by insurgents in Haditha, Iraq in 2005. Their house-clearing operation resulted in the deaths of several ambushing insurgents, as well as several individuals identified as civilians. Though Mr. Chessani wasn’t present during



the incident, he was criminally charged for failing to launch a full investigation.

When the situation became public, Mr. Savage took up Mr. Chessani's cause. Local hosts around the country such as Steve Maltzberg of WOR in New York and Al Kresta of WDEO in Ann Arbor, Michigan also gave significant attention to the trial.

Mr. Savage discussed the case on his nationally syndicated radio talk show, *The Savage Nation*, and interviewed Mr. Chessani's attorney, Brian J. Rooney. The Thomas More Law Center, the public interest law firm who represents Mr. Chessani, gave credit to Mr. Savage for assisting with the defense. "He's all over this case," Mr. Rooney said in a New York Times article. "He really is a big supporter of us and the marines."

Mr. Savage personally donated more than \$20,000 dollars to assist in Mr. Chessani's defense. It is estimated that because of his encouragement, Savage listeners donated tens of thousands of dollars, as well. "Directly from [*The Savage Nation*], we can attribute \$60,000," said Mr. Rooney. He says that number does not take into account donors who did not directly attribute their donation.

Typical of radio -istener response to the issue is one individual who wrote this message with his donation to Mr. Chessani's defense:

"I am a loyal ... Savage listener donating on behalf of my brother, Tim, who is proudly

serving in the U.S. Navy. He is a career serviceman coming up on 20 years of service to our country with great sacrifice to him and his family and I couldn't imagine this happening to him. Frankly, this is absurd. I am sorely disappointed in both parties of this country. Good Luck!"

When the decision in Mr. Chessani's case was announced, Mr. Savage proclaimed it as a victory for talk radio, as well. "He was victorious in his fight against the government, which maliciously pursued him in the Haditha case for the crime of doing his job and protecting the American people from terrorism," Mr. Savage wrote on *MichaelSavage.com*. "His victory is a triumph for *The Savage Nation* and the entire country."

But Mr. Chessani's is not the only case which has benefited from talk radio attention. When Lt. Col. Allen West was accused of using improper methods to force information out of an Iraqi detainee in 2003, talk radio came to his defense. Neal Puckett, who represented Mr. West said that his client's appearance on *The Savage Nation* was helpful to the case. "Allen told me that lots of donations came from appearing on that show," said Puckett. "Talk radio is helpful in focusing the attention of the right-thinking public on these cases."

Thanks to the air waves, the freedoms our military are fighting for are being preserved.

-Beowulf Rochlen is executive producer of The Savage Nation radio show.

Feminists' crowning glory

By Loredana Vuoto

Feminists always protect their own—except when it comes to supporters of Proposition 8.

During the Miss USA pageant, Miss California Carrie Prejean was asked by judge and celebrity gossip blogger Perez Hilton if she thought every state should legalize same-sex marriage. Ms. Prejean, an unabashed Christian, proudly said: “I think that I believe that a marriage should be between a man and a woman. No offense to anyone out there, but that’s how I was raised, and that’s how I think it should be between a man and a woman.”

Mr. Hilton, a flaming homosexual and gay activist known for outing celebrities, was clearly upset by her response and scored her accordingly. The result: Ms. Prejean was runner-up to the winner, Miss North Carolina Kristen Dalton.

Later blogging about the event, Mr. Hilton called Ms. Prejean a “blond bitch.” Other gay celebrities have also called Ms. Prejean some derogatory names, insulting her character, intelligence and religious beliefs. Well-known gay British politician Alan Duncan even went so far as to say that if she turned up murdered, “you will know it was me.”

Gay activists are attempting to smear and humiliate Ms. Prejean. On May 4, nude pictures of her were leaked on a celebrity gossip blog. In an effort to continue to discredit and embarrass Ms. Prejean, Shanna Moakler, co-executive of Miss California USA, told the media that the group behind the pageant paid for Ms. Prejean’s breast implants. Although

Ms. Moakler supported the plastic surgery, she was not supportive of Ms. Prejean’s answer on same-sex marriage, believing that her remarks “hurt feelings.”

Mr. Hilton confirmed what Ms. Prejean has been claiming since becoming the runner-up to Miss USA and the attacks began: “She [Prejean] lost it because of that question. She was definitely the front-runner before that.”

Conservatives and heterosexual marriage advocates have come to Ms. Prejean’s defense, but feminists are nowhere to be found. This is similar to when Sarah Palin was viciously attacked while campaigning with John McCain (R-AZ) during the presidential election. The same was true for Monica Lewinsky during the sexual harassment scandal that broke out with Bill Clinton in the 1990s. It appears that women must politically align themselves with the liberal agenda of same-sex marriage, abortion on demand and sexual liberation. Otherwise, feminists are willing to throw them under the bus.

But as Ms. Prejean told Matt Lauer on the “Today” show, she does not regret her answer to Mr. Hilton. In fact, she continues to hold her head high and exercise her First Amendment right to advance her belief in heterosexual marriage. She is even featured in a new advertisement from the National Organization for Marriage. The spot highlights how same-sex marriage lobbyists are trying to silence Ms. Prejean. This issue has now become her platform and the ad says she will “do whatever it takes...to protect marriage.”

Culture

Renowned feminist Gloria Steinem once said that a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle. But in 2000, the fish got her bicycle when Ms. Steinem married the now-deceased David Bale. In 1963, Ms. Steinem broke new ground with an investigative report of how the women of Playboy were treated. Despite Ms. Steinem's ground-breaking efforts at promoting women's rights, she—along with some of the most high-profiled feminists—has remained silent about the nasty attacks on Ms. Prejean. It appears that feminists bark loudest

only when it doesn't interfere with advancing their radical left-wing ideology. This is too bad for the likes of Ms. Prejean and Ms. Palin. Perhaps they are scorned and despised by feminists for having the courage to stand by their convictions in all circumstances—not just ones that are politically expedient.

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Marriage is more than a civil right

By Joseph Beaudoin

Empirical evidence establishes an undeniable fundamental truth: heterosexual monogamy is the key survival strategy of the human species. Traditional marriage, therefore, is much more than a civil right.

In 1967, in *Loving v. Virginia*, the Supreme Court ruled that state laws banning interracial marriages violated the Fourteenth Amendment because marriage is a civil contract and all Americans have the right to enter into con-



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tracts. Same-sex activists are using this decision to prove that they, too, have the right to marry. But their claim has no historical foundation whatsoever and may have little legal merit.

While *Loving v. Virginia* was the right decision, dismantling a vestige of slavery, it also reduced marriage to the status of a civil contract and stripped it of its great historical and social significance. Marriage, indeed, involves a contract between a man and a woman, long established before the U.S. Constitution was even conceived. But marriage is much more than a contract.

Even if one thinks of it strictly as a civil contract, marriage is vastly different from all other civil contracts: (1) marriage involves only two parties; (2) of different genders; (3) who cannot, by law, be blood relatives; (4) in several states, can be minors with the consent of their parents; (5) and, in some states, have to submit to a blood test. Clearly, should civil contracts be subjected to the same restrictions as marriage, America would not be a land of commerce.

Americans have accepted those restrictions because they have helped define marriage for generations. The Founding Fathers' conception of marriage was virtually identical to what we call the traditional marriage today. Had they wanted to change that standard, as they wanted to radically alter their society, the Founders would have expressed their views of marriage in writing as they did with respect to taxation, government and basic rights. The word "marriage," however, is not even mentioned once in the Declaration of Independence or the U.S. Constitution.

Clearly, the Founders did not want to change the nature of marriage, which was then what it is now. The Founders were educated men who knew about polygamy, polyandry, incest, homosexual unions and other archaic practices. They did not write one word about the desirability of these practices being lawfully introduced into the United States. They knew that previous generations had terminated them for good reason.

Humans rejected incest because it contaminated the gene pool and, therefore, threatened their survival. Most human civilizations rejected polygamy and polyandry for economic reasons and because these practices caused social tension by reducing the availability of mates. Christianity eradicated polygamy because it treated women as property. The few societies that permitted same-sex marriage eventually discontinued it because same-sex marriage is sterile and unsustainable.

Reducing marriage to just a civil contract without paying attention to history will open the doorway not only to same-sex marriage, but also to polygamy and to incest. This is not an extreme view. The process by which this will take place has already been established.

Loving v. Virginia rightly overturned bans on interracial marriage. It is worth keeping in mind that the banned marriages in question were traditional ones, involving a man and a woman. Same-sex marriages are not banned in America. They have simply never been recognized as legal. Consequently, in the case of same-sex marriage, *Loving v. Virginia* is not being used to overturn any ban; it is being used to change the composition of the couple being married. A ruling that allowed tradition-

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al marriages to take place regardless of race is now being used to change the very definition of marriage.

From a purely legal standpoint, unfortunately, the distance between legalizing same-sex marriage—which played no role at all in the evolution of humanity and the development of civilizations, and consensual polygamy—is not a quantum leap. Indeed, if marriage is simply a civil contract, then it will eventually include more than two parties, as lots of civil contracts do. If *Loving v. Virginia* can be used to overturn the age-old gender requirement of marriage, it will soon overturn the numeric requirement as well.

Even incest can be made legal. Humans prohibited incest because of the resulting genetic damage. If contraception can prevent that ge-

netic contamination, the age-old objection to incest is removed. And *Loving v. Virginia* can be used to legalize incestuous marriage in the same way as it is being used to legalize same-sex marriage.

The relegation of marriage to the status of a civil contract will destroy marriage and introduce sexual practices that have historically already been outlawed because of their harmful effect. Of course, same-sex marriage is the El Dorado of those who oppose the traditional family. Ultimately, it is the glorification of sterility.

- Joseph Beaudoin holds degrees in economics and finance, and worked in the banking and investment industries for 20 years. He is a regular contributor to Reflections.

The extravagance of complacency

By Kerry W. McCarthy

Recently, a friend commented that complacency was what defeated John Kerry in the presidential election of 2004 and Hillary Clinton in 2008. Just what is complacency, and how can it be so important as to lose elections?

A textbook definition of “complacency” is as follows: “a feeling of quiet pleasure or security, often while unaware of some potential danger, defect, or the like.” Simply put, complacency is a misguided sense of safety or certainty. Politicians can get away with complacency for quite some time. But complacency caught up with Mr. Kerry. He lost his presidential bid basically because he thought he was so superior

to George W. Bush that he couldn’t really lose. Ms. Clinton did not heed warnings to avoid the caucus states, believing that simply getting her name on the ballot would ensure her victory.

Republicans, while they enjoyed a clear majority, could afford complacency. After all, they were confident they were right—and as long as most Americans agreed with conservative ideas, they could afford to be a little smug. But that time has come to a close. We are entering a new era along the continuum of mainstream political thought. Conservatives may be in a stage of denial, but observant people have begun to nudge each other—apprehension is be-

ginning to set in.

When Mr. Bush took office, it was reasonable to assume that an adequate “business plan” for a president was not to misbehave in office as Bill Clinton had done while in office. Tax cuts would help him preside over a strong economy. Conservative methods of diplomacy and the maintenance of a strong defense should have taken care of national security issues. Later, when the time was right, privatizing a small part of social security and establishing a Medicare drug benefit might win over independent and even some liberal voters. He also planned to establish a “new tone” which was meant to end partisan rancor. It seemed simple.

However, even a person possessing the family background and sufficient political experience to expect such plans to work must have some degree of collaboration—events over the past few years show how important this is.

Unfortunately for Mr. Bush and for the country, the attacks on September 11 touched a match to the political powder keg of American politics. Enjoying 90 percent approval ratings immediately following, the president had no idea that Democrats would dare to actively oppose and ultimately undermine the war effort. Fearing that Republicans could be strengthened to political dominance, Democrats successfully counteracted the rallying effect of war with the aid of a powerful, sympathetic media. An ideological battle erupted unlike any seen in this country since the build-up to the Civil War, creating a political tsunami.

Some conservatives were not comfortable with Mr. Bush as a candidate in 2000. Their discomfort can be seen as a kind of prescience—not

of specific events like the attacks on the World Trade Center, but they felt a general apprehension that the position of president in these times requires sufficient ideological backbone to resist the kind of undermining Mr. Bush experienced.

In these ideologically demanding times, complacency has become a luxury we cannot afford. Our next presidential nominee must have strength of conviction so that in case of another catastrophe such as the financial melt-down of the last eight months, he or she will not be manipulated into such a blunder as “abandoning the free market in order to save it,” as Mr. Bush said in a CNN interview last fall.

Any group who begins to realize that things are not as they were—that is, enough people disagree that opposition needs to be taken seriously—is in danger of falling into finger-pointing, accusations, anger, denial, even panic, disarray and stampeding. The situation could turn into a rout.

Conservatives need to find a way to reconcile their convictions with necessary adjustments in reaction to circumstances beyond their control. It is important to discover how to do this whether or not they are in denial or are reeling from assault. The acceptance of defeat can be akin to complacency in the sense that there is relief in just giving up.

There is danger inherent in relinquishing the responsibility to struggle by acquiescing to powerful political forces in the interest of “getting things done.” In the Weimar Republic, the government that preceded the Nazis in Germany, members of the Reichstag felt they needed to compromise with parties of the left.

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The communists took credit for moving moderates to the left while moderates were blamed for not going far enough to compromise. At the same time, people reasoned that by conceding to communist ideas, moderates had no political ground to stand on and could not hold these ideas back from their logical conclusions.

Nationalized health care is recognized as a tipping point from which any independent

people find it difficult to return to limited government. The United States has reached this critical juncture. Conservatives must keep fighting. Just as we can no longer afford complacency, we also cannot afford to be dumbstruck, baffled or disabled. We need to stand on the strength of our convictions and resist capitulation.

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