

**From:** Gregory Brown <[REDACTED]>

**To:** undisclosed-recipients;

**Bcc:** jeevacation@gmail.com

**Subject:** Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.... 06/22/2014

**Date:** Sun, 22 Jun 2014 08:02:53 +0000

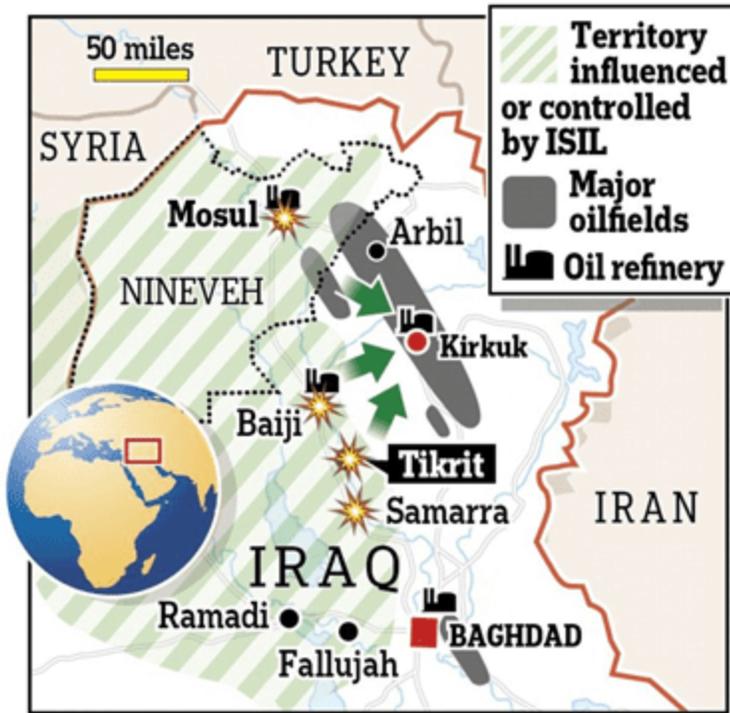
**Attachments:** 5\_Foods\_Every\_Midlifer\_Needs\_To\_Start\_Eating\_Today\_Yagana\_Shah\_Huff\_Post\_06\_06\_2014.docx; Sammy\_Davis\_Jr\_bio.docx; Political\_Polarization\_in\_the\_American\_Public\_PEW\_June\_12,\_2014.docx; Bionic\_Eye\_AlJazeera\_June\_12,\_2014.docx; U.S\_Healthcare\_Most\_Expensive\_and\_Worst\_Performing\_OLGA\_KHAZAN\_The\_Atlanti\_c\_June\_16,\_2014.docx; How\_to\_Manage\_the\_Mess\_in\_Iraq\_Michael\_Eisenstadt\_USNews\_June\_18,\_2014.docx; An\_enclave\_strategy\_for\_Iraq\_Fareed\_Zakaria\_TWP\_June\_19,\_2014.docx; Denise\_Squared\_Wedding\_-\_June\_21,\_2014.docx; Denise\_&\_Dad\_-\_Father\_&\_Daughter\_dance.jpg

**Inline-Images:** image.png; image(1).png; image(2).png; image(3).png; image(4).png; image(5).png; image(6).png; image(7).png; image(8).png; image(9).png; image(10).png; image(11).png; image(12).png; image(13).png; image(14).png; image(15).png; image(16).png

**DEAR FRIEND.....**

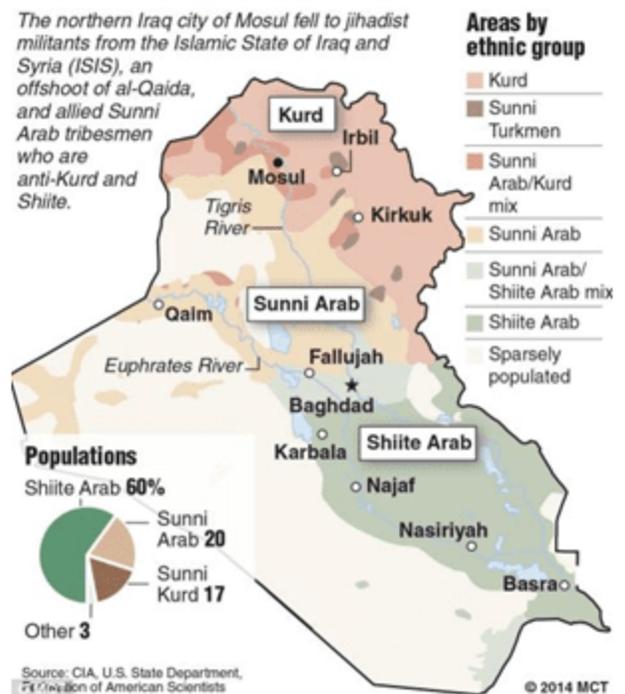


As JFK once lamented, **“Success has a thousand fathers while failure is an orphan,”** in light of the recent events in Iraq journalist and author Fareed Zakaria wrote an op-ed last week in **The Washington Post – Who lost Iraq? The Iraqis did, with an assist from George W. Bush.** With the fall of Mosul to ISIS insurgents, Kirkuk to Kurdish forces and a number of Sunni groups threatening to march on Baghdad it is becoming increasingly likely that Iraq has reached a turning point of no return as forces hostile to the government have grown stronger, better equipped and more organized. And having now secured arms, ammunition and hundreds of millions of dollars in cash from their takeover of Mosul — Iraq’s second-largest city — they will build on these strengths. Inevitably, in Washington, the question has surfaced: Who lost Iraq?



## Mosul falls to Sunni militants

The northern Iraq city of Mosul fell to jihadist militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an offshoot of al-Qaida, and allied Sunni Arab tribesmen who are anti-Kurd and Shiite.



Whenever the United States has asked this question — as it did with China in the 1950s or Vietnam in the 1970s — the most important point to remember is: The local rulers did. The Chinese nationalists and the South Vietnamese government were corrupt, inefficient and weak, unable to be inclusive and unwilling to fight with the dedication of their opponents. The same story is true of Iraq, only much more so. The first answer to the question is: Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki lost Iraq. The prime minister and his ruling party have behaved like thugs, excluding the Sunnis from power, using the army, police forces and militias to terrorize their opponents. The insurgency the Maliki government faces today was utterly predictable because, in fact, it happened before. From 2003 onward, Iraq faced a Sunni insurgency that was finally tamped down by Gen. David Petraeus, who said explicitly at the time that the core element of his strategy was political, bringing Sunni tribes and militias into the fold. The surge's success, he often noted, bought time for a real power-sharing deal in Iraq that would bring the Sunnis into the structure of the government.

A senior official closely involved with Iraq in the Bush administration said, "Not only did Maliki not try to do broad power-sharing, he reneged on all the deals that had been made, stopped paying the Sunni tribes and militias, and started persecuting key Sunni officials." Among those targeted were the vice president of Iraq and its finance minister. But how did Maliki come to be prime minister of Iraq? He was the product of a series of momentous decisions made by the Bush administration. Having invaded Iraq with a small force — what the expert Tom Ricks called "the worst war plan in American history" — the administration needed to find local allies. It quickly decided to destroy Iraq's Sunni ruling establishment and empower the hard-line Shiite religious parties that had opposed Saddam Hussein. This meant that a structure of Sunni power that had been in the area for centuries collapsed. These moves — to disband the army, dismantle the bureaucracy and purge Sunnis in general — might have been more consequential than the invasion itself.

The turmoil in the Middle East is often called a sectarian war. But really it is better described as "the Sunni revolt." Across the region, from Iraq to Syria, one sees armed Sunni gangs that have decided to take on the non-Sunni forces that, in their view, oppress them. The Bush administration often justified its actions by pointing out

that the Shiites are the majority in Iraq and so they had to rule. But the truth is that the borders of these lands are porous, and while the Shiites are numerous in Iraq — Maliki's party actually won a plurality, not a majority — they are a tiny minority in the Middle East as a whole. It is outside support — from places as varied as Saudi Arabia and Turkey — that sustains the Sunni revolt.

If the Bush administration deserves a fair share of blame for "*losing Iraq*," what about the Obama administration and its decision to withdraw American forces from the country by the end of 2011? The Obama Administration would have preferred to see a small American force in Iraq to try to prevent the country's collapse. But let's remember why this force is not there. Maliki refused to provide the guarantees that every other country in the world that hosts U.S. forces offers. Some commentators have blamed the Obama administration for negotiating badly or halfheartedly and perhaps this is true. But here's what a senior Iraqi politician told me in the days when the U.S. withdrawal was being discussed: "*It will not happen. Maliki cannot allow American troops to stay on. Iran has made very clear to Maliki that its No. 1 demand is that there be no American troops remaining in Iraq. And Maliki owes them.*" Let's remember that Maliki spent 24 years in exile, most of them in Tehran and Damascus, and his party was funded by Iran for most of its existence. And in fact, Maliki's government has followed policies that have been pro-Iranian and pro-Syrian.

With war hawks in Washington demanding that the President do something the White House is debating whether airstrikes or training forces would be more effective, but its real problem is much larger and is a decade in the making. In Iraq, it is defending the indefensible. And for many of the same reasons the same is true in Afghanistan. The policy of Regime Change has always been a fool's errand. Just ask the Russians about their efforts in Afghanistan. Hawks will point to Germany and Japan as successes of Regime Change but they forget to mention that over the past sixty years we have kept hundreds of thousands of troops in both countries as well as provide billions of dollars in economic assistance. Our little unnecessary bloody and inconclusive foray into Iraq has cost American taxpayers several trillion dollars as well as more than 4400 American lives with another 32,000 casualties and taking away valuable resources from our own country that we should have used to deal with the worst economic calamity to hit U.S. since the Great Depression, what makes anyone believe that doubling down is going to make any difference, as long as the underlying ethnic divisions continue.

Our responsibility ended in 2010 when the Iraqis essentially kicked U.S. forces out of Iraq by refusing to sign a status of forces agreement with Washington. Iraq did not want U.S. forces to stay. It was finished with the American occupation. Iraq was admitting, too, that it had to deal with its internal predicaments on its own, not with the aid of its foreign ally. In fact, the Iraqis were right -- it was time for them to sort out their own problems on their own. As President John Kennedy once said about another war in which the U.S. was involved -- in Vietnam - "*in the end, it is their war, not ours.*"

ISIL has ridden a wave of resentment felt by Iraq's Sunni Arabs at the exclusionary sectarian policies pursued by Iraq's Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. They are currently riding a wave of resentment felt by Iraq's Sunni Arabs at the exclusionary sectarian policies pursued by Iraq's Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. As a result the Iraqi security forces are seen by many locals as an army of occupation in northern Iraq, in Baghdad it is defending its home turf, and can rely on the support of the thousands of Shiite militiamen that have been mobilized to fight ISIL, as well as much of the population. Already, ISIL's efforts to take the city of Baquba, northeast of Baghdad, seem to have stalled. Accordingly, the conflict is likely to take the form of a prolonged and bloody war of attrition. There may be no more easy victories for ISIL, though its ability to wreak havoc in the capital and elsewhere through suicide bombings remains undiminished. This is a civil war and suggest that it

is anything other is false. And to suggest that ISIL is successor to al-Qaida in Iraq is also wrong other than if your enemy and my enemy are the same we have something in common.

In 2006, Iraq had a resurgence, when then Senate Foreign Relations Committee chair, and now Vice President, Joe Biden suggested in a New York Times op-ed essay that semi-autonomous sections should be created along sectarian lines. *"The idea, as in Bosnia, is to maintain a united Iraq by decentralizing it, giving each ethno-religious group — Kurd, Sunni Arab and Shiite Arab — room to run its own affairs, while leaving the central government in charge of common interests."* A year later Biden pursued the theme, telling the senate on April 24, 2007, that then President George W. Bush's centralized plan for Iraqi governance would set Iraq up with problems for years to come. *"The most basic premise of President Bush's approach, that the Iraqi people will rally behind a strong central government headed by Maliki, in fact, will look out for their interests equitably, is fundamentally and fatally flawed. It will not happen in anybody's lifetime."*

Back then, a plan for Iraq's federal-style division hammered out among all the parties could have worked. But now, as all three sides gird for war, and the United States plans to move an aircraft carrier into the Persian Gulf, may be too late and definitely a stupid move. *"The partition has already happened,"* says Iraqi analyst Hiwa Osman. *"If putting Iraq back together comes at the price of the people's blood, let it go. If keeping the country intact means more mass graves, genocides and war, I say, to hell with Iraq."* The wild card now is ISIS, who members do not respect boundaries with the goal of creating a Sunni dominated theocracy.

But ISIS's blitzkrieg to Baghdad isn't based on military prowess alone. Many of the Sunni tribes in the areas around Mosul and Tikrit, which ISIS captured a day after taking Mosul, backed the militants out of a deep-seated resentment for the Shi'ite-dominated government of Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki. In fact, many Iraqis say that ISIS played a relatively minor role, and that without Sunni support they wouldn't have been able to gain any traction at all. *"The fall of Mosul was not brought by ISIS,"* says Istrabadi. *"Blaming ISIS alone overlooks the fact that the movement had much broader support from Sunnis that have been disenfranchised since 2003,"* when the United States overthrew Sunni strongman Saddam Hussein, reversing decades of Sunni dominance. ISIS, he says, exploited the dissatisfaction of Sunnis who have long complained that Maliki's government has monopolized power for his sect. *"What the Shi'ites see as a conspiracy, the Sunnis see as a revolution,"* says Hoshang Waziri, an Iraqi analyst based in Erbil who has written extensively about the country's sectarian divides. *"What is going on in Mosul, and Tikrit and Baiji [all cities that fell to ISIS so far], is a rejection by the Sunnis of the new Iraq under Shi'ite rule."*

In Iraqi Kurdistan, a region that has enjoyed autonomy for two decades, the tensions fall along territorial lines. Where the Iraqi forces failed to confront ISIS, dropping their weapons and shedding their uniforms as the militants approached, the Kurdish militia, known as the Peshmerga, triumphed in battle. An extremely disciplined and effective fighting force, the Peshmerga was able to protect several towns from ISIS's advance. They also benefited from the Iraqi army's retreat, claiming long disputed territory in the name of shielding it from ISIS's reach. The Peshmerga now hold Kirkuk, an oil city officially controlled by the Iraqi government, but claimed by Kurds as their historic capital. It is unlikely that they will ever give it up. *"Some Kurdish politicians see this as the perfect moment to declare independence,"* says Waziri. And they may be better off, he adds, given what is going in the rest of the country. *"This isn't really a Kurd, Sunni and Shi'ite war, this is a war between Sunnis and Shi'ites, one that the Kurds do not want to get involved in. The best solution for this crisis at this point would be to build three different states."*

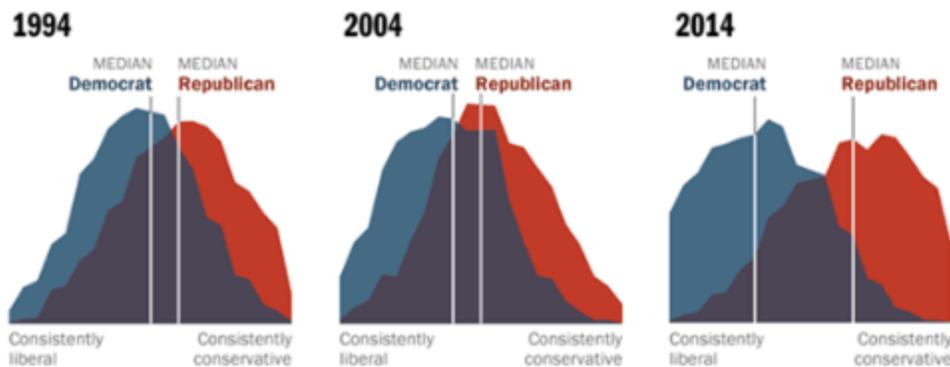
The idea of dividing Iraq along ethno-sectarian lines dates almost all the way back to its formation at the end of World War I, when the country was carved out of the former Ottoman Empire. In 2006, it had a resurgence, when then Senate Foreign Relations Committee chair, and now Vice President, Joe Biden suggested in a New York Times op-ed essay that semi-autonomous sections should be created along sectarian lines. *“The idea, as in Bosnia, is to maintain a united Iraq by decentralizing it, giving each ethno-religious group — Kurd, Sunni Arab and Shiite Arab — room to run its own affairs, while leaving the central government in charge of common interests.”* A year later Biden pursued the theme, telling the senate on April 24, 2007, that then President George W. Bush’s centralized plan for Iraqi governance would set Iraq up with problems for years to come. *“The most basic premise of President Bush’s approach, that the Iraqi people will rally behind a strong central government headed by Maliki, in fact, will look out for their interests equitably, is fundamentally and fatally flawed. It will not happen in anybody’s lifetime.”*

Back then, a plan for Iraq’s federal-style division hammered out among all the parties could have worked. But now, as all three sides gird for war, and the United States plans to move an aircraft carrier into the Persian Gulf, it may be too late. “The partition has already happened,” says Iraqi analyst Hiwa Osman. *“If putting Iraq back together comes at the price of the people’s blood, let it go. If keeping the country intact means more mass graves, genocides and war, I say, to hell with Iraq.”* There is little that Western powers can do other than let events play out. Al Maliki could remain in power but most likely it won’t be as Prime Minister of Iraq. And if there is any chance of this civil war to stop, it is going to require that the Sunni’s receive their own autonomous state. But getting back to settling the age-old question within the Beltway, who is the blame? One would have to agree with Fareed Zakaria’s op-ed 1 – *Who lost Iraq? The Iraqis did, with an assist from George W. Bush.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### Democrats and Republicans More Ideologically Divided than in the Past

*Distribution of Democrats and Republicans on a 10-item scale of political values*



Source: 2014 Political Polarization in the American Public

Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see Appendix A). The blue area in this chart represents the ideological distribution of Democrats; the red area of Republicans. The overlap of these two distributions is shaded purple. Republicans include Republican-leaning independents; Democrats include Democratic-leaning independents (see Appendix B).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

There is a perfect storm in politics whereby gerrymandering has tweaked safe seats for both Republicans and Democrats to the point that voters in districts are so alike there is no longer debate. The second part of the storm is partisan media whereby political discourse is more entertainment than news enabling pundits to personalize their attacks against opposition politicians as if they were commenting for the WWF. And the last part of this perfect storm is hatred. Hatred so deep, that more than 20% of Conservative Republicans publically believe that President Obama’s agenda is to destroy America which they voice as *“wanting their government/country back.”* But back from where? And back from who? What has also happened is that economic and cultural inequality has created separate camps. Rich camps, poor camps, ethic neighborhoods and public schools where there are often only a handful of white kids among 500, 1000 more students. When there is little or no contact distrust often festers. And festering can easy turn into hatred. And we are now seeing how this hatred is playing out

in our partisan politics. We have lost civility in our politics and this is more corrosive than any foreign terrorist movement.

Republicans and Democrats are more divided along ideological lines – and partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive – than at any point in the last two decades. These trends manifest themselves in myriad ways, both in politics and in everyday life. And a new **PEW survey** of 10,000 adults nationwide finds that these divisions are greatest among those who are the most engaged and active in the political process. The survey labelled, ***Political Polarization in the American Public: How Increasing Ideological Uniformity and Partisan Antipathy Affect Politics, Compromise and Everyday Life***. See attached.

Twenty years ago, about 10 percent of Americans were "*uniformly*" liberal or conservative in their opinions on 10 issues ranging from the role of government to the effects of racial discrimination. Today, 21 percent are, leaving little room for agreement on whether federal aid to the poor should be more or less generous, for example, or whether environmental regulations' benefits outweigh their cost. The only issue on which Democrats and Republicans moved in the same direction was acceptance of gay rights. While members of both political parties have become more ideological in their views, the change is especially stark among Democrats, who are more than four times more likely to be consistent liberals today than they were in 1994. Part of the reason, according to Pew, is "*a broad societal shift toward acceptance of homosexuality and more positive views of immigrants,*" two issues formerly divisive for Democrats.

The tie between ideology and political party is stronger than in recent years. Just 4 percent of Republicans are more liberal than the average Democrat, down from 23 percent in 1994, while just 5 percent of Democrats are more conservative than the average Republican, down from 17 percent. Partisans' dislike for the opposition has grown. Thirty-eight percent of Democrats and 43 percent of Republicans have a "very unfavorable" view of the other party, up from 16 percent and 17 percent respectively in 1994. A significant fraction of partisans see the opposition as a genuine enemy: 27 percent of Democrats, and 36 percent of Republicans, say the other party's policies "are so misguided that they threaten the nation's well-being." That number rises to 50 percent among consistently liberal Democrats, and 66 among consistently conservative Republicans.

Some, especially conservatives, prefer to live in what the report calls an "*ideological echo chamber.*" Half of Americans with consistently conservative opinions, and 35 percent of those with consistently liberal opinions, say it's important to them to live in a place where most people share their political views. Sixty-three percent of those on the right say that most of their close friends are also conservatives, while 49 percent on the left are friends mostly with liberals. Partisan voices speak louder. Although the most polarized Americans remain the minority, they're likelier than those with mixed views to cast a ballot, donate to campaigns, and contact elected officials. People with the deepest antipathy to the other party are also among the most politically active. Democrats with a "*very unfavorable*" view of the GOP are 12 points more likely to say they always vote than those with merely a "*mostly unfavorable*" view. Republicans with a "*very unfavorable*" view of Democrats are 18 points more likely to say they vote every time than those who just "*mostly dislike*" them.

With Barack Obama in the White House, partisan antipathy is much more pronounced among Republicans, especially consistently conservative Republicans. Overall, more Republicans than Democrats see the opposing party's policies as a threat and the differences are even greater when ideology is taken into account. Fully 66% of consistently conservative Republicans think the

Democrats' policies threaten the nation's well-being. By comparison, half (50%) of consistently liberal Democrats say Republican policies jeopardize the nation's well-being. Conservatives also exhibit more partisan behavior in their personal lives; they are the most likely to have friends and prefer communities of like-minded people. However, there is as much ideological uniformity on the left as the right. The share of Democrats holding consistently liberal views has grown steadily over the past 20 years, quadrupling from 5% in 1994 to 23% today. Social issues like homosexuality and immigration that once drove deep divides within the Democratic Party are now areas of relative consensus. And Democrats have become more uniformly critical of business and more supportive of government.

Over the past 40 years, Americans have been sorting themselves into communities where people increasingly live, think, and vote like their neighbors. In 1976, for example, just more than a quarter of Americans resided in counties where presidential candidates won the election by a margin of 20 percent or more; but by the year 2004, nearly half of Americans lived in these more politically homogeneous counties. Highly educated liberals become more liberal, while highly educated conservatives grow more conservative. It is now possible to get a clearer picture of the underlying reasons through the examination of education and evolution. The dynamics that fuel the acceleration in the second half of the 20th century, coincides with a massive increase in education. Between 1960 and 2008, for instance, the proportion of women with bachelor's degrees nearly quintupled. The dramatic rise in educational attainment has a couple of unexpected side effects. For one, research shows that higher education has a polarizing effect on people: Highly educated liberals become more liberal, while highly educated conservatives grow more conservative. Second, people with college degrees enjoy greater freedoms, including social and geographic mobility. During the 1980s and 1990s, 45 percent of college-educated Americans moved to a new state within five years of graduation, compared with only 19 percent of their counterparts who had only a high-school diploma.

Meanwhile, evolutionary forces are pulling these more mobile, like-minded individuals together, because our political orientations play a key role in our choice of a mate. In society as a whole, spouses tend to resemble one another — at least a bit more than they would if coupling occurred at random — on most biometric and social traits. These traits include everything from skin color to earlobe size to income to major personality dimensions like Extraversion. Most of these statistical relationships are quite weak. But one of the strongest of all correlations between spouses by far is between their political orientations (0.65, to be precise). Spouses tend to have similar attitudes on moral issues like school prayer and abortion not because they converge over time, but rather *because "birds of a feather flock together."* Biologists call this *assortative* mating. Spouses tend to have similar attitudes on moral issues like school prayer and abortion not because they converge over time, but rather because *"birds of a feather flock together."*

Political scientists Peter Hatemi, Rose McDermott, and Casey Klofstad have fed actual assortment rates from the 1980s into a computer simulation of American society. Their simulation took into account the fact that political orientation is a moderately heritable trait. When they ran the program, the population's left-right curve widened substantially in just the first five generations. In the next 10 generations, the curve expanded only a bit more and then reached equilibrium. At this point, the percentage of political extremists in the population had increased from 4.5 to 11.2 percent, while moderates had dropped by 17 percent. In other words, the *"birds of a feather"* had bred a more polarized nation.

This slow dance of ideological assortment and reproduction is already underway on the ground, and it's likely contributing to our unprecedented political polarization. When this fracturing began to

accelerate in the 1980s, only a quarter of the electorate voted for a president and a legislator in different parties. By 2012 the proportion of voters who split their ballot had plummeted to 11 percent. And polarization of voting in the House of Representatives has now reached record levels, surpassing even 19th-century highs from the post-Civil War era. The silver lining to these gloomy findings is that our ideological positions are not set in stone. Only about half of the variance in political orientations comes from genetic differences between individuals; the rest comes from the environment. So it's certainly possible to transcend the attitudes that threaten to divide us. The first steps in doing so are to understand our political nature, develop realistic expectations about ideological diversity, and make a renewed commitment to pragmatism over ideology.

Fareed Zakaria points out that Washington used to have a system that encouraged compromise and governance. But over the last few decades, what has changed are the rules organizing American politics. They now encourage small interest groups - including ideologically charged ones - to capture major political parties as well as Congress itself. Call it 'political narrowcasting.

Here are some examples:

- 1) Redistricting has created safe seats so that for most House members, their only concern is a challenge from the right for Republicans and the left for Democrats. The incentive is to pander to the base, not the center.
- 2) Party primaries have been taken over by small groups of activists who push even popular senators to extreme positions. In Utah, for example, 3,500 conservative activists managed to take the well-regarded Senator Robert Bennett off the ballot. GOP senators like Orrin Hatch and John McCain have moved farther to the right, hoping to stave off similar assaults.
- 3) Changes in Congressional rules have also made it far more difficult to enact large, compromise legislation. In the wake of the Watergate Scandal, "*Sunshine rules*" were put into place that required open committee meetings and recorded votes. The purpose was to make Congress more open, more responsive - and so it has become to lobbyists, money and special interests. This is because they're the people who watch every committee vote and mobilize opposition to any withdrawal of subsidies or tax breaks.
- 4) Political polarization has also been fueled by a new media, which is also narrowcast.

Representative Darrell Issa, Republican of California, gave an interview to the Wall Street Journal in which he suggested that he might further the conservative agenda through an occasional compromise. That provoked a tirade from Rush Limbaugh, which then produced a torrent of angry e-mails and phone calls to Issa's office. Issa quickly and publicly apologized to Limbaugh and promised only opposition to Obama. Multiply that example a thousand-fold, and you have the daily dynamic of Congress.

What he and others are afraid to say is that RACE is the biggest elephant in the room. It started the moment when it looked as if Barack Obama had a serious chance of becoming President. They first questioned his credentials, religion and then his citizenship. I even remember hearing one pundit asking if he was black enough. They have called him a community organizing socialist, Islamic sympathizer and an al Qaeda apologist. Even though the financial markets are at an all-time high, banks are solvent, more than 8 million new jobs created and the inflation at less than 1%, most Republicans will tell you that the Obama Administration has been a disaster. Republicans campaigned vehemently against Obamacare until recently abandoning their opposition when it became clear that the American public wants to keep many of its popular components. And today their attack is that the President released 5 al Qaeda prisoners in exchange for one American serviceman. Lost in the media this

week was that ISIL militants seized control of Iraq's second biggest city Mosul and Saddam Hussein's home city of Tikrit and are marching on Baghdad after American spent more than \$1 trillion and lost thousands of American lives. And understand that the ISIL are so militant that al Qaeda has disavowed them. It's depressing, but the fact that much of our politics are the result of structural shifts and overt racism means they can be changed.

\*\*\*\*\*

## WAR WHISPERERS



**THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES: *Media Welcomes Back Consistently Wrong Iraq 'Experts'... Wolfowitz, Feith, Bremer, Kristol... Even Judith Miller!... Tony Blair Calls For Intervention... FLASHBACK: Wolfowitz's Terrible Prediction On Sectarian Violence... Kristol In '03: 'Pop Sociology' Shiites And Sunnis Can't Get Along... MEANWHILE: UN Warns War Could Engulf Middle East...***

*Republicans are like the fat girl in any given tavern in America - always the victim, always blaming some other guy, never their fault despite constantly having their fingerprints on every bit of drama that takes place there and very proud of it.*

Glenn Quagmire



Web Link: <http://youtu.be/uy5Un3vNbXg>

Paul Bremer, the former envoy to Iraq, has been among the more prominent architects of the Iraq War to suddenly reemerge all over the nation's televisions in the wake of that country's current crisis. On Monday night, he received one of his tougher grillings about his actions during the war from CNN's Erin Burnett. Not booking one of the most vocal defenders of the war was apparently not an option, so instead, Burnett asked, "A lot of people are watching you right now and they're —they're hearing you give your ideas of what to do. And they're saying, 'but aren't you the guy who got us in this mess?'" (Another question might have been, "If you're the one who got us into this mess, why are you on television right now?") Bremer's response was essentially to say that there was nothing wrong with anything ████ done. Burnett pressed him admirably on this point.

In Monday's **Wall Street Journal**, Paul Bremer criticized the Obama administration's policy in the Middle East and argued that the United States needs to make "a clear commitment to help restabilize Iraq." Notably, Bremer's op-ed -- "**Only America Can Prevent a Disaster in Iraq**" -- neglected to mention his own role in helping to destabilize Iraq following the Bush administration's disastrous 2003 invasion. As U.S. presidential envoy to the nation, Bremer disbanded the Iraqi army at the beginning of the occupation, a critical blunder that was followed by years of sectarian violence. The Iraq war, which Bush officials and media advocates sold as easy and inexpensive, grew into the biggest U.S. foreign policy debacle in a generation, resulting in the deaths of over 4,500 U.S. soldiers, 100,000 Iraqis and costing US taxpayers more than \$1.7 trillion. It also cast a shadow over the U.S. media, which largely promoted the administration's bogus case for war. Now Bremer and others who were largely discredited when it comes to Iraq are back in the spotlight, and they're being treated as credible experts on the growing chaos in the country. Iraq is once again in the news because the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, an extremist group, has taken several major cities and set its sights on Baghdad. Former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, who pushed for the Iraq invasion soon after the unrelated 9/11 attacks, appeared Sunday on NBC's "**Meet the Press.**" **Weekly Standard** editor Bill Kristol, one of the most influential media figures to have promoted the war, could be found talking Iraq across the dial on ABC's "**This Week.**"

In recent days, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, whose legacy is inextricably linked to his backing of Bush in Iraq, called for intervention. Former Bush-era officials Doug Feith, in **Politico**, and Andrew Card, on **CNN** and **Fox News**, have taken aim at the Obama administration for its Iraq policy and the withdrawal of U.S. troops in December 2011. Historian and prominent Iraq war-supporter Robert Kagan expressed support for U.S. intervention Monday in a **New York Times** profile. Even former **Times** reporter Judith Miller, who has become synonymous with the media's

failure during the run-up to the war in 2002 and 2003, recently appeared on **Fox News** to, of all things, criticize media coverage of Iraq.

James Fallows, an **Atlantic** correspondent and author of the book, *“Blind Into Baghdad,”* tweeted Friday that *“no one who stumped for original Iraq invasion gets to give ‘advice’ about disaster now [or] should get listened to.”* The media hasn't listened to Fallows, and several Bush-era figures have been allowed to weigh in with little, or no, acknowledgement of their past actions or statements. For instance, **Politico** didn't mention Feith's bungling in Iraq when quoting his critique of the current administration's policy there. Feith, the former undersecretary of defense for policy, said weeks before the invasion in February 2003 that Iraq posed a threat because of the *“connection between three things: terrorist organizations, state sponsors, and weapons of mass destruction.”* In reality, Iraq had no connection to the 9/11 attacks, al Qaeda had little to no presence in the country before the invasion, and there were no WMDs.

Around the same time, Wolfowitz told Congress that *“it's hard to conceive that it would take more forces to provide stability in post-Saddam Iraq than it would take to conduct the war itself and to secure the surrender of Saddam's security forces and his army.”* Wolfowitz also told Congress that Iraq could finance its own reconstruction” with oil revenues” and do so *“relatively soon.”* On **“Meet the Press”** Sunday, host David Gregory asked Wolfowitz if he, and other Bush administration veterans, were *“culpable of underestimating the level of sectarian violence, warfare in the country that creates the potential for this kind of terrorist state to develop today.”* Gregory told HuffPost he asked the question to try to hold Wolfowitz accountable for what happened over a decade ago. But Wolfowitz largely dodged it and turned instead to al Qaeda, which he said is *“not on the road to defeat.”* Later in the broadcast, Wolfowitz criticized the Obama administration for a *“lack of seriousness”* in dealing with the Syria crisis. *“I would do something in Syria,”* he said. *“It's a bad situation.”*

During a Monday interview on **MSNBC's “Morning Joe,”** Bremer went as far as to suggest the need for *“some troops on the ground.”* (President Barack Obama has ruled out putting U.S. troops on the ground, though the **AP** reported Monday that the White House is considering sending in some special forces soldiers.) In response, **Bloomberg Politics** editor Mark Halperin challenged Bremer on why the United States should, once again, play a role in determining Iraq's government. *“What business is it of the United States, at this point, who is in the government of Iraq?”* Halperin asked. *“Why isn't that up to the people of Iraq, civil society and leaders there, to figure it out, and not the United States?”* Bremer, echoing his Monday column and decade-old calls for U.S. intervention, responded that *“there is no one there who can do it, and no other country who can do it.”*

But the real question is, what was he doing on television anyway? Like his neocon comrades — Bill Kristol, Charles Krauthammer, Robert Kagan, and others — Wolfowitz does not deserve to be presented as an expert with important ideas about the ongoing mess. He and the rest of this gang should have had their pundit licenses revoked after the Iraq war. They got it all wrong: WMDs, the cost of the war, the consequences of the invasion. And these errors were compounded by the deaths of nearly 4,500 US service men and women—and 180,000 or more civilian Iraqi casualties. (Here's a partial list of Kristol's pre-war errors and misrepresentations.) So why care what they have to say now?

**How about a flashback.** It's February 27, 2003, three weeks before the invasion. As some experts are pointing out that the war could cost a great deal and require the United States to keep hundreds of thousands of troops in Iraq following the cessation of hostilities, Wolfowitz is testifying before

Congress. He's insisting that the US will not have to maintain large number of troops in Iraq after the war—and he's refusing to provide a cost estimate. There's also another critical concern hovering at the time: whether a US invasion will create disorder that will trigger sectarian violence within Iraq. Wolfowitz, long known in Washington as a "*defense intellectual*," pooh-poohed the matter and indicated it was silly to fret such an outbreak.

**Let's go to the tape:** <http://www.c-span.org/video/?c4501030/wolfowitz-says-iraq-record-ethnic-fighting>

There are other differences that suggest that peacekeeping requirements in Iraq might be much lower than historical experience in the Balkans suggests. There's been none of the record in Iraq of ethnic militias fighting one another that produced so much bloodshed and permanent scars in Bosnia along with the requirement for large policing forces to separate those militias. And the horrors of Iraq are very different from the horrific ethnic cleansing of Kosovars by Serbs that took place in Kosovo and left scars that continue to require peacekeeping forces today in Kosovo. The slaughter in Iraq—and it's been substantial — has unfortunately been the slaughter of people of all ethnic and religious groups by the regime. It is equal opportunity terror.

That is, no reason to fear Shiite-Sunni bloodshed after a US invasion. Yet in the aftermath of the invasion, such violent conflict began right away. And the Shiite-Sunni strife — exacerbated by the Bush-backed Maliki regime — has led to the crisis of the moment, with the ultra-extremists of the Sunni-led Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) having taken control of major Iraqi cities and threatening Baghdad. At that same congressional appearance, Wolfowitz echoed the Bush-Cheney administration mantra of the time that the United States would be embraced by Iraqis after invading their nation.

**Web Link:** <http://www.c-span.org/video/?c4501032/wolfowitz-iraqis-will-greet-us-liberators>

These are Arabs, 23 million of the most educated people in the Arab world, who are going to welcome us as liberators. And when the message gets out to the whole Arab world, it's going to be a powerful counter to Osama bin Laden... It will be a great step forward. Now, 11 years after that message was supposedly sent to Bin Laden, Wolfowitz says, "*Al Qaeda is on the march. Not just in Iraq, in Syria, and Libya.*" A reminder: there was no Al Qaeda on the march in Iraq and this region before the US invasion of Iraq.

In 2003, Wolfowitz clearly did not know what he was talking about regarding sectarian tensions within Iraq — or much else about Iraq and its people and problems. (In the book, Hubris: *The Inside Story of Spin, Scandal, and the Selling of the Iraq War*, Michael Isikoff reported that Wolfowitz at that time embraced an odd and convoluted conspiracy theory that held that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein controlled Al Qaeda and was responsible for all of its terrorism.) Wolfowitz is perfectly unqualified to be giving advice about the present situation — even if he helped cause it.

The United States has already sacrificed enough of its soldiers and treasury for Iraq during its eight years of involvement in that nation's so-called struggle for freedom. From the beginning, the war was based on a falsehood, namely the notion that Iraq harbored weapons of mass destruction. There

turned out to be none. Yet, in pursuing this bloody and inconclusive war, we spent several trillion dollars, saw over 4400 of our soldiers die in action with another 32,000 casualties, and took away valuable resources from our own country that we should have used to deal with the worst economic calamity to hit U.S. since the Great Depression.

But, in any case, our responsibility with that land ended in 2010 when the Iraqis essentially kicked U.S. forces out of Iraq by refusing to sign a status of forces agreement with Washington. Iraq did not want U.S. forces to stay. It was finished with the American occupation. Iraq was admitting, too, that it had to deal with its internal predicaments on its own, not with the aid of its foreign ally. In fact, the Iraqis were right -- it was time for them to sort out their own problems on their own. As President John Kennedy once said about another war in which the U.S. was involved -- in Vietnam - "*in the end, it is their war, not ours.*"

Yet, at this late date, some in Congress are now urging that we launch air strikes or bombing attacks on the insurgents to save the regime of Prime Minister Maliki. This would be a grave error. Most importantly, there is no way America will be able to guarantee that its air raids or drone strikes can actually retard the forward movement of thousands of ISIS ground forces. While we may kill a few militant fighters here and there -- such action will not be enough to change the outcome. Meantime we will cause immense collateral damage -- our missiles will wound or murder bystanders, civilians, and other innocent victims, making the US look once again like a cruel interloper.

In the end, as noted earlier, this is a conflict that only the Iraqis can resolve through the political will of the Maliki regime which now must broaden the base of his government by including in its ranks more Sunni and Kurd leaders, as well as rallying to its side the Shia militias inside Baghdad. In the final analysis, this is a test of whether the majority population of Iraq wants to save its government -- and its fragile democratic system -- or not. It is an Iraqi decision, not an American one. And the last thing that we should do is listen to the people who got us into this mess in the first place and refuse to acknowledge their complicity. ***And this is my rage of the week....***

## WEEK'S READINGS

### 5 Foods Every Midlifer Needs To Start Eating Today



From kale to quinoa to kombucha, we've had our fill of the hype surrounding so many new-age 'superfoods' that are as difficult to incorporate into our diets as they are to pronounce. In middle-age you'll have very specific nutritional needs and health concerns on the horizon. Here are the foods that will help you fight off aging (and they taste pretty good too.)

## **Almond Milk**

A common health risk associated with aging is osteoporosis. As many as one in two women and one in four men over 50, will break a bone due to the brittle bone disease at some points, according to the National Institutes of Health. There are three known ways to keep your bones strong; exercise, get plenty of vitamin D, and get plenty of calcium. The good news is if you can't stomach dairy or only like milk with your cereal, try almond milk. Just one serving of most varieties of unsweetened almond milk has fewer calories and plenty of calcium. Plus many varieties also provide you with a good dose of Vitamin D. Besides being yummy in smoothies and shakes, try using almond milk in your baking in when recipes call for milk, like french toast or bread pudding.

## **Fish**

If you aren't squinting at your smartphone or having trouble reading your Kindle, you're lucky. The risk of cataracts and macular degeneration commonly increases with age, so fight back with your diet. Fish, particularly salmon, is rich in heart-healthy Omega-3 fatty acids, which can also help reduce your cholesterol and arthritis pains. But you may not have known that salmon is also a superfood when it comes to eye health. It's loaded with niacin, which studies have shown can cut your risk of cataracts. One study showed a significant reduction in the risk of macular degeneration with just one serving of fish per week! One less pot roast and one more fish file, please.

## Watermelon

We don't all like to talk about it, but at some point or another, many of us will experience a loss of libido as we get older. And while we might turn to strawberries and champagne and oysters to turn up the heat in the bedroom, it's the old picnic favorite that will really do the trick. Texas researchers discovered that several nutrients found in watermelon, including citrulline, which the body converts into arginine, are good for your libido. "Arginine boosts nitric oxide, which relaxes blood vessels, the same basic effect that Viagra has, to treat erectile dysfunction and maybe even prevent it," researcher Bhimu Patel said in a statement. We'll have a slice or two of watermelon -- or should we call it the love fruit?

## Bananas

Your risk of developing high blood pressure increases with age -- but unlike what you may have heard, you can do more than just watch the salt. It's also about upping your potassium, the mineral which helps your body regulate sodium. Studies have shown that eating potassium-rich foods can boast the same benefits as taking a supplement. We love our peanut butter and banana sandwiches.

## Prunes

Yes, we know, these are the most stereotypical foods for us older folks -- but hear us out! Many of us have encountered the, ahem, middle-age spread. We diet and exercise, but scale just doesn't seem to budge and it seems our spare tires are here to stay. A little fiber could help move things along (we had to). A British study found the fruit can help with weight loss efforts and help keep you feeling full. Dieters who ate prunes daily (about 3.5 ounces) shed more weight and inches around their waists compared with dieters who were simply educated on healthy snacking. Plus, with 7 grams of fiber per 3.5 ounces, prunes are a tastier way to get your 25-38 daily grams of fiber, than Metamucil.

And for those who would like to know what **Foods That Make You Look Older** her they are:

## Sugar

There are several reasons why a sugar-filled diet makes you look older. When there is excess sugar in the body, it attaches itself to collagen, making the skin look stiff and inflexible. According to "**Diet Myths Busted; Food Facts Not Nutrition Fiction**" by Ann A. Rosenstein, *"losing this elastic resilience of young skin will give the skin deep wrinkles and make it look old."*

## Trans Fats

Like sugar, excess trans fats make the skin look stiff and inflexible. *"Trans fats clog and stiffen the arteries and smaller blood vessels,"* which makes the skin look old, wrote Rosenstein.

## Salt

Salt dehydrates the body. When you are dehydrated, you become fatigued, which makes you look tired and worn out. In addition, excess salt contributes to kidney disease, high blood pressure and interferes with bone metabolism.

## Coffee

Coffee and caffeinated products also dehydrate the body, making you look tired and worn out.

## **Candy**

The sugar in candy causes inflammation in the body and can make skin look wrinkled and old.

## **Artificial Sweetener**

Artificial sweeteners such as aspartame are associated with headaches and joint pain and can make you crave sweets.

## **Alcohol**

Consuming too much alcohol dehydrates your body and causes wrinkles, loss of collagen, redness and puffiness, according to "The Dr. Oz Show."

## **Energy Drinks**

Energy drinks damage the enamel in your teeth eight times more than soda does. This erosion makes your teeth look yellow and unhealthy, according to Dr. Oz.

## **Carbohydrates**

An overconsumption of carbohydrates can damage the collagen and fibers in your skin, according to WebMD.

## **Fried Food**

Fried food contributes to collagen break down in the skin, making one's skin look wrinkled and worn out, according to [REDACTED]

## **Soda**

As a beverage high in sugar, soda tends to dehydrate the body. This fatigues the body and makes you look tired. *"A good rule of thumb is to drink half your body weight in ounces. So if you weight 130 lbs, you need 65 ounces of water a day -- just over eight cups,"* according to [REDACTED]

\*\*\*\*\*

# **Bionic Eye**

How the world's first 'bionic eye' is giving artificial sight to blind people.



"On November the second on a Saturday, she was sitting at the dinner table and I was sitting here and I saw her... It was a very special moment." This was the first time Fred van Rennes saw his wife after losing his sight around 20 years ago. Fred went blind at the age of 34 due to a degenerative eye disease called *retinitis pigmentosa*, a condition in which the photoreceptors in the eye stop working properly. But a ground-breaking new 'bionic eye' called the **Argus II Retinal Prosthesis System** is helping Fred and others suffering from *retinitis pigmentosa* to see shapes and patterns for the first time in decades.

The device is made up of a miniature camera placed on a pair of glasses and electrodes which are surgically implanted on the patient's damaged retina. The camera sends wireless signals to the electrodes, which in turn send small pulses of electricity down the optical nerve to the brain, which slowly learns to interpret the pulses as visual patterns. Dr Javid Abdelmoneim travels to Amsterdam, the Netherlands, to see how this incredible new implant is giving people who are completely blind the chance to see again.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **The Three Biggest Right-Wing Lies About Poverty**

Rather than confront poverty by extending jobless benefits to the long-term unemployed, endorsing a higher minimum wage, or supporting jobs programs, conservative Republicans are taking a different tack.

They're peddling three big lies about poverty. To wit:

### **Lie #1: Economic growth reduces poverty.**

"The best anti-poverty program," wrote Paul Ryan, the House Budget Committee chairman, in the *Wall Street Journal*, "is economic growth."

Wrong. Since the late 1970s, the economy has grown 147 percent per capita but almost nothing has trickled down. The typical American worker is earning just about what he or she earned three decades ago, adjusted for inflation.

Meanwhile, the share of Americans in poverty remains around 15 percent. That's even higher than it was in the early 1970s.

How can the economy have grown so much while most people's wages go nowhere and the poor remain poor? Because almost all the gains have gone to the top. Research by Immanuel Saez and Thomas Piketty shows that forty years ago the richest 1 percent of Americans got 9 percent of total income. Today they get over 20 percent.

It's true that redistributing income to the needy is politically easier in a growing economy than in a stagnant one. One reason so many in today's middle class are reluctant to pay taxes to help the poor is their own incomes are dropping.

But the lesson we should have learned from the past three decades is economic growth by itself doesn't reduce poverty.

## **Lie #2: Jobs reduce poverty.**

Senator Marco Rubio said poverty is best addressed not by raising the minimum wage or giving the poor more assistance but with "reforms that encourage and reward work."

This has been the standard Republican line ever since Ronald Reagan declared that the best social program is a job. A number of Democrats have adopted it as well. But it's wrong.

Surely it's better to be poor and working than to be poor and unemployed. Evidence suggests jobs are crucial not only to economic well-being but also to self-esteem. Long-term unemployment can even shorten life expectancy.

But simply having a job is no bulwark against poverty. In fact, across America the ranks of the working poor have been growing. Around one-fourth of all American workers are now in jobs paying below what a full-time, full-year worker needs in order to live above the federally defined poverty line for a family of four.

Why are more people working but still poor? First of all, more jobs pay lousy wages.

While low-paying industries such as retail and fast food accounted for 22 percent of the jobs lost in the Great Recession, they've generated 44 percent of the jobs added since then, according to a recent report from the National Employment Law Project.

Second, the real value of the minimum wage continues to drop. This has affected female workers more than men because more women are at the minimum wage.

Third, government assistance now typically requires recipients to be working. This hasn't meant fewer poor people. It's just meant more poor people have jobs.

Bill Clinton's welfare reform of 1996 pushed the poor into jobs, but they've been mostly low-wage jobs without ladders into the middle class. The Earned Income Tax Credit, a wage subsidy, has been expanded, but you have to be working in order to qualify.

Work requirements haven't reduced the number or percent of Americans in poverty. They've merely increased the number of working poor -- a term that should be an oxymoron.

### **Lie #3: Ambition cures poverty.**

Most Republicans, unlike Democrats and independents, believe people are poor mainly because of a lack of effort, according to a Pew Research Center/USA Today survey. It's a standard riff of the right: If the poor were more ambitious they wouldn't be poor.

Obviously, personal responsibility is important. But there's no evidence that people who are poor are less ambitious than anyone else. In fact, many work long hours at backbreaking jobs.

What they really lack is opportunity. It begins with lousy schools.

America is one of only three advanced countries that spends less on the education of poorer children than richer ones, according to a study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Among the 34 [REDACTED] nations, only in the United States, Israel and Turkey do schools serving poor neighborhoods have fewer teachers and crowd students into larger classrooms than do schools serving

more privileged students. In most countries, it's just the reverse: Poor neighborhoods get more teachers per student.

And unlike most OECD countries, America doesn't put better teachers in poorly performing schools.

So why do so many right-wing Republicans tell these three lies? Because they make it almost impossible to focus on what the poor really need - good-paying jobs, adequate safety nets, and excellent schools. These things cost money. Lies are cheaper.

**Robert Reich: Huffington Post – June 14, 2014**

\*\*\*\*\*



Eventually the question will be asked -- **"Who lost Iraq?"** In a way, it might be seen as an improper question to ask since it presumes that Iraq was ours to lose. The fact that it was not, however, doesn't absolve us of responsibility. We have badly bungled Iraq from the beginning. Our invasion was irresponsible, our occupation and administration of the country were disastrous, and our departure, though necessary, left too many critical issues unresolved. What should also be clear is that no one is blameless.

The Iraq war was conceived in sin. It was based on the lies of the Bush Administration, the most notorious of which were not about *"weapons of mass destruction."* More dangerous were the fabricated projections they presented about how: the war would last only a few weeks and our presence would end in six months; it would only cost one to \$2 billion dollars; our soldiers would be greeted as *"liberators"* with flowers at their feet; and Iraq's new democracy would be *"a beacon for the new Middle East."*

Early on, in October of 2003, when our first poll of Iraqi opinion was released showing that Iraqis were dissatisfied with our behavior and wanted us to leave, the Bush Administration again lied. They tried to spin the poll into good news about how we were winning and the war was going well.

By 2005-2006, it was clear we were in a worse mess than we had ever imagined. The crimes of Abu Ghraib had shocked the world, laying waste to American honor, sectarian strife had devastated Iraqi society creating waves of refugees and internally displaced persons, and both Arab and American public opinion had decided that *"enough was enough."* Back then, the American debate was waged between two poles: one which called for U.S. forces to double-down, and the other which envisioned an immediate withdrawal.

It was then that Congress commissioned the "**Iraq Study Group**", led by our most senior statesmen, to find a way forward. The ISG report was highly anticipated. When it was released, it was largely ignored. The Bush Administration cherry-picked the parts they liked, ignoring recommendations they didn't like. The result was to consolidate Iraq's sectarian divide while reinforcing the country's corrupt sect-based leadership.

Toward the end of the Bush Administration, the U.S. negotiated a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the Iraqi government requiring U.S. forces to withdraw from the country by the end of 2011. It was this agreement that President Obama was forced to implement.

During the 2008 campaign candidate Obama had rejected calls to simply abandon Iraq, insisting that the US must be "as careful getting out of Iraq as we were careless getting in." The date for withdrawal had been set by the SOFA, and the Iraqi government insisted that it be honored. But the challenge facing the Administration was not the date we were to leave, but what they were to do before the date marking the end of the U.S. military presence in Iraq.

One of the ISG recommendations that Bush had refused to implement was the establishment of a regional security framework. This required the participation of all the regional stakeholders: Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Syria and Iran. While many of the participants might have objected, all had an interest in and a role to play in Iraq's stability. Moreover, many of these principals were already involved in Iraq, in ways designed to protect their own interests. The key reason behind convening them was that it would be better to have them sitting around a table working above board than to have them manipulating events under the table. This was not done, with neither Bush nor Obama accepting the challenge.

In a wide-ranging poll we conducted in Iraq toward the end of 2011, the concerns of the Iraqi people were clear. They were deeply divided about our presence and our withdrawal. The majority Shi'a constituency wanted us out, but majorities among both the Sunni Arab and Kurdish communities were concerned that with our departure they would be vulnerable and at risk. Their biggest fears were that with our departure their country would explode in civil war, would divide along sectarian lines, and would become dominated by Iran.

We had early warnings of what was to come. Nevertheless, at the end of 2011, we left Iraq in the hands of a sectarian and increasingly autocratic government. In the absence of any regional security arrangement, the Maliki government became more closely allied with Iranian interests, increasingly alienating its Sunni Arab and Kurdish constituencies, setting the stage for where we are today.

It is just plain wrong for hawkish critics of the Obama Administration to argue that "*we never should have left Iraq.*" They conveniently forget that we were obliged to do so by the Bush Administration's negotiated SOFA. And it is equally wrong for doves to argue that Iraq is none of our business. Whether we like it or not, we have become part of Iraq's history. Our war and occupation have created a responsibility. After all the lives lost and the treasure spent, we cannot simply abandon the country.

That said, the U.S. should not commit force or political capital in support of the Maliki government. His sectarian policies are the reason why Iraq is imploding. The way forward is to implement the last piece of the ISG report and convene the regional powers in an effort to address both the situations in Iraq and Syria. Both have become connected -- and not just because the ISIS has a base in both areas. Equally important is the fact that Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey all have direct interests in the outcomes of these conflicts. No one can afford further deterioration. And all must recognize that, in the end, a continuation of the fighting can only lead to greater destabilization and greater extremism. Given the realities of both Iraq and Syria, there can be *"no victor or vanquished."* A new order must be found that secures the rights of all citizens in both countries.

Maliki and Assad may see things differently, but they are leading their respective countries to greater conflict and ruin. Only a regional peace arrangement can end this downward spiral, and only intense U.S. political, and if necessary military, pressure, can help to find a way out of this situation. The President is right to insist that he will not commit to the use of force without a plan. But he should not hesitate to use force to back up a plan that will convene a conference that would invest regional powers in support of an effort that would bring an end to Iraq and Syria's long nightmares.

James Zogby: The Arab American Institute – June 14, 2014

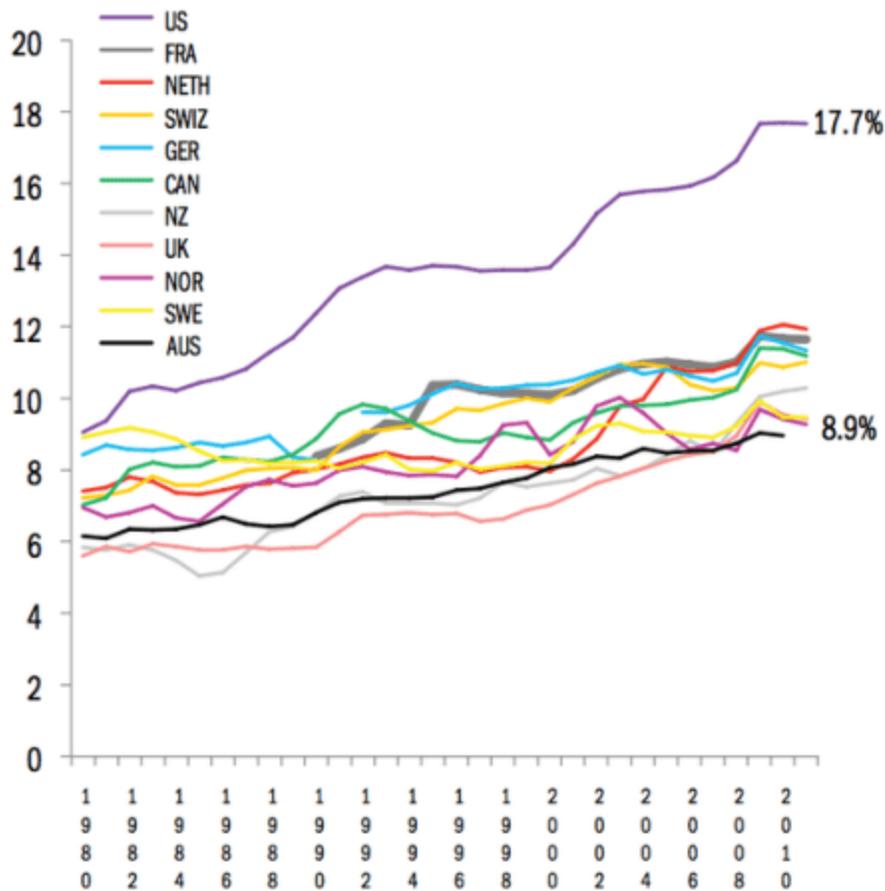
\*\*\*\*\*

Although many Americans like to think that we have the best healthcare in the world, this week in **The Atlantic**, Olga Khazan wrote the article — ***U.S. Healthcare: Most Expensive and Worst Performing*** — which showed a new international ranking showing the United Kingdom in first place and the U.S. performing poorly across almost all health metrics. The United States healthcare system is the most expensive in the world, but when it comes to health outcomes, it performs worse than 11 other similar industrialized nations, according to a new report released today by the Commonwealth Fund. The nonprofit examined the health systems of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, and it found that the U.S. was last or near-last in measures of health access, efficiency, and equity.



According to the report, the United Kingdom, which has a single-payer healthcare system, ranks first. In second place is Switzerland, which like the U.S. has a compulsory health insurance system — though Swiss health insurers are not allowed to make a profit off their basic insurance plans. It's important to note that one reason for America's lag, as the authors explain, is our historic absence of universal health coverage. But the data for the report was collected before the full implementation of Obamacare, which dramatically expanded health insurance, so it's possible that the U.S. may rise in future rankings. And notably, both the U.K. and U.S. ranked low on the *"Healthy lives"* scale, which considers infant mortality, healthy life expectancy at age 60, and mortality from preventable conditions, such as high blood pressure. The U.S. spends 17.7 percent of GDP on healthcare, much more than all of the other countries, while Australia spends the least—8.9 percent:

Total expenditures on health as percent of GDP



The metric the U.S. performed best on was "effective care." Particularly laudable were our preventative care efforts, which included things like physicians asking patients to eat healthy and exercise, and doctors' offices sending patients appointment reminders. The U.S. fared poorly, meanwhile, when it came to managing administrative hassles for both doctors and patients, avoiding emergency room use, and reducing duplicative medical testing, all part of the score for "efficient care." "It is apparent that many primary care physicians struggle to receive relevant clinical information from specialists and hospitals, complicating efforts to provide seamless, coordinated care," the report authors note. Americans also had the worst equity of care between high-income and low-income patients. "The U.S. health care system is not the 'fairest of them all,'" the authors write, "At least from the viewpoint of those who use it to stay healthy, get better, or manage their chronic illnesses, or who are vulnerable because of low income and poor health."

\*\*\*\*\*

## The Gall of Dick Cheney

The situation in Iraq is truly worrisome, as militants threaten to tear the country asunder and disrupt the fragile, short-lived period absent all-out war there.

We have strategic interests in preventing Iraq from unraveling, not least of which is that we don't need the country to become a haven for terrorists, particularly those who might see America as a target. And of course, there is the uneasy subject of oil: Volatility in the region has already sent global oil prices soaring. On Wednesday, militants were said to have taken control of Iraq's largest oil refinery.

We have to tread carefully here. There are no saints to be seen in this situation. Everyone's hands are bloody. And, we don't want to again get mired in a conflict in a country from which we have only recently extricated ourselves. As we weigh our response, one of the last people who should say anything on the subject is a man who is partly responsible for the problem. But former Vice President Dick Cheney, who was in the administration that deceived us into a nine-year war in Iraq, just can't seem to keep his peace.

In an Op-Ed published with his daughter, Liz, in *The Wall Street Journal* on Tuesday, the Cheneys write: "Rarely has a U.S. president been so wrong about so much at the expense of so many." This, from the man who helped lead us into this trumped-up war, searching for nonexistent weapons of mass destruction, a war in which some 4,500 members of the American military were killed, many thousands more injured, and that is running a tab of trillions of dollars. During the lead-up to the war, Mr. Cheney said to Tim Russert: "I really do believe that we will be greeted as liberators." Nothing could have been further from the truth. Even if it were indeed rare to be "so wrong," as Mr. Cheney puts it, he was vice president in an administration that was much more tragically wrong. His whole legacy is wrapped in wrong.

At one point in the article, the Cheneys state: "Iraq is at risk of falling to a radical Islamic terror group and Mr. Obama is talking climate change. Terrorists take control of more territory and resources than ever before in history, and he goes golfing." Mr. Cheney must think that we have all forgotten the scene from "Fahrenheit 9/11," Michael Moore's 2004 documentary, in which President George W. Bush, brandishing a club on a golf course, looks into the camera and says, "I call upon all nations to do everything they can to stop these terrorist killers. Thank you." That is quickly followed by, "Now, watch this drive," and a shot of Bush swinging at the ball.

In fact, on one of the rare occasions that Mr. Cheney was actually right, in 1994, he warned about the problems that would be created by deposing Saddam Hussein: "Once you got to Iraq and took it over, and took down Saddam Hussein's government, then what are you going to put in its place? That's a very volatile part of the world, and if you take down the central government of Iraq you can easily end up seeing pieces of Iraq fly off. Part of it the Syrians would like to have to the west. Part of eastern Iraq, the Iranians would like to claim, fought over for eight years. In the north you've got the Kurds, and if the Kurds spin loose and join with the Kurds in Turkey, then you threaten the territorial integrity of Turkey. It's a quagmire."

That was quite prescient. And yet, the Bush administration pushed us into the Iraq war anyway, and the quagmire we now confront. That's why it's so galling to read Mr. Cheney chastising this administration for its handling of the disaster that Mr. Cheney himself foresaw, but ignored. I know that we as Americans have short attention spans, but most of us don't suffer from amnesia. The Bush administration created this mess, and the Obama administration now has to clean it up.

The Cheneys wrote: "This president is willfully blind to the impact of his policies," Mr. Cheney seemingly oblivious to the irony. George W. Bush may well have been a disaster of a president (in a 2010 Siena College Research Institute survey, 238 presidential scholars ranked Bush among the five "worst ever" presidents in American history), but at least he has the dignity and grace — or shame and humility — to recede from public life with his family and his painting, and not chide and meddle with the current administration as it tries to right his wrong. Mr. Cheney, meanwhile, is still trying to bend

history toward an exoneration of his guilt and an expunging of his record. But history, on this, is stiff, and his record is written in blood.

By CHARLES M. BLOW: June 18, 2014 -- New York Times

\*\*\*\*\*

## Pressure on Obama to Quickly Resolve Centuries-Old Sunni-Shiite Conflict

WASHINGTON (**The Borowitz Report -- June 18, 2014**) — Congressional leaders left the White House on Wednesday “*deeply frustrated*” that President Obama had not found a swift resolution to the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites that began in the seventh century ■■■.

After meeting for more than an hour with the President in the Oval Office, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell expressed disappointment that Mr. Obama “*came up empty*” when asked for a plan to heal the rift between the two religious groups, which began in the year 632.

*“All we ask of this President is that he do one thing: settle a religious conflict that has been going on for a millennium and a half,”* McConnell said. *“What did he offer today? Nothing.”*

Speaker of the House John Boehner acknowledged that there was a possibility that Obama might find a way to resolve the centuries-old Sunni-Shiite conflict, but the Ohio Republican was not optimistic. *“This struggle between Sunnis and Shiites has been going on for almost fifteen hundred years,”* he said. *“That means President Obama has had ample time to fix it.”*

### THIS WEEK'S QUOTES

*“The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie--deliberate, contrived and dishonest--but the myth--persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Too often we hold fast to the clichés of our forebears. We subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations. We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.”*

**John F. Kennedy: Commencement Address at Yale University, June 11 1962**

### BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

**\*\*\*FIRST PLACE\*\*\***

*John Lindo and Stephanie Batista*

Web Link:



**Who said that Big Guys can't dance... wonderful...**

**MY DAUGHTER'S WEDDING**





Yesterday was the wedding of my oldest daughter **Denise Ortiz** with the love of her life **Denise Pratt** and all that I can say is how proud I am of **D1** and how much I have come to love **D2**.... As a proud father who remembers a three year-old sitting on my knee at the kitchen table asking about love..... *Denise you did well*.... In spite of my convoluted and confusing answer....  
Bravo my daughter, her Mother Stephanie and a double Bravo to my wonderful daughter in-law....



*With this I present..... Denise Squared....*

## THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

### Sammy Davis, Jr.



**Samuel George "Sammy" Davis, Jr.** (December 8, 1925 – May 16, 1990) was an American entertainer and a national treasure. Primarily a dancer and singer, he was also an actor of stage and screen, musician, and impressionist, noted for his impersonations of actors, musicians and other celebrities. At the age of three Davis began his career in vaudeville with his father and Will Mastin as the **Will Mastin Trio**, which toured nationally. After military service Davis returned to the trio. Davis became an overnight sensation following a nightclub performance at **Ciro's** after the **1951 Academy Awards**. With the trio, he became a recording artist. In 1954, he lost his left eye in an automobile accident, and several years later, he converted to Judaism. Davis' film career began as a child in 1933. In 1960, he appeared in the first **Rat Pack** film, **Ocean's 11**. After a starring role on Broadway in 1956's **Mr. Wonderful**, Davis returned to the stage in 1964's **Golden Boy**, and in 1966 had his own TV variety show, **The Sammy Davis Jr. Show**. Davis' career slowed in the late 1960s, but he had a hit record with **"The Candy Man"** in 1972 and became a star in Las Vegas, earning him the nickname **"Mister Show Business"**.

As an African-American, Davis was the victim of racism throughout his life and was a large financial supporter of the Civil Rights movement. Davis had a complex relationship with the African-American community, and drew criticism after physically embracing President Richard M. Nixon in 1972. One day on a golf course with Jack Benny, he was asked what his handicap was. **"Handicap?"** he asked. **"Talk about handicap – I'm a one-eyed Negro Jew."** This was to become a signature comment, recounted in his autobiography, and in countless articles. After reuniting with Sinatra and Dean Martin in 1987, Davis toured with them and Liza Minnelli internationally, before he died of throat cancer in 1990. He died in debt to the Internal Revenue Service, and his estate was the subject of legal battles. Davis was awarded the **Spingarn Medal** by the **NAACP** and was nominated for a Golden Globe and an Emmy Award for his television performances. He was the recipient of the **Kennedy**

**Center Honors** in 1987, and in 2001, he was posthumously awarded the **Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award**.

Having first met Sammy in the 1970s and had the pleasure of seeing him perform a number of times I can tell you first hand that both more complex than first glance and talented beyond belief. And although James Brown was often called *The Hardest Working Person in Show Business* no one worked harder on the stage than Sammy Davis Jr. whose personal goal was to make sure that he gave the best show possible every time. With this said, I invite you to enjoy the music, dance, impersonations and humor of *an American Treasure*, Mr. Sammy Davis Jr.

Sammy Davis Jr. – **Mr. Bojangles** -- [http://youtu.be/5voM2HEXV\\_Q](http://youtu.be/5voM2HEXV_Q) and <http://youtu.be/NvYmL5KsvYA>

Sammy Davis Jr. – **I Dreamed a Dream** -- <http://youtu.be/nUkRZDgwlls>

Sammy Davis Jr. – **Who Can I Turn To (When Nobody Needs Me)** -- <http://youtu.be/pE4EoAPIOgU>

Sammy Davis Jr. – **Because of You** -- <http://youtu.be/KCQc-naGb3E>

Sammy Davis Jr. – **You Rascal You** -- <http://youtu.be/Xe6JTHAWDT4>

Sammy Davis and Gregory Hines -- <http://youtu.be/nlpvhtd1ual>

Sammy Davis Jr. does Michael Jackson – **Bad** -- <http://youtu.be/FHSDEjZcU3Y>

Sammy Davis Jr. on drums & vibes -- <http://youtu.be/USxvJFKXrE>

Sammy Davis Jr. impersonates his peers -- <http://youtu.be/hguNG5rXf5g>

Sammy Davis Jr. – **I Gotta Be Me** -- <http://youtu.be/rbLICxK0pHY>

Sammy Davis Jr. – **What Kind of Fool Am I** -- <http://youtu.be/7Jg7wFHWXT4>

Sammy Davis Jr. – **One For My Baby** -- <http://youtu.be/UkHvw5eP5zU>

Sammy Davis Jr. – **My Way** -- <http://youtu.be/Q-zOONO2K4c>

Dean Martin & Sammy Davis Jr. – **Sam's Song** -- <http://youtu.be/KkFOUNzkyOk>

Sammy Davis Jr – **Ol' Man River** -- <http://youtu.be/5D7RvKw3wDY>

Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Dean Martin, Johnny Carson – **The Start of the Blues** -- <http://youtu.be/uNcfCA9UsDQ>

*I hope that you have enjoyed this week's offerings and wish that you and yours a great week....*

Sincerely,

# Greg Brown

--

Gregory Brown  
Chairman & CEO  
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

US: +1-415-994-7851  
Tel: +1-800-406-5892  
Fax: +1-310-861-0927  
Skype: gbrown1970

