

The Franciscan Conservative

"It does not take a majority to prevail...but rather an irate, tireless minority, keen on setting brushfires of freedom in the minds of men."-Samuel Adams

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Obama and Foreign Policy: An Analysis

By Dan Woltornist

Since taking office, President Obama has clearly made foreign policy a priority, but following the G20 Conference and his address to the United Nations General Assembly, one would be hard pressed to make the case that America is now better off in the world.

Foreign policy is all about making the right alliances for America, and

sometimes, the Obama Administration has embraced our enemies rather than our allies. Obama consistently talks down America's past and its current role as one of the world's chief policy makers. In an attempt to promote economic conformity, Obama pushed for the G20 to replace the G8 as the world's global economic forum. This has significantly put America at a disadvantage in

deciding our own economic future globally.

Most recently in his speech to the United Nations, Obama outlined what he considered recent victories for America in foreign policy.

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The Troubling Obama White House

By Grant Schertzing

We don't need bigger government or smaller government. We need a better government – a more competent government – a government that upholds the values we hold in common as Americans.¹
-Senator Barack Obama

President Obama campaigned in 2008 on his promise to bring 'change' to Washington, a mystery goal coated in a thin candy shell of speeches. Democrats all

hopped on his rhetorical bandwagon, promising 'clean government' and a 'new era' of government transparency.

Well, Washington is certainly 'changing,' and it's starting to look more and more like a Saturday morning cartoon.

We have Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner² and Ways and Means Chair Charles Rangel³ committing tax fraud, just after our Vice President Joe Biden described paying taxes as 'patriotic,' interestingly enough.

After that is Science

Czar John Holden⁴, who maintained that a baby develops into a human being, given enough food and socializing, not to mention subscribed to Ehrlich's Population Bomb, a radical theory of overpopulation overwhelmingly proven wrong due to the persistent existence of England.

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The Political Peace Prize?

By Clare Hinshaw

On Friday morning President Barack Obama was unexpectedly announced to be the winner of the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize Award. The Nobel Peace Prize committee stated that they had chosen President Obama "for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples." However, those opposed to the choice of President Obama have questioned whether this is not, in fact, a political move on the part of the committee.

The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded by a five-member

committee which is elected by the left-leaning Norwegian Parliament. The committee itself has long been recognized as a leftist group, particularly this year with three of the five members belonging to left-of-center parties. AOL News reports that "Members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee said their choice could be seen as an early vote of confidence in Obama intended to build global support for his policies." One member of the committee, Aagot Valle, a lawmaker for the Socialist Left Party, stated that it was her hope that the choice would be seen as "support and a commitment for Obama." Alan Lichtman, professor of history at American

University stated that "This was to encourage rather than to recognize an accomplished fact." In Alfred Nobel's 1895 will he charged that the peace prize should go 'to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for the fraternity between the nations and the abolition or reduction of standing armies and the formation and spreading of peace congresses."

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Letter to the Editor: What Does the Constitution Really Say?

By Lucas Bedia

"And what kind of man am I? One of those who would gladly be refuted if anything I say is not true, and would gladly refute another who says what is not true, but would be no less happy to be refuted myself than to refute, for I consider that a greater benefit, inasmuch as it is a greater boon to be delivered from the worst of evils oneself than to deliver another."
-Socrates, speaking to Gorgias as recorded by Plato, in his dialogue "Gorgias" (458a)

Foreword: The findings and judgments of this note are based on the legal and judicial philosophy of originalism in so far as I understand and have adopted it. In a nutshell,

originalism holds the position that laws mean what the original intent of them that legislated them was. For example, if your mom tells you, "Junior, set the table for dinner when I'm gone, I'll be back at 6:00," and she comes home to find you in the front yard and the house going up in flames, she will probably ask you, "Junior, what happened?" If you answer that you set the table on fire with some gasoline, you may not live through the night. Why, you might ask? Well, first of all, because you did not actually set the table: you set it on fire. You eisegeticized (practiced eisegesis on) the order from your mom. She intended to order you to put silverware on the table. You disobeyed that order and torched the house. Obviously, the practice of exegeticizing (practicing exegesis on) 200-year-old laws is not as simple as

figuring out what mom meant 20 minutes ago when she said "set the table," but that does not mean that the original meaning of the 200 year old law is any less important than what mom said. In fact, it may be even more important. So, if you don't buy into originalism, then the findings of this note will strike you as the most inane and ridiculous of opinions.

Tim Wilson, for those that know not his work, is a rather libertarian comedian and a staunch 2nd Amendment advocate, as far as comedians go.

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Letter to the Editor: The War in Iraq and National Responsibility

By Daniel Davis

The issue of the Iraq War and the War on Terror has been taken far out of the realm of reality. There are people out there who are debating the issue of the Iraq War at this very instant. However, I think the war is far too often approached with a incorrect attitude. War is a dreadful thing to all; no one really wants war, yet no one can all out avoid it. War has often been pushed as a peace maker, the last resort in dealings with another nation, yet all to often war is being used as an early step to attaining one's desired outcome. But positive outcomes for all can be likewise attained through peaceful negotiations, although not always as history as shown. Then again the issue of the Iraq War rears its ugly head with such worries as, "Should we have gone in? Are we doing the right thing? Should America be the world's police force?" The true issue here is not should we have gone in, but that we are in Iraq and as such we must stay

and hold our ground until there comes a time when it would be safe to withdraw most if not all US combat troops. It is frankly irrelevant to keep on the discussion about whether or not we should have invaded Iraq, because we did invade Iraq, and now we must look to the future of Iraq and the Middle East. When it comes to Iraq I think one must look at it as thus: Regardless of weather or not we should have invaded Iraq, we did, and it is now our responsibility to leave Iraq in equal if not better shape than when we first went invaded. It would be detrimental and inappropriate for the United States to suddenly pull out of Iraq and leave the Iraqi people weak, exhausted, and vulnerable to outside influence. The U.S. must act with the world's interests in mind, and a free Iraq is better for everyone. Leaving Iraq now would only make the Iraqi people more prone to future dictatorship and unrest, if we leave Iraq prematurely we will be forced to return within a decade most likely in the form of the Peacekeepers.

The Iraq War is brutal and deadly and the loss of men is truly horrible, but we must retain a clear vision of why and what we are doing in Iraq. We are helping a people long held victim to the ravings of a dictator, we are working on stabilizing the often-turbulent Middle East, and we are furthering world interests for peace along with working on ending the very real threat of global terrorism. A world held hostage to the whims of terrorists and dictators is neither a free nor a safe world. My personal politics are not what has motivated me to write this article, but rather my anguish over those who just want to cut and run out of Iraq. The War in Iraq is a truly dreadful thing, any and every single loss of human life is regrettable, but we must remember that we are doing what is best now for the world, whether or not we should have invaded Iraq in the first place.

College Republicans Weekly Meeting

*Friday, October 16th at 11:00 a.m.
The Leo Room (in the JC, next to
Jazzman's)*



Obama and Foreign Policy: An Analysis (cont'd)

Some of the acts he highlighted were his closing of Guantanamo Bay, withdrawing from Iraq, reducing America's nuclear arsenal, pushing for Israeli-Palestinian peace, embracing policies against climate change, acting internationally against the global recession, and actually regarding the United Nations. The international community as a whole has been generally receptive of these actions. Many countries are seeking to take in former Guantanamo prisoners. Russia also promised to reduce its stockpiles. Israel put a freeze on construction in the West Bank for the sake of Palestinians.

These advances in international affairs are not what stick out in American's mind considering foreign policy. The headlines have been consisting of mostly

personal blunders like giving the Queen of England an iPod with his own speeches in it, giving Gordon Brown a collection of DVDs that were not formatted for use in Britain, bowing to the Saudi King, having a picture taken with his shoe sole's exposed while talking with the Israeli Prime Minister (a Middle East insult), welcoming himself in a speech in Ireland, sending a letter to President Jacques Chirac while Nicholas Sarkozy was president of France, and calling "Cinco de Mayo" "Cinco de Cuatro" in front of the Mexican President to name a few.

The defining aspect of Obama's foreign policy has almost become compromising with unfriendly nations at almost any cost.

Americans should always be wary when a set of policies

garners praise from American enemies like Hugo Chavez.

The condition in Iran has deteriorated significantly since the president took office. After the hotly contested elections amid corruption charges, Obama did not make any statements about the situation. After riots persisted for weeks and rioters were imprisoned and killed, Obama still did not condemn the inhumane practices. He even indicated he was still willing to meet with the Iranian President for negotiation talks. The complete negligence of the situation has led to an Iran who just disclosed they had a secret nuclear reactor and brags that their missiles are now capable of striking Israel. Iran's Revolutionary Guard is now practicing war games as a flex of their military muscle.

The Troubling Obama White House (cont'd)

Then there's Green Jobs Czar Van Jones⁵, a self-proclaimed socialist whose responsibility is to grow private sector jobs. Let's also not forget that he bought into the conspiracy theory that Bush and Cheney were behind the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centers.

We then have 'Communications Diversity' Czar Mark Lloyd⁶, who proposed that the government institute a federal broadcasting system to essentially silence noisy critics so that we can have a fair balanced discussion.

Next up is Safe Schools Czar Kevin Jennings⁷, who not only failed to report a case of statutory rape while a high school teacher, but actively encouraged it. Jennings has

also admitted to drug abuse in his youth with no apparent regrets.

But wait, there's one more: Patrick Gaspard⁸, Obama's political affairs director, has strong connections with ACORN, shown to converse with its CEO on a regular basis, an organization recently revealed to encourage and enable tax fraud, prostitution, and other illicit activities.

At this point, either President Obama is thoroughly incompetent at vetting individuals for his administration, or our new president has a radically different understanding of American values than most Americans and absolutely no sense of irony.

A man can be known by the company he keeps, and as each week brings a new White House scandal, we are getting to know President Obama real well.

This whole farce would almost

be funny, if only our freedoms weren't the punch line.

¹ Senator Barack Obama (Jacksonville, FL), November 3, 2008

² "Geithner Touts Tackling Tax Evaders After Failing to Pay Own Taxes," Fox News, March 3, 2009

³ "Morality and Charlie Rangel's Taxes," Wall Street Journal, July 27, 2009

⁴ "Obama's Science Czar Said a Born Baby 'Will Ultimately Develop Into a Human Being,'" CNS News, July 28, 2009

⁵ "Green Jobs' Adviser's Past Could Stir Trouble for White House at Critical Time," Fox News, September 4, 2009

⁶ 'Czar wants parallel government broadcasting system,' American Thinker, September 25, 2009

⁷ "Safe School Czar' Ignored Statutory Rape,' Sweetness and Light, September 28, 2009

⁸ 'ACORN's Man in the White House,' The American Spectator, September 28, 2009

Letter: What Does the Constitution Really Say? (cont'd)

In one of his routines, he talks about how it doesn't make sense that the government takes away the right of people to own certain types of small firearms while the government itself has way more firepower at its disposal (the example he uses is that of the Apache assault helicopter). He thinks that Americans have, under the 2nd Amendment, a right to own and bear an Apache as an arm. Now, I do know that the 2nd Amendment was in large part intended to allow the people a measure of forceful protection against a tyrannical government as well as other purposes, one of which is stated in the Amendment itself. We have George Washington's remark, "Firearms are second only to the Constitution in importance; they are the peoples' liberty's teeth." Obviously, few of the proposers and ratifiers of the 2nd Amendment could have foreseen such an awesome weapon as the Apache, let alone the lowly machine gun, which is only a small part of the helicopter's formidable

armament.

So, what sort of force would they (the proposers, and more importantly, the ratifiers who actually made the Amendment binding) be okay with Joe Citizen bearing today under the 2nd Amendment? Now, one of my friends thinks we have a God-given right to own as private citizens just about any weapon, including tanks (maybe not nukes, chemical, or biological weapons, but we didn't touch that subject). I'm not so sure about tanks, but I do know that the explicit, expressed purpose of Amendment 2 is to guarantee "a well regulated militia" to each state and to the Union as a whole. So, what sort of weapons would a "well regulated militia" have in these times? Well, officially, the respective National Guards of the respective states are their militias, but their members are not civilians, so I think it may be fair to say that they are militias in name only. But, in the old days (you know, like during the War of Independence), a militia was called forth/marshaled from the civilian citizenry itself. Men would, when

they of their own accord perceived a threat or were called upon by their government, leave their houses of their own accord with their weapons: you know, muskets, occasional pistols, hand-to-hand weapons, horses, and maybe a few other things. They would form a militia on their own or at the request of their colony's/state's government. Funnily enough, though I care not two whits for the movie The Patriot, I think it illustrates the idea of a militia and its arms quite accurately and, well, violently. So, if we were to have, say a national security problem, like, I don't know, a flood of invaders from Mexico or something like that, which the National Guards and Federal forces were having a tough time dealing with, and the federal government had to "call forth the militia," as in, the civilian warriors, what sort of weapons should they have with which to repel (i.e. kill and drive out) invaders or put down domestic insurgents?

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The Political Peace Prize (cont'd)

Being that the Peace Prize committee has long since ignored Nobel's stipulations in order to expand the prize to include efforts to combat poverty, disease, and (nonexistent) climate change, it is unsurprising that they have now dismissed Nobel's instruction that the prize should go to the person who "shall have done the most." In the words of Obama supporter Stephen Wayne,

professor of American Government at Georgetown University, "Obama may have been the first to get it for his rhetoric and his orientation."

The question that has been circulating since the Committee announced Obama as the recipient of the Peace Prize, has been whether it isn't too soon to be awarding the President this honor. At the time when nominations for the Prize were due President Obama had been in

office less than two weeks. Professor Wayne went on to ask "What had he done by February? He had been the first African-American elected president and provided sawing rhetoric."

The Nobel Peace Prize was set up to recognize those people who have a record of actively working for peace, not to endorse politicians. If the committee continues in this vein they are only setting themselves up for embarrassment.

Letter: What Does the Constitution Really Say? (cont'd)

If they recognized the threat and decided to form their own militia without prompting from their state's government, what sort of arms would they be bearing?

Obviously, we haven't had such a drastic situation in the past 100 years; we've had a few close calls with Mexico, but nothing like the War of Independence. So, where do we turn to find the answer? To fictional works, like *Red Dawn*? No, not unless we have to, anyway. It's a pretty interesting movie, and it illustrates some very important truths very clearly, but, ultimately, it's a work of fiction. How about some historical examples instead?

1) *Charlie Wilson's War* (the book): In this book is narrated, among other things, the partly heroic struggle of the Afghani militia men, the Mujahadeen (let's call them "the Muj" [pronounced "moozh"] for short) against what was arguably the most terrifying and awesome military force the world had ever seen, the Soviet Red Army. The Red Army was wielding state-of-the-art war machines, and, at first, the Muj had only WWI era Enfield rifles (bolt-action, I think). They managed to stick it out for years with these primitive weapons, but they took heavy casualties, especially due to the Soviet Hind assault helicopters (the Soviet version of the Apache). Until the Muj acquired the American-made, man-portable Stinger "fire-and-forget" SAM (that's "Surface to Air Missile"), they were mostly defenseless before the awesome Soviet air power, and without any sort of air-cover, it is really hard to gain an advantage on the ground. If one's opponent has unbridled and unchallenged control of the skies, it is nearly impossible to mount any sort of attack on the

ground for any sustained amount of time because the enemy will bring in air support and kill you: that's exactly what happened to the Muj. Thus, the Muj were slaughtered wholesale by the Hinds, which also destroyed many Afghani villages and killed loads of civilians on purpose. However, when, among other factors, the Stinger came online for the Muj, they could actually win battles against the Reds and easily destroy millions of dollars of Soviet equipment. Now, I ask you, my brilliant readers, whether or not "a well-regulated militia" in these times would be armed with a manually portable SAM like the stinger.

2) *Black Hawk Down* (the movie: sorry, I haven't read the book): In this movie is depicted how the terrorist militias in Mogadishu, Somalia shot down two American, state of the art, Black Hawk transport helicopters. Now, did they have the mighty Stinger, slayer of Soviet Hinds? No. They had lowly unguided RPGs (rocket propelled grenades). These relatively rag-tag militiamen killed multiple US special forces personnel (Let me say that with more specificity: Delta Force and Rangers) with AK-47s, RPGs, and a few other various and sundry weapons. So, again do I ask the reader whether a well-regulated militia would be armed with automatic weapons and other formidable weapons or only semi-automatic rifles that have to be registered with the government.

So where does this leave us? Does Joe Six-Pack have a constitutional right to own a Stinger, a liberty that no government (federal, state, county, or municipal: sorry, the UN doesn't count) shall deprive

him of without due process of law (cf 14th Amendment)? Does he have a right to own a weapon that he could easily use to bring down a commercial airliner and kill hundreds of people? It does seem so. And why not? If a man cannot be trusted to civilly bear arms, how could he be trusted to govern himself (remember, we govern ourselves through representatives). That's why felony convicts are generally disenfranchised and barred from owning and bearing weapons: they have shown themselves not trustworthy with respect to governing themselves and following their own laws, thus it is folly to trust them to own and bear weapons.

Appendix 1: I in no way wish to put the Muj on a pedestal as a paragon of humanity; many of them were cruel and inhumane to the unfortunate Soviet soldiers that fell into their hands. The Muj are in many ways the same folks the U.S. and its allies are fighting against in Afghanistan at the current time. In the power vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet-controlled Afghani puppet government, the Muj became the Taliban

Appendix 2: The Stinger was not the end-all-be-all thing that turned the Soviet-Afghani around and it did not single-handedly defeat the Soviets. The Afghanis employed numerous weapons and tactics against the Soviets including screaming meemies (WWII rocket artillery), land mines, Dashika machine guns, a Swiss-made machine gun, various Soviet weapons, the Texas Chainsaw, bicycle bombs, car bombs, etc. The Stinger merely leveled the playing field by ensuring that the Hinds could not attack with impunity. I do not endorse all of the Muj's tactics as ethical.

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The Importance of School Choice

By Steven Valentine

Just last week in Washington, D.C., around a thousand parents, students, and teachers gathered outside the U.S. Capitol for a rally in support of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. The program, which gives D.C. students scholarships to attend private schools, is up for reauthorization in Congress. Supporters suffered a blow in April when Congress voted to phase out the program. President Obama, who had previously signaled support for the D.C. vouchers, chose not to intervene. The end result was 216 low-income children having their scholarships, which had been awarded to them earlier in the year, rescinded.

To understand why students need vouchers, you have to look at the performance of the D.C. school system. According to the Washington Post, "Tests show that in reading and math, the District's public school students score at the bottom among 11 major city school systems, even when poor children are compared only with other poor children. Thirty-three percent of poor fourth-graders across the nation lacked basic skills in math, but in the District, the figure was 62 percent. It was 74 percent for D.C. eighth-graders, compared with 49 percent nationally."¹

The program began in 2004 under President George W. Bush. Children whose families' annual income fell at or below 185% of the federal poverty guidelines were eligible for the program. More than 3,000 students have been provided scholarships of up to \$7,500.² According to evaluations done by the Department of Education over

students enrolled in the program have made significant gains.

Says the Heartland Institute, "The evaluators found statistically significant positive impacts on reading test scores. Students offered a scholarship were performing at higher reading levels by the equivalent of 3.1 months of additional learning when compared with students who applied but did not receive a scholarship. Students who actually used the scholarships to attend a private school improved even further, showing 3.7 months' worth of additional gains. Reading scores are notoriously difficult to raise, so evaluators view the effects as encouraging."³

School safety was also a reason for students seeking scholarships. The 2009 Department of Education evaluation found that 17% of parents participating in the program chose school safety as their top priority in seeking a scholarship. It was the most cited reason behind academic quality. These same parents rated their child's school higher in the areas of safety and an orderly climate. D.C.'s percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 reporting being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property is higher than any states. It is clear that school safety cannot be overlooked.⁴

Sending students to private schools not only improves their education and safety; it is also cost effective. According to the Cato Institute, D.C. currently spends about \$1.3 billion on K-12 education, covering about 49,000 students. That works out to over \$26,000 per student. Compare that

tuition at voucher-accepting schools.⁵ D.C. can only throw money at the public school system for so long. The system is failing, and the one cost-worthy reform has been thrown under the bus.

Over the last nine months, President Obama and Congress have spent recklessly on ineffective boondoggles like the \$787 billion stimulus package and Cash for Clunkers. Meanwhile, the education system is failing and children are losing out. Extending and expanding the D.C. Scholarship Opportunity Program is the right place to start. Our school system needs free market principles and competition. All children should have a decent chance at obtaining the benefits of private schools. Especially considering the fact that President Obama's daughters attend private D.C. schools and 44% of Senators and 36% of Representatives have at one time sent their kids to private schools.⁶

¹<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/09/AR2007060901415.html>

²<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/bipartisan-supporters-call-congress-reauthorize-dc-voucher-program/story?id=8714759>

³http://www.heartland.org/publications/school%20reform/article/25362/Parents_Children_Rally_for_School_Choice_in_DC.html

⁴http://www.heritage.org/Research/Education/wm2437.cfm#_ftn2

⁵http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=10254

⁶<http://www.heritage.org/research/education/bg2257.cfm>