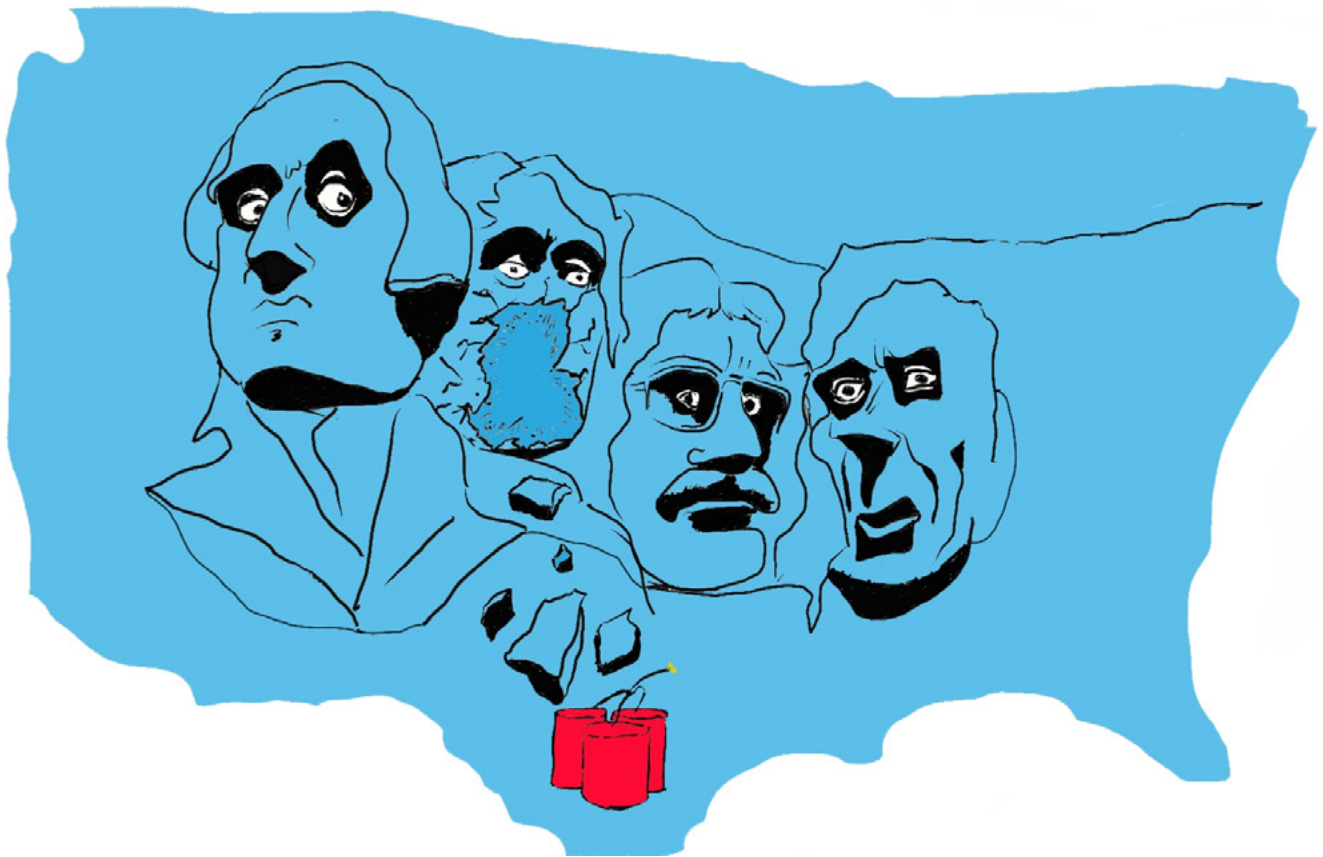


THE PRINCETON PROGRESSIVE

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TWILIGHT OF THE IDOLS



THE PRINCETON PROGRESSIVE

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Recalibrating Progressivism

Why Bernie is not our savior

By Ararat Gocmen

Bernie Sanders is a political anachronism. He is at the same time the Gilded-Age Populist, the 1920s Progressive, and the New Deal-era Socialist. His goal, like theirs, is to unite the American masses into an organized political bloc to fight the moneyed elites of Wall Street.

At a time when the mainstream media and political parties dismiss “class warfare” as demagoguery, Sanders calls upon Americans to “wage a moral and political war against the billionaires and corporate leaders ... whose policies and greed are destroying the middle class of America.” While other politicians make promises to this or that special interest group, Sanders pledges to fight for laborers, pensioners, and students. Populist progressivism, not pandering, is Sanders’ modus operandi.

Sanders often publicly attributes his “democratic socialist” ideology to the political systems of Scandinavia, celebrating the expansive welfare states of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland. Yet he draws an important part of his political vision—that of a populist progressive movement pulling political discourse leftward and securing policies more favorable to the working class—from the

history of the American Left.

However, today’s American Left should view Sanders’ embrace of the United States’ populist-progressive tradition with a degree of skepticism. Though such a movement has the potential to gain mass support in an era of socioeconomic stratification not seen since the Gilded Age, Sanders’ populist politics should temper his supporters’ excitement regarding the “revolutionary” potential of his attempted crusade. Populism has simply disappointed too often throughout American history, failing to ever fundamentally change the system it has sought to challenge.

There are two reasons to regard Sanders’ presidential campaign skeptically. First, past movements with similar populist orientations found little electoral success on a national level. Second, Sanders’ New Deal-inspired platform is unlikely to be an effective ideological response to the rise of neoliberalism.

The central theme of Bernie Sanders’ presidential platform is a laser-focused concern for the American working class: the amalgamation of

laborers, pensioners, students, and others who, in Sanders’ conception, are the victims of contemporary American capitalism. Sanders protests the sharp rise in income and wealth inequality in the United States while decrying the stagnation of real median wages. Promising to combat these trends and improve the socioeconomic conditions of working-class families, he calls for an increase in the minimum wage and various forms of public employment policies. Sanders also rails against the critics of Social Security and Medicare. By scrapping the former’s payroll tax cap and making the latter more cost-efficient, he pledges to strengthen and expand both programs. And while condemning the American higher education system’s failure to offer college students across the country the opportunity to pursue their studies at a reasonable-to-low cost, he vows to make all public universities in the United States free.

It makes sense, then, that Sanders also embraces the political empowerment of marginalized groups. A

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Sanders’ populist politics should temper his supporters’ excitement regarding the “revolutionary” potential of his attempted crusade.

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a major plank of his platform is to reform campaign finance law through legislation, constitutional amendment, or appointment of Supreme Court nominees who would overturn Citizens United. Sanders' commitment to such reform has also affected the way he has structured his own campaign. He is one of the only candidates in this election, and the only major candidate, to forgo campaign funds from Super PACs, opting instead to raise money solely through small donations. His campaign turns the FEC's campaign finance disclaimer into a mantra: "Paid for by Bernie 2016, not the billionaires."

Sanders has also adopted a more robust racial justice platform, unveiled after a run-in with Black Lives Matter protesters in Seattle this summer. Specifically, the platform calls for restoring the parts of the Voting Rights Act overturned by the Supreme Court two years ago, as well as an increase in ballot access for minority populations most affected by voter identification and post-incarceration voting laws. The Sanders campaign has thus adjusted its class-analytic overtones to the realities of a post-Ferguson United States, offering a policy framework that accounts for racial identity as much as it does socioeconomic status.

In all these ways, Sanders' platform appeals to today's American Left, es-

and congressional campaigns on a platform supporting unions, progressive taxation, and railroad nationalization. Similarly, throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, Wisconsin's La Follette family spearheaded a Progressive movement that also gained influence in other parts of the Midwest. During the Great Depression and the years after, Norman Thomas and his Socialist Party were extremely active in American politics, clamoring for economic policies far more radical than anything President Roosevelt originally intended to pursue when he entered office.

These three movements, along with the small agrarian parties, utopian socialist communes, and radical labor unions that popped up after the Industrial Revolution, shine brightly in the collective memory of today's American Left. They represent some of the few instances in American history when the working class had a vocal, influential, and resolute voice to call its own.

But despite their contributions to American working-class history, the Populists, Progressives, and Socialists all ultimately failed. None of them successfully revolutionized national politics or grew into a lasting partisan force, peaking as small parties with only regional support. Their populism suffered from a crucial ideological weakness: a dubious worldview which defined

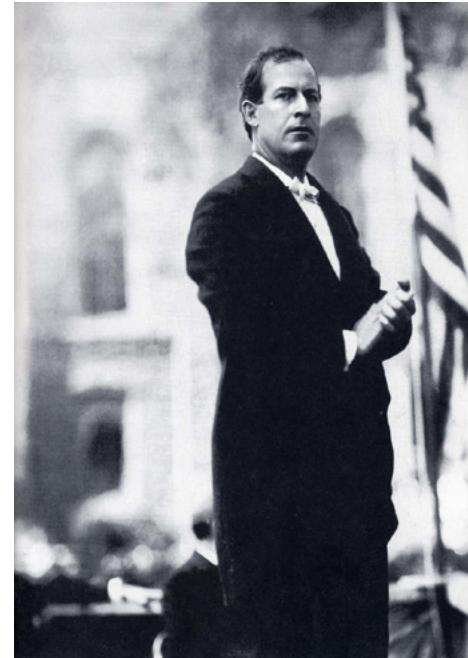
Populism has simply disappointed too often throughout American history, failing to ever fundamentally change the system it has sought to challenge.

pecially to progressively minded college students who have grown up on nothing but the conservative soup of Reagan, tax cuts, and the evils of big government. Unfortunately, given the historical failures of the ideology underlying his policies, Sanders' campaign seems likely to disappoint.

The United States has a long tradition of populist and progressive movements. In the 1890s, the People's Party—also known as the Populists—organized presidential, gubernatorial,

working-class struggle as the fight between the 1% and the 99%, wrongly grouping together the many heterogeneous groups which make up "the 99%" as though they shared common interests. This mis-framing of national political conflict limited these movements' broader appeal. As a result, they failed to mobilize enough voters to support their campaigns.

The disappointing history of American populist progressivism is a bad omen for Sanders' campaign.



William Jennings Bryan, American populist

Like the Populists, Progressives, and Socialists of the past, Sanders asserts the same unpersuasive narrative of a working-class struggle between 99% and 1% that has consistently failed to galvanize the American masses. He condemns the same bankers, millionaires, and elites that countless populist and progressive groups have denounced since at least the late nineteenth century, but whose power and influence such movements have ultimately failed to challenge.

That Sanders resembles the populist and progressive movements of the past makes his success unlikely. Simply put, the United States' long history of populist failures gives a reason to be skeptical about Sanders' campaign. Considering populists' tendency to make overconfident promises about the transformative potential of their movements, Sanders' pledges to lead a grassroots "movement [to take] on the economic and political establishment" and spur "the political revolution of 2015" sound unconvincing.

The reasons for skepticism don't stop there. Thinking dialectically about the history of U.S. politics and ideology raises other questions about the potential of a Sanders-led progressive movement.

By thinking dialectically, I mean interpreting changes in political

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Dollars and Devotion

How understanding the origins of ISIS may help us defeat it

By ANDREW TYNES

In ancient Egyptian mythology, Isis was the daughter of Geb and Nut. Geb was the God of the earth and abundant harvests, while Nut assisted the deceased in their journey to the heavens and was often depicted as a ladder, offering direction to lost souls. The Salafi jihadist group in Iraq and Syria named ISIS coincidentally bears remarkable similarities in its heritage to the Egyptian goddess. The unique origins and subsequent success of the Islamic State lie in its ability to recruit people in both the Middle East and the West by providing Geb's material possibility to the former and Nut's spiritual guidance to the latter.

The lack of economic opportunity in the Middle East has defined an entire generation through its consequences: endemic poverty and severely lacking civil institutions. This particularly affected those who grew up in the regional turmoil of the Iran-Iraq War and American-led interventions in Iraq. Together, these conflicts lasted almost continuously for more than 30 years. According to the International Labour Organization,

the unemployment rate for people in the Middle East between the ages of 15-29 rose to 27.2 percent in 2013. The relationship isn't arbitrary; youth unemployment and political instability are inexorably linked according to a study conducted by the African Development Bank Group. They found that across regions and socioeconomic conditions, countries seeking to promote stability should focus on "providing employment or educational opportunities for youth in times of economic decline." Like Al-Qaeda, ISIS took advantage of the disenfranchised, many of whom were enticed by the prospect of political and economic stability which had been lacking their entire lives. Unfortunately, the radicalism ascendant across Iraq and Syria was almost entirely avoidable. It was not the inevitable circumstance of demographics and history, but rather arose as the result of willful ignorance on the parts of Western elites who viewed the region as a collection of commodities and short term strategic choices.

In June of 1972, the Iraqi government under Saddam Hussein nationalized the Iraqi Petroleum Company,

which dominated oil production in the country and until that point had been owned almost exclusively by Westerners. Between 1972 and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980, Iraq's oil revenue expanded more than 40 fold and per capita income rose by 92 percent. While the Iraqi people undoubtedly profited from the oil crisis that characterized global trade in the 1970s, state ownership also permitted them to share in the fruits of oil revenue in a way that private, largely foreign ownership had not. With this revenue, the economy began to diversify into industries like textiles and steel. However imperfectly attempted, this was the first substantial effort at distributing profits from Iraq's natural resources in a way that engendered long term viability and national stability.

State control of most of the Iraqi economy, with particular emphasis given to the military, persisted until the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 when the United States and its coalition allies implemented a series of rash and ultimately costly reforms aimed at westernizing

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Messaging wishing "Death upon America" from 1980 (This photo and all the others that appear in this article were taken by the author in Iran.)

The Graffiti Revolution

Getting a picture of politics and art in Iran

By SARAH SAKHA

"Give me your phone."

The British embassy had just reopened in Tehran, after being marked with "Death to England" graffiti above the portrait of Queen Elizabeth. The street was flooded with police officers - close to a hundred of them - in anticipation of demonstrations. Some women in loose hijabs brazenly sauntered by them; others walked by briskly with their heads down, fidgeting with their veils. I was one of the latter.

At the street corner, men with gray suits and graying beards were huddled together in front of the embassy just having left jummah, or Friday prayers. They were members of the Basij, a paramilitary civilian volunteer force of the Revolutionary Guard whose role is to enforce the morals and values of the Islamic Republic and repress dissidents, as

they did during the 2009 election riots. They attacked the British embassy back in 2011, storming and raiding the embassy and leaving more than 20 people with injuries and arresting many more. The damage inflicted cost seven million pounds in repairs.

The Basij has since maintained and bolstered its anti-Western position. The main branch of the Basij, the Student Basij Organization, severely criticized the Iran nuclear deal and the concessions Iran made in cooperating with the West. They remain opposed to Westernization, which entails the nuclear deal with the United States. However, their views ultimately must align with those of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, since they are first and foremost loyal to the Supreme Leader. This translates into backing the deal, which Khamenei has done.

Just as I was about to sneak a

photograph of the scene, 3 basiji descended. My line of sight was completely cut off by three robust, older men with unforgiving expressions. A vigorous tug-of-war ensued between them, myself and my mother as they demanded I turn over my phone. They unrelentingly accused me of having taken photos of them and the embassy when such is prohibited; my voice shook as I yelled, insisting that I hadn't taken any photos. Finally, a fourth younger basiji gently told the others to allow me to show them my photos and then to release my mother and me. With trembling hands I showed them a nearly-empty camera roll, and they cleared the sidewalk. Heart racing, I walked away and didn't dare look back.

That was the second, and final, embassy I visited in Tehran - embassies that had been graffitied by dissidents. This graffiti is a part of the street art scene in Tehran, and has become a prominent part of the larger art scene in Iran. Street art is a tool to communicate political and social commentary in the streets of Tehran, among other cities. Any street art that is not sanctioned by the state is illegal, deemed slanderous and dissentient. And yet street artists defy the law on a daily basis, protesting the country's status quo in hopes of bringing to light some of the injustices that plague the Iranian people today. They continue



Graffiti from the U.S. Hostage Crisis at the former U.S. Embassy in 1980, depicting anti-American sentiment

to operate clandestinely, hiding their identities and retaining anonymity. Usually their art is whitewashed within the next day or two by the government.

Street art has a rich history in Iran, both as a means of political propaganda on the part of the government and as a means of self-expression on the part of the Iranian people. After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, during which the Shah was deposed and the Islamic Republic installed, murals of religious and political figures from the revolution and later the Iran-Iraq War began to appear on the walls of Tehran. The walls of the former U.S. Embassy where the students held American hostages in 1979 still exhibit "Death to America" slogans in Farsi. Fast forward to the 2009 election riots, and graffiti became a medium for counterculture propaganda by a younger, more progressive generation.

In the 2000s, street artists began to counter these images, drawing inspiration from both the 1980s Latin-lettered throw-ups of New York and traditional Perso-Arabic calligraphic script. They've organized and collaborated, and some private galleries and smaller intellectual circles have exhibited their work, granted to a limited audience. It was time to expand their audience. Today, many operate by night, such as Black Hand, otherwise known as the Iranian Banksy. One of the artist's most recent images depicted blood types and phone numbers to protest the organ trade in Iran, the only country in the world in which the organ trade remains legal. The images were soon taken down by the government, typically by painting over it or whitewashing.

Just as I was about to sneak a photograph of the scene, 3 basiji descended. My line of sight was completely cut off by three robust, older men with unforgiving expressions. A vigorous tug-of-war ensued between them and my mother and me as they demanded I turn over my phone.



State-sanctioned mural of the late Ayatollah Khomeini

Some images protest the heightened poverty, particularly child poverty, in Iran, largely attributable to economic sanctions, as reported by The New York Times. Others use nature motifs, such as trees, to communicate messages of peace and harmony in the face of polarizing politics. A tree is generally symbolic of not only peace, but protection and antiquity, perhaps pointing to the retention of tradition and culture even in the face of modernization in Iran.

These images of graffiti seem innocuous enough, promoting self-expression and peace with no antagonistic motivations as alleged by the government. It is all part of a larger movement to fight back

against the increasing politicization of art, largely by the government. Yet, the regime has begun cracking down, perhaps out of a state of paranoia and fear in the wake of the nuclear negotiations. The image of the colorful tree was promptly washed off the next day, a 6 feet by 6 feet white box in its place. But so were the "Death to America 2015" slogans from the walls of the U.S. Embassy, according to reports from Iranian state media - an unprecedented, inconceivable step. Iran has gone from sanctioning a mural of this slogan to erasing it from the one of its most sensitive political sites in Tehran, as pointed out by The Washington Post.

Such a shift comes three months after Tehran's mayor Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf, a former Revolutionary Guard commander, led a week-long campaign to encourage greater attendance of art museums and general appreciation of art by Iranian youth. He replaced all 1500 billboards throughout the capital city with pictures of art - foreign,

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Dollars and Devotion

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the country. When the Coalition Provincial Authority was first set up, Donald Rumsfeld appointed Lieutenant General Jay Garner as its administrator. Garner wrote and spoke publicly about the need to “set an Iraqi government that represents the freely elected will of the people” within 90 days, and about the fact that “[it was] their oil.” In addition, he argued that the Iraqi army should be mobilized to assist with reconstruction efforts and that only the small and political Republican Guard should be disbanded, citing the inherent risk in choosing to “immediately demobilize 200,000-300,000 personnel and put [them] on the street.”

Garner’s loquaciousness didn’t sit well with the Bush Administration, and Rumsfeld replaced him with L. Paul Bremer III in early May. While General Garner had served in the Persian Gulf War by helping maintain peace in the Kurdish north, Bremer had little in the way of either leadership or relevant foreign policy experience. Enter Coalition Provincial Authority Order Number 2.

It immediately dismantled all military and intelligence services of Saddam Hussein’s regime. It came as a surprise to nearly everyone who had been involved with the decision-making apparatus from the beginning of the invasion, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and U.S. Central Command. It directly contributed roughly 4 percent to the unemployment rate, which climbed to over 28 percent in 2004 (although the unofficial number was likely much higher). And it put hundreds of thousands of young men on the streets, with little money and lots of confusion and anger. While the Coalition Provincial Authority attempted to correct its error the following month by providing pensions, they ultimately failed. The Iraqi people clearly needed resources to provide for themselves and for their families, but they also needed

employment with dignity that would keep them off of the streets and away from those who would go on to spread sectarian hate and distrust. The offensive lack of basic foresight outlined by Order Number 2 highlights the degree to which the West fundamentally misunderstood the region it occupied and helps explain why the insurgency that became ISIS was so successful.

The Coalition Provincial Authority subsequently began to rapidly privatize large swaths of Iraq’s economy. If Order Number 2 was an individual’s incompetency, the decision to auction off Iraqi assets to Western corporations was collective ineptitude. Several weeks before the in-

The radicalism ascendant across Iraq and Syria was almost entirely avoidable. It was not the inevitable circumstance of demographics and history, but rather arose as the result of willful ignorance among Western elites.

vasion, the Heritage Foundation published a report entitled “The Road to Economic Prosperity for a Post-Saddam Iraq.” The authors use the word “privatization” in some form or another 58 times in the six page report, second only to “oil” despite the extra syllables. A litany of fair criticisms of nationalized industry certainly exist, but the idea that “privatization works everywhere” speaks to the hubris with which neoconservatives and Westerners more generally dealt with the invasion and its aftermath.

After auctioning off many of Iraq’s assets to foreign investors, the Coalition Provisional Authority lowered the tax rate on corporations from 40 percent to 15 percent (with complete exemptions for corporations that worked with Bremer’s administration). In 2004, government

revenues plummeted nearly 35 percent despite the fact that crude oil was at its highest price in decades. Debt ballooned to 335 percent of GDP, making it even more difficult for the chaotic country to attract private creditors. Essential redistributive services and social safety nets that may have eased the transition to a market economy were halted by high interest and low taxes pushed through by the Western interim government. While we might never know for sure what exactly created fertile ground for ISIS to grow in the next decade, American and coalition policies did little to engender a sustainable peace in the region.

Simply put, unrestricted markets fail in the absence of rule of law and sovereignty. While the Iraqi people were freed from Saddam Hussein’s brutality, they quickly found themselves subject to the ruthlessness of international finance. Powerful countries and their corporations were awarded contracts to much of the economy, but perhaps no aspect was more important or more coveted than oil. Influential (and generally Western) corporations received a disproportionate number of contracts, including ExxonMobil, BP, and Shell. Despite the fact that Iraq’s oil industry makes up nearly two thirds of the economy, 99 percent of government revenue and 95 percent of export revenue, it only provides employment to 1 percent of the Iraqi labor force. The commodity that markets want most out of Iraq is the one that will do the least to improve the security and employment situation. Oil extraction and refining requires much more equipment than it does manpower, so capital inflows over the last decade which have gone primarily to the energy sector have barely dented poverty or scratched unemployment.

Although this evidence focuses on the mistakes of the buildup, execution, and aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, the general carelessness with which the West regarded the region pervades the entire history of its relations with the Middle East. Be it the partition of Palestine in 1947, the overthrow of a democratically



Andrew Poulin, who defected to ISIS and was killed.

elected secular Prime Minister of Iran in 1954, or the endorsement of an autocrat in Egypt for nearly thirty years, the West has treated the Middle East with reckless abandon, moral bankruptcy, and inconsistency. In Tunisia, where the Arab Spring erupted, 61 percent of foreign investment between 2003 and 2010 went to the energy sector with predictably similar results. The policies pursued by the West in Iraq and the greater Middle East have only succeeded in destabilizing the region, counter to the concerns of both the people living there as well as Western strategic interests.

But ISIS is unique. While botched Western policies can help explain its rise, its continued success and expansion distinguish it from other extremist groups in the region. In particular, its effective recruitment of young people in the developed world highlights the other pillar of Western failure: the inability of markets to provide meaning in people’s lives. Although one can imagine a world in which policymakers learn from their mistakes and adapt accordingly, there is a certain innate aimlessness in the capitalist system that seriously threatens its hegemony.

Gallup polls indicate that 31 percent of the employed in the United States feel “involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace.” Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the West has lacked a grand unifying project to engender social solidarity and purpose. Tyler Durden succinctly summarized

in 1999’s Fight Club what millions were beginning to feel by the end of the 1990s. He decried a culture that forced them into “working jobs we hate...” while at the same time there was “no Great War. No Great Depression” to inspire them to action. An astonishing number of the generation’s biggest cultural moments like American Beauty, Rage Against the Machine, and even 50 Shades of Gray found similar themes. The Bush Administration’s War on Terror attempted to revive the generational struggle to no avail.

ISIS has responded to this existential angst through both its tactics (intentionally) and ideology (incidentally). They have spent manpower, time, and financial resources courting young people on the internet and enticing them with promises of a fuller life. The FBI reports that ISIS “typically preys on Western youth who are disillusioned and have no sense of purpose or belonging,” including 23 year old Alex. When she spoke to the New York Times, she talked about the daily and incessant loneliness, the desire for community, and the elation she felt when she converted to Islam and her “brothers and sisters” warmly welcomed her on Twitter. Although Alex’s family intervened and she

failed to make it to the Middle East, more than 4,000 Westerners like her have left their home countries to fight for ISIS in Iraq and Syria. ISIS targets and offers solace to individuals who feel trapped by that tedium and emptiness of life in the developed world. To people like Alex, it represents more than an exciting family vacation to the beach. It offers the possibility of a life beyond morning commutes, beyond dull LED lights, beyond cubicles, and beyond the hegemony of monotony.

Jihadists in Iraq and Syria supplement these efforts with a fixation on the apocalypse that seems bizarre to Western observers. They believe that the armies of “Rome” will assemble outside of the small town Dabiq, where they will battle the armies of Islam shortly before the Day of Judgment. This aspect of their ideology is unique and has been actively rejected by other Islamic groups, including Al-Qaeda which, according to Brookings fellow Will McCants, “really played down apocalyptic thinking.” Regardless of the significance of the town or the battle, Dabiq and the apocalypse play “a major part of the Islamic State’s recruiting pitch.” The emphasis that they place on the prophecy, which has inspired military action that would make little sense without it, reminds us why ISIS terrifies the West. More than the reprehensible violence or archaic law, the jihadists offer a way of life beyond capitalism. Like communists or fascists, they dare to reject what has been the singular dominant force in economics, politics, and culture for more than 100 years. And people are listening.

ISIS is not the final harbinger of Western decline, but it is a warning. The emptiness that characterizes so much of so many lives in the West has given rise to a number of

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If Order Number 2 was an individual’s incompetency, the decision to auction off Iraqi assets to Western corporations was collective ineptitude.

Dollars and Devotion

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“solutions” which, like ISIS, are terrifying. Nationalism across Europe and the United States will continue to provide cover for violence against minority communities of Muslim and Jewish faith. All of this speaks to the need to shift priorities in the developed world. We must begin to value each other over the bottom line and transition to a world focused on family, community, and the environment. We must begin to provide basic economic security for all and restrict the amount of time in the office and on the job. Automation in the coming century will provide an opportunity for these dreams to become realities, and we must seize it.

As was often the case of family trees in mythologies of the ancient world, the relationship was incestuous; Geb and Nut were siblings, both children of Ra who ruled the world. Geb helped ISIS fight the failure of market fundamentalism in the Middle East, while Nut provided spiritual and emotional satisfaction that the affluent West has not. Their parent has enveloped the world with highly destructive and unpredictable results.



events in the Middle East and elsewhere remind us that human welfare is not a given and its flourishing is not an effortless task. To expose the systemic failures of neoliberalism is not to absolve those who commit terror of their sins, rather it is to illustrate the full breadth of today's moral crisis. Despite the insistence of the

The idea that “privatization works everywhere,” however, speaks to the hubris with which neoconservatives and Westerners more generally dealt with the invasion and its aftermath.

It is the ideology of commodification, which claims that life only has value insofar as it can be quantified and that an individual's worth lies in his ability to produce. This concept now dominates rhetoric and culture in the developed world and has been the source of both generational malaise and economic turmoil.

Markets have ushered in the greatest period of relative peace and prosperity in the history of mankind. Across the world, poverty has plummeted, women are enrolling in schools for the first time, and there are fewer casualties from war or disease than ever before. But recent

West, extremism will not vanish when the dust of combat boots and cruise missiles clear. Geb and Nut also gave birth to the siblings of Isis, gods and goddesses of war and death. If we want to defeat them, we must overcome their heritage and replace it with financial security and purposeful lives for all. ■

**THE
CONSERVATIVES
HAVE
SUPER PACS
BUT WE HAVE
YOU!**

**DONATE
TO THE
PROGRESSIVE
AND HELP US
KEEP
FIGHTING THE
GOOD FIGHT.**

The Graffiti Revolution

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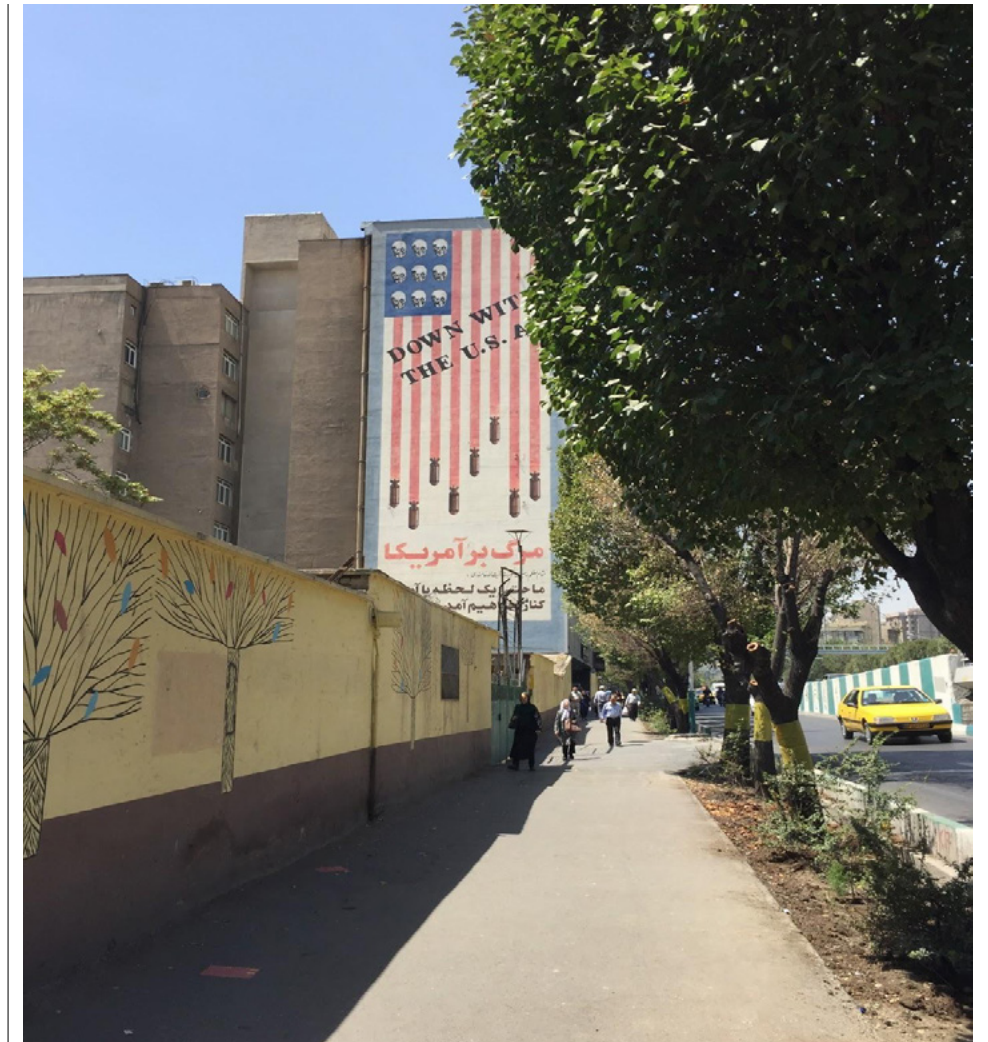
Iranian, classical, modern.

The street art alone represents a shift in relations between Iran and the United States, contrary to what Western mass media or opponents of the nuclear deal may posit. Just last year, the government was sanctioning anti-American sentiment in any visual or verbal form. Now, it can barely stay up a day without being erased.

This is just a smaller part of the bigger picture. Undoubtedly, the Iranian people continue to suffer under the economic sanctions. The price of barbari bread, an Iranian staple, has increased from 50,000 rials (roughly \$1.50 then) three years ago to 150,000 rials (roughly \$5) this past summer, inevitably putting a financial strain on a good portion of at least the more than eight million people of Tehran.

But it's better, and people hope it will get better. One Tehran resident - a menial laborer, former taxi driver and father of two - affected by the sanctions and ensuing inflation.

“Sanctions have repressed its [Iran's] growth; otherwise we could and would rise to power and go back to how we were [prior to the sanctions,” he remarks. “Still, generally it's better. Hopefully this is a new chapter. I think it is.” And he wasn't alone in his conviction. I talked to several taxi drivers, some older and more religious, with Qur'ans on their dashboards and misbahas (prayer beads) on their wrists, others more critical of the theocratic regime. I talked to young men working the cashiers at the corner produce stores. I even talked to Armenian women who owned local women's beauty salons. In order to respect their wishes and not compromise their safety, I could neither record what they said nor take down their names. Regardless, they all embraced a new rapport between the United States and Iran. They welcomed the nuclear deal as a sign of change and progress, and they were all hopeful of a future for the Iranian people. ■



Mural that reads, “Down with the U.S.A.”



Street art of colorful tree used to connote peace and harmony

Forging the Instruments of Progressive Peace

Why the left should care about the defense budget

By IAN KIM

Liberals have retreated from the technical and philosophical discourse surrounding defense budgeting. The detrimental consequences of this retreat on progressive policy goals domestic and foreign are rarely examined. Now, as the Republican Presidential primaries, in all its absurd pageantry, revives a neoconservative vision for military spending, time is running out for a left that has been negligent for too long.

“We need the strongest military on the face of the planet, and everyone has to know it”. Republican presidential hopeful Carly Fiorina began with bravado as she laid out her thoughts on the future of American military expenditure at the CNN Republican primary debate in September. Amidst the three-hour mayhem of right wing rhetoric and Trumpisms, Fiorina’s policy statements served as both an unexpected departure from the debates’ general tenor and a reminder of an issue that the Right intends to press—and that few progressives are ready for: the debate over defense expenditures.

The military budget Fiorina outlined amounted to a gargantuan \$5.5 trillion plan in the coming decade. Her prescriptions included an active duty maintenance of 50 Army brigades; a 100,000 soldier increase from the current count of 30 brigades, surpassing the 45 brigade peak the Army operated during the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Her plan also outlined a 350-ship navy, which would amount to a fifty percent increase from current naval fleet size and would cost anywhere around twenty billion dollars per year. She also expressed interest in expanding US nuclear capabilities, though the cost and details of such an expansion were not specified.

Fiorina’s position on defense

spending, though the most comprehensive so far, is neither unique nor exceptionally exorbitant in this election cycle’s Republican field. In fact, this primary season has seen an abundance of similar rhetoric. Jeb Bush presented his \$54 billion dollar per year plan to lift and reverse the budget sequester’s effect on defense spending. Going even further, Marco Rubio called for an increase in the defense budget from its current level at \$612 billion (which does not include the \$89 billion ‘emergency’ funds used to finance additional US operations in the Middle East) to \$661 billion. Ben Carson, Chris Christie and Donald Trump have, to differing degrees, voiced calls for a military build up. Even Senator Rand Paul, despite his libertarian roots, acquiesced to the expansion of military aid abroad. Uniting the Republican candidates this election season is a particular interest in defense spending with a major focus on quantitative rearmament. Coupled with the field’s increasingly combative language toward Iran, Russia, China and other potential geopolitical rivals, this quantitative armament doctrine points to the Right’s underlying intention to return to the very interventionist, big stick neoconservative foreign policy like that of the Bush years.

On the issues surrounding defense expenditures, the left has little to say in response. Defense expenditure has yet to take center stage on the campaign trail speeches. The silence on these issues must be viewed with great concern, but, perhaps more tragically, without surprise. After all, candidates are representatives of their constituencies. And the current partisan imbalance in the discussion over the future of military spending stems from the relationship between many progressives and the issue of defense spending—one marked by

distance and talking-point truisms.

Judging by the discourse in progressive media, the Democratic agenda on Capitol Hill, and conversations between campus liberals, progressives appear less interested in defense spending than in civil domestic policy or even foreign policy more generally. This phenomenon isn’t particularly difficult to explain. The defense budget has been neither an issue that decides elections nor a matter of populist concern. Defense budget debates generally do not spark more political investment from most progressive media or office holders, with the exception of those with constituencies dependent on defense manufacturer employment.

Policy wise, progressivism’s main focus has by far been domestic improvement—there is no shame in this. But when it comes to defense spending, the prevailing progressive focus has been on the general reduction of the budget, with little concern for what the budget consists of. The House Democrats’ pursuit of amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act this past May was an example of this, where the discussion was isolated to cutting the defense budget without any consideration for the far more important challenge of re-engineering the contents of the budget to align with a progressive foreign policy. Working under the singular metric of reducing the size of the budget and bureaucracy, progressives have had little reason to expend additional energy or thought under an Obama administration which, by way of reducing our involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, has had consistent success in reducing the defense budget as a percentage of GDP. However unintended, the reduction approach has stunted the development of a more thorough leftwing philosophical

framework for addressing defense spending.

On a more fundamental level, the left must admit to having developed somewhat of an allergy for any discussions related to the mechanics of fighting wars. And while this has hampered the formulation of a progressive doctrine for defense appropriations, it is a fully understandable phenomenon. As Admiral Mike Mullen touched on in his recent inaugural speech for the Princeton University Program in the History and Practice of Diplomacy, for most of the new millennia, we repeatedly had to swallow a Washington consensus that opted for rash military action abroad instead of the full reservoir of diplomatic options. Progressives are just now beginning to savor the freedom we have gained after years of entanglement in foreign wars. Steeping ourselves in the details of war planning and technology comes across as antithetical to our political instincts.

To progressives, it seems that we misappropriate so much funding and focus on our military not because it serves as deterrence for war or as necessary preparation for security crises, but because war-hawks need the spending to wage the wars they instigate. This sentiment is well grounded. But it does not mean progressives should abandon the defense budget. Disinterest and disengagement continue to impose untenable costs on progressive politics and policies.

Progressives have yet to appreciate and capitalize on the inextricable link between military spending and the type of American foreign policy that is exercised. Changes to the defense budget set the trajectory for how the US projects influence abroad. For example, the current acquisition dilemmas surrounding the types of naval vessels or next generation aircraft are crucial, because those military assets are the strategic instruments through which the security side of American foreign policy is realized. The particular kind of vessel or aircraft that is selected and financed determines the type of policy that can be exercised. For example,

additional investments in polar-capable patrol vessels set the stage for a more aggressive projection of power in the Arctic and pulling a more confrontational line with Russia, whereas bolstering investments in drones facilitate the continuity of the current way of war in the Middle East. By not addressing the specifics of military acquisition, progressives effectively prevent the achievement of any Pax Liberalis we desire to construct.

A less obvious yet equally injurious consequence of progressives’ passive defense budget mismanagement is that it hampers our domestic policy priorities. When they are not working towards undermining nondiscretionary social safety net programs, Republicans frequently respond to any additional progressive policy proposals with the argument that there simply is no responsible way to increase discretionary spending. However, when the majority of discretionary spending is tied up in a Defense Department plagued by inefficiency and in desperate need of reform, it is evident that there is a case to be made for rebalancing the allocation of funds, which could facilitate progressive policies. The opportunity cost of unexamined military spending is a \$600 billion burden ultimately shouldered by America’s poor and middle class. While the defense budget is in part being reduced as mentioned prior, the Left has not shown particular initiative, and therefore it has been unsuccessful in translating this reduction into funding progressive policies.

Moreover, there are plenty of reasons for greater scrutiny, even in the age of a slightly smaller Obama era defense budget. The administration’s defense spending of late has demonstrated plenty of irresponsibility. For example, the Defense Department purchased \$16 billion worth of ammunition that was found to be mostly unusable, prompting the expenditure of an additional \$1 billion to destroy the ammunition they had just purchased. In another case, the Pentagon, after spending nearly half a billion dollars on 20 planes for the Afghan Air Force, turned around and scrapped

The question of what specific projects are conducive to setting the stage for a progressive foreign policy is a matter that demands deliberate policy analysis and creativity from the Left.

16 of the aircraft for just \$32,000 per plane. Progressives should not only express more outrage but demand more change.

Despite the costs of neglect, for now, the left has not rebooted its policy approach to the defense budget. And the vacuum left by progressives’ disengagement leaves the defense budget a stomping ground for our less than sound ideological rivals. The most recent and possibly most toxic ideology to dominate the conversation, the one making an unwelcomed comeback this Presidential election cycle from the Right, is the neoconservative approach.

The neoconservative framework for defense spending rests on providing the logistical base for a type of aggressive, unilateral and interventionist foreign policy best exemplified by the Bush administration of the 2000s. The Bush years featured numerous cases of appropriations gone wrong, hijacked by neoconservative adventurism abroad. From the cost metric standpoint, the Bush era budget eventually clocked in at double the Clinton era levels. In terms of composition, the neoconservative approach left behind a lasting impact on American foreign policy by employing private military contractors. The funding and therefore presence of private military contractors in the US power projection toolkit has allowed US interventionism to persist, especially in the Middle East, by lowering the political cost of neoconservative foreign policy. The Right no longer must justify the deployment and loss of uniformed American soldiers. The militarization of the

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Contesting Wilson's Legacy

Memory and racism at Princeton

By MARCIA BROWN

During the Civil War, many Princeton students enlisted, took the Dinky to Princeton Junction, and headed south. They fought for the Confederacy. But this isn't the only reason Princeton has been known as the Southern Ivy. Like many American institutions, and other Ivies at the time, Princeton was also involved in other racist movements. For example, The College of New Jersey, Princeton's former name, birthed the African Colonization Society—a group motivated to expunge a race that James S. Green called a “revolting wretchedness and deadly pollution.” Green was also the U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey.

One hundred and fifty years later, Princeton admits “its most diverse class ever” with each passing year. And these students, most conspicuously right now as members of the Black Justice League, are making clear that Princeton must confront its past. In particular, they argue, it is imperative to address the implications of Woodrow Wilson's legacy to the school, the nation and students of color at Princeton.

Princeton's history regarding race and women doesn't reflect the inclusivity Princeton is currently attempting to pursue. African Americans were attending other Ivies long before Princeton admitted them. Princeton

went coed only after other colleges were doing the same. Princeton has never been at the forefront of social justice. However, it is not too late to acknowledge the past injustices and work toward a more inclusive future. In some ways, the university has already tried to do that. But it has not been enough, and students are making that clear. Most recently, posters detailing the school's idol, President Woodrow Wilson, show some of his most inflammatory and racist remarks. They are another example of students' efforts to bring Wilson's full legacy into the open.

The context of today demands that we wrestle with where Wilson stands on our campus. “Our” includes women and students of color, a future Wilson would have scorned. If we merely dismiss Wilson as complex, — a flawed “man of his time” — and do not acknowledge his flaws publicly and deliberately, we leave an unacceptable status quo unchallenged. It means maintaining a symbol that reflects values no longer viewed as acceptable. Wilson's continued presence as symbol implies that the university is indifferent to the African American experience. For this very reason, it is necessary for Princeton to reevaluate and grapple with its history and with its relationship with Woodrow Wilson, just as other universities are doing the same.

On the subject of Woodrow Wilson,

we have easy access to the traditional narrative. Moreover, while that narrative sometimes acknowledges his racism and sexism alongside his political achievements, it neglects to regard those sentiments in a contemporary context. Professor Voices, a website from Boston University Public Relations platform sums this up: “Wilson is widely and correctly remembered—and represented in our history books—as a progressive Democrat who introduced many liberal reforms at home and fought of the extension of democratic liberties and human rights abroad. But on the issue of race his legacy was, in fact, regressive and has been largely forgotten.”

“There's not much awareness. Most think about him as Woody Woo, which is a building,” Professor Stanley Katz said. There's “idealization” of him on campus, Katz added. Katz, whose appointment is in the Wilson School, has been at Princeton since 1978. As Katz wrote in the afterward of *The Educational Legacy of Woodrow Wilson*, “Confronted with a college that was half female and substantially nonwhite, he would surely have been dismayed.” More than that even—Wilson would have soured to learn that “the practical question,” as the posters quip, of African Americans applying and being accepted to Princeton is now a reality.

One of Wilson's first moves in

office was to re-segregate federal offices and public spaces like cafeterias and bathrooms. Soon after, he required photographs for applications to federal jobs. He also passed a law making interracial marriage a felony in Washington D.C. Black Americans who had voted for Wilson were dismayed. W. E. B. Du Bois had thrown his unenthusiastic support to Wilson over William Taft and Theodore Roosevelt as Wilson had expressed more moderate views during his campaign. The posters, which recently appeared around campus, say, “If the colored people made a mistake in voting for me, they ought to correct it.” Attributed to Wilson, this quote reflects a view Wilson held until his death in 1924.

Wilson is far from the only leader of a prestigious educational institutions whose legacy today's students are calling into question. Yale University still calls one of its residential colleges Calhoun College. This year, the college's website offers an open conversation with freshmen about the college, “named for one of slavery's most ardent defenders,” (Yalecollege.yale.edu). They call for conversation about the place of historical narratives on campus. That call to action is one that institutions across the country are reckoning with today, especially as the general public grows more aware of the killing of African Americans by police. A few years prior to the current debate, Brown University, under the leadership of their first female black university president, commissioned a comprehensive report of Brown's role in the slave trade, illuminating Brown's sinful past. Graduate students at Yale University pursued some similar research, uncommissioned by the university, Guild said. Even Princeton students, under Professor Martha Sandweiss' guidance, are working on a history of Princeton's role in slavery. The University, however, did not commission the work that Sandweiss and some students are doing together to publish to a website later this academic year, according to Guild.

Joshua B. Guild, professor of history and African American studies, credits much of the recent discussion about Wilson's legacy to a “group of underclassmen, black students in general as well, who were determined not to let the status quo remain.” The Black Justice League, an organization formed last year of around 12 members with horizontal leadership, believes that raising awareness and educating students about the complexity of revering Wilson is the first step. As institutions and universities across the U.S. grapple with similar issues, the BJJ is calling on Princeton to do the same.

I met with members of the BJJ to hear their thoughts about the recent campaign and to better understand their experiences at an institution that venerates a man like Wilson.

“It's a feeling of exhaustion,” said Destiny Crockett, a member of BJJ. She added, too, that BJJ doesn't speak for all African Americans on campus. Asanni York, another BJJ member and Wilson School major, explained the significance of the Woodrow Wilson School's name. “When a black person— or a woman — walks into the Woodrow Wilson School, he or she knows Wilson wouldn't want him or her there,” York said. York added that he knows it's important that he be in that physical space to make it clear that he should be there. For the BJJ, “My ultimate goal would be to change the name [of the Wilson School],” Crockett said. “But I know that won't happen before I graduate.”

In the meantime, the Princeton community must cultivate an understanding of Wilson's legacy. There are many paths this could take. To begin with, there is the BJJ's proposal to have mandatory discussions in freshman advisory groups groups their first week to discuss Wilson and his history. Not only will this educate students, but it will allow them right away to begin the kind of discussion our diverse campus requires.

As it currently appears, the description of Wilson on the Orange Key tour website and on Princeton's own website entirely omit any mention of

Wilson's racism and belief in white superiority. It is time to change that language to reflect Princeton's transformation into a more inclusive institution—more diverse, as the administration constantly tells us, than ever in its history.

Student and faculty town halls should also become more commonplace. This would reflect a commitment to free speech and academic freedom while allowing different kinds of voices to be heard. It would not be the anonymous comments section or Yik Yak but, instead, a space that would invite comments with the understanding the speaker must believe in what he or she says and be willing to stand behind it.

Finally, if Princeton does not change the name, perhaps it can create a physical acknowledgement to students of color within the campus community and around the country in the Wilson School. A plaque inside the Woody Woo building detailing Wilson's racist views and their consequences is not a huge concession, but it is a start.

These solutions will not make our campus perfect, but they will continue a critical dialogue begun last year by a dedicated group of students unwilling to let the status quo remain and allow the scourge of racialized police violence to go unnoticed. Princeton was late in admitting African Americans and other people of color. It was late in admitting women. Let's not be late in fulfilling our obligation to students of color and to Princeton's ideals as an institution dedicated to truth.

Confronting the past with an understanding that it is our obligation to history and future of our institution is our duty. And it is imperative that this confrontation be fully public. This undoubtedly makes that alumni, faculty, students, administrators nervous. Yet it is necessary to do for the students who belong on Princeton's campus right now. Welcoming Princeton's most diverse class yet—a trend I imagine will continue into the future—means that the University must also welcome an open discussion of its past. ■



The UK's Red Tide?

BY LUKE SHAW

Jeremy Corbyn was recently elected leader of the UK Labour Party, winning 60% of first-preference votes, well ahead of the second-placed candidate's 19% showing. Due to his firmly leftist politics, he was considered an outsider, both politically and in terms of his electoral chances. During the leadership campaign, he rapidly built a vast following and prompted new, younger members to join the party to vote for him.

Since many Labour MPs originally refused to serve in his shadow cabinet, Corbyn was expected, despite his mandate, to construct a broad-based team that drew from the ranks of the party's more moderately inclined members. But to them, given the British public's fixation on the necessity of austerity—according to a Labour study, 58% of voters agree and only 16% disagree that cutting the government's budget deficit is the top priority—Corbyn's "Old Labour" welfare-state vision looked politically suicidal. Thus the gasps of horror from the parliamentary party (as distinct from the general membership), who voted overwhelmingly against him, may have come from fears of Corbyn's alleged un-electability. According to their analyses, the former Labour leader Ed Miliband, who led the party to a crushing defeat in the May general election, and whose resignation prompted this leadership

crisis, had already been too left-wing for the tastes of the British electorate.

But why should Labour so denigrate what 40 years ago were core principles of the party?

There is, in all this behavior, a somewhat unconscious acceptance, if not celebration, of neoliberalism by the party. The "common sense" that Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron is so fond of appealing to goes unquestioned. And in this "common sense" conception, people, especially impressionable youth, are caught up in Corbyn's ideological politics instead of "what governance should instead be": a calculus of the best way to let "the market" do its work, with minimal state intervention. This concession to conservative ideology has been implicit in Labour's platform since the years of Tony Blair's leadership, during which concerns were never heard about "broad-based" cabinets needing to include the party's left: its representatives were never actually included. In the Labour MPs' rhetoric, there is the tacit assumption that Corbyn's election is a misstep by the general membership: a failure on their part to recognize the rules of the market, and an electoral mistake which ought to be "corrected" as much as possible

Why should Labour so denigrate what 40 years ago were core principles of the party?

while still preserving the veneer of democracy.

The great neoliberal coup that made politics about sober acceptance of inevitable "tough choices," within a narrow framework is ingrained in Labour MPs' minds. Out of fear of losing "credibility," few other than Corbyn voted against the welfare cuts of the Conservative government's recent budget, even if the majority opposed it morally or economically. The general party line was to abstain, suggesting the same confused political message that Labour appears unable to clarify. The party is too afraid of public opinion to oppose austerity, but equally unable to back it.

But this is Labour's problem. "Fiscal responsibility" is the touchstone for many voters, and the party continues to struggle with two of the public's impressions about Labour. The first is that they "cannot be trusted on the economy." This is a product of the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne's myth that the Labour government overspent in the lead up to, and hence worsened or even caused, the 2008 recession. (Osborne backed the spending plans at the time, and the real cause of the

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Recalibrating Progressivism

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discourse as an ideological tug-of-war between constantly reformulated conceptions of Left and Right. Applying this framework to the U.S. since the Civil War, we can divide American history into three distinct periods: the period until the Great Depression, when classical liberalism and laissez-faire thought were the dominant ideologies; the period from President Roosevelt's election in 1932 to the end of the 1970s, when progressives exploited the collapse of the free-market system and established government intervention and a strong welfare state; and, finally, the period from Reagan's election until today, during which conservatives reformulated market principles into new terms and have successfully trumpeted them into ideological dominance.

Carrying out this analysis in greater detail requires a much farther-reaching investigation than this (POL concentrators, take note). Nevertheless, the ascent of neoliberalism in the United States since the 1980s—the predisposition toward market-based solutions to society's problems, derived from a critique of state interventionism—is an undeniable fact and a phenomenon to which the American Left has failed to adequately respond. Sanders is a part of this failure. His response is not an innovative reformulation of historically progressive and left-wing thought—as the new free-market ideology was to laissez-faire thinking—but the mere restatement of a traditional New-Deal inspired platform.

In their challenge to post-war American progressivism and European social democracy, the conservative intellectuals who brought about the free-market renaissance—Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and their friends in the Mont Pelerin Society—did not simply reassert the usual laissez-faire arguments of classical liberalism. Recognizing the post-Great Depression era obsession with problem-solving in public policy, they

reformulated the notion of the market and promulgated it anew.

In this new conception, which prevails today, the free market does not merely represent humankind's natural state of economic freedom, as it did in classical liberalism; it is also the answer to the majority of society's problems. The market becomes a simpler, more elegant solution to the issues that the state could only try to resolve through more complicated, less efficient means. Cap-and-trade can now save the environment; and "flexibility" in the labor market can reduce inflation and unemployment without negative consequences for the working class. Combined with the stagflation of the 1970s, the ideological appeal—the novelty and freshness—of this reformulation of free-market thought proved strong enough to turn American public opinion away from the progressive postwar consensus.

It is now up to the American Left to continue its dialectical, ideological struggle with the Right and respond effectively to this reformulation of free-market thought in the United States. Yet Sanders, the Left's candidate in the coming presidential election, has failed to put forth the recalibrated progressivism necessary to galvanize the American masses into supporting his campaign. Instead, the policies he proposes—increasing the minimum wage and public works programs and expanding social security—are exactly the policies the Right critiqued out of popular support in the 1980s. Sanders' counterpunch to the return of free-market dominance is no more than the restatement of the New Deal-inspired policies that the Right clubbed out of existence with Reagan's election.

Any effective political and ideological response from the Left today requires the kind of originality that Sanders' platform lacks. Simple reassertions of public policy goals from the New Deal-era are not enough to galvanize today's American masses into turning against the post-Reagan variety of free-market dogma. To truly challenge the dominance of this ideology, as President Roosevelt once challenged classical liberalism during the

Great Depression, Sanders and the rest of the American Left must come up with new ideas and proposals that excite the American public and reorient popular opinion leftward. That might mean new socioeconomic policies like universal basic income, or it could be a reorientation away from mere economic progressivism to an entirely new kind of progressive thought—for example, one which attempts to bring the postmodern Left's insights on race, gender, and sexuality into policy consideration. In any case, what is certain is that the Left needs a neo-progressivism, neo-radicalism, neo-something to effectively challenge neoliberalism.

I still plan to vote for Sanders next year, and I encourage others to do the same. Regardless of my skepticism of his campaign's potential for success, his platform stands out among those of current candidates due to its truly progressive pitch and tenor. And though I remain pessimistic because of Sanders' populist orientation and New Deal-inspired policy proposals, I hope that I'm proven wrong.

I hope Sanders' populism is able to inspire the American masses into political action in a way that William James' Bryan, Robert La Follette, and Norman Thomas never could. I hope that he can channel FDR in his calls for a more expansive welfare state; and that he successfully recalibrates the American Left as Reagan reformulated and resurrected the American Right.

Until then, all I can do is keep my expectations of Sanders in check while calling on him and other leading American progressives to offer us some ideological novelty, creativity, and freshness—namely, to offer us a coherent vision of a post-neoliberal Left. ■

I'd like to thank Andrew Hahm '17 for helping me write this article. The discussions I had with him regarding Sanders' campaign were crucial to my final thoughts on the matter, and his review of and contributions to my drafts of this article were invaluable.

The UK's Red Tide?

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large post-Labour deficit is the bail-out of the banks). The second impression is that the party does not actually believe focusing on the deficit is the correct policy orientation. We sense that Labour believes there is something wrong with the neoliberal consensus, this way of thinking goes, but it unconvincingly trumpets the importance of what we believe in, namely deficit reduction. This produces a muddled and confusing message which the Conservative mantras of “hard truths” and “competence over [Labour’s] chaos”—yes, the best the Tories strive for is competence—cut through.

Corbyn’s ascent is thus the natural reaction of the Labour believers who have stayed true to the party’s founding principles, while its leadership has diverged from them, chasing the absolute truths of the market and obsessing over the deficit. Recent changes in how leaders are elected have given a greater say to the wider membership at the expense of the parliamentary party, resulting in the return of Old Labour ideas to the public consciousness. Indeed, MPs are separated from supporters by a vast gulf—the parliamentary party voted in favor of non-Corbyn candidates 210 to 20.



Corbyn’s anti-establishment background is clearly a reason for his popularity. He has never served in a shadow cabinet and is untainted by association with the party’s powerbrokers. But this is not just a classic case of inchoate anger at the “establishment” candidates and the commensurate, unthinking hatred of traditional politicians associated with it. Instead, it demonstrates the historical marginalization of Corbyn’s views in the upper echelons of mainstream politics, even in the party which is supposedly their natural home. Supporting longstanding Labour principles has never gotten figures like Corbyn anything but minor roles in the government.

This peculiar antagonism within Labour is only coming to the surface now because the cognitive dissonance required to maintain a leadership divorced from the party’s principles no longer has a means of suppression. The promise of being in power, as under Blair, no longer hold. The memories of past electoral failures of the Old Labour platform, as in the 1960s and 1970s have faded, and so has under the potential for compromise between the old-school hardliners and the more moderate members of party. The forces pulling apart Labour’s left (commitment to principles) and its right (promise of power) have been exposed,

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eliminating any potential for victory in May’s general election. The party’s muddled message satisfies neither its members nor the electorate.

As a result, the left has declared itself unsated by the mere prospect of power. The worst recession since the Great Depression radicalized young voters and led to Corbyn’s election. They want something more. There has thus emerged a great tension within Labour, leaving there much to be pessimistic about before even considering the weight of public opinion.

However, there can be no triumphant renditions of the “Red Flag” for British leftists until the bizarre acceptance of the politics of neoliberalism, on the grounds of its supposed apolitical nature, is challenged. Labour, and conceivably any major left-wing party in the world, must respond to the electorate in order to win and prevent the party from tearing itself apart, as it is currently on the verge of doing with its MPs’ failures to support Corbyn’s leadership. While one can make allowances for the radical sympathies temporarily produced by extreme economic contraction, and hence explain the rise of leftist parties such as Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece, in the majority of the developed world, the left waned for years as neoliberalism has waxed. The question thus becomes, “In what way should the left respond?”

The left has two choices: accept the public’s “indisputable” logic of “deficit reduction” and allow democracy to truly become technocracy,

the direction which the non-Corbyn Labour leadership seems to be heading in. Or—just as neoliberalism emerged from academic treatises by Hayek and Friedman—make use of the economic research supportive of traditional and new left-wing policies coming out of universities, think-tanks and the like to construct a solid basis of credibility. “Common-sense,” the preferred label of the right for what one would call right-wing opinions, surely implies empirical experience. If that is so, one can marshal the numerous data extolling the virtues of the “Golden Age” of the post-war era, during which the ‘New Deal’-philosophy of fettered markets and welfare was widespread and popular among governments. It is possible to justify progressively oriented economic policies. But while this has been the case for decades, the left has yet to make much of it.

Relatedly, the depoliticization to which neoliberalism pretends must also be answered. In times of moral relativism like today, the discomfort with arguments based on humanitarianism is understandable. It is difficult to ground politics in beliefs when belief is an unfashionable concept. Neoliberalism makes assertions on the basis of “rationality” and claims certainty. In contrast, the left, with its semi-arguments for efficiency, modified (for example, in the case of Miliband’s pledge to freeze energy prices) by appeals to the interests of the working-class, looks to be making moral judgments about what society should look like. People may agree ethically, but the neoliberal mentality, which emphasizes that the most efficient outcome is that of the free market, leaves one thinking that the left is living in an unrealistic land where one can “waste” output for the sake of intervention based on a moral judgment. In this way, the trumpeted “amorality” of neoliberalism, with efficiency as its sole basis, becomes a strength, convincing the public where the left’s half-and-half mix of morality and efficiency fails.

Returning to the politics at hand, we can pose our earlier question to



Currently, Labour is a weak and fragmented party that has a confused sense about what to do. It will not provide the singular platform necessary to articulate a coherent left-wing message, even if it had the leader to do it. Corbyn is a deserved product of Labour’s travails; but he is not the person the party, nor the left, needs right now.

Corbyn: “In what way should the left respond?” Seemingly, he lacks something which would prevent him from coming across as a little too “old-school”—recent poll figures, show 36% (up 22% from April) of voters see the party as extreme, and 55% as out of date (up 19%). His “People’s Quantitative Easing” was not well-received by economists, and while some of his policies are popular, such as renationalizing the railways, he is in many ways too obviously moralistic. This is part of his popularity with the recent wave of Labour supporters. The demographic group who most supported Labour at the

last election, according to Labour MP Jon Cruddas’ review of the party’s election result, were what sociologists call “Pioneers”—young, altruistic, metropolitan liberals.

But to win, the left must gain support of the pragmatists, too. Voters are not all ideologues—in a recent YouGov poll, 42% of Conservative voters favored renationalizing the railways, as many as those who opposed it—and will respond well to arguments about, for example, the ludicrousness of the right’s “treating the economy like a household.” The key is to just present these arguments to such an audience in a less esoteric fashion.

Currently, Labour is a weak and fragmented party that has a confused sense about what to do. It will not provide the singular platform necessary to articulate a coherent left-wing message, even if it had the leader to do it. Corbyn is a deserved product of Labour’s travails; but he is not the person the party, nor the left, needs right now. ■

Forging the Instruments of Progressive Peace

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intelligence community and domestic law enforcement has led to tragedy at home in the form of police brutality and the erosion of civil liberties. It has subsequently drawn progressive outrage. Those tragedies were catalyzed by the transfer to agencies and local police of Defense Department surplus generated by an unchecked neoconservative acquisitions spree. The most recent statements from Republican candidates, such as Carly Fiorina, are of the same genetic strain as the Bush era *modus operandi* as they propose those same spending habits.

So what coherent alternative can progressives present to stand against a past and potential future of conservative abuse when it comes to defense spending?

The starting point may very well be in preserving and continuing the reduction of the military budget. On this point, there could be greater scrutiny from the Left regarding the ‘emergency’ appropriations for military operations that is, for now, considered separately from the base-operating budget of the military. What is supposed to serve as an exceptional case of funding has become an annual affair, fueling an \$89 billion that once supplemented the costs of Iraq and Afghanistan. Now, it fuels the continuing shadow wars the US fights in various corners of the Middle East. From the progressive standpoint this simply is not an accountable or appropriate budgetary practice.

Yet, the innovation progressivism most requires lies beyond the discretionary price tag and surface rhetoric of reduction. Success in implementing a progressive vision of defense spending will hinge on having an eye for composition not just cost. Outside the undesirable sequester framework, defense appropriations have to function under a shuffle system where certain line items face more cuts or funding than others. The Left

could profoundly change the defense spending and practice landscape by beginning to operate around a new metric of whether or not certain investments in weapons systems or personnel training today are conducive to building a foundation for the type of broader US military and foreign policy progressives envision.

The configurations of military assets the Pentagon possesses significantly affect how American military policy manifests itself. Turning away investments from items that do not align with progressive values or foreign policy priorities, whether it is private military contractors or any potential expansion of the strategic nuclear weapons arsenal, and toward projects that sow the seeds for a progressive foreign policy should be our goal. By defining what instruments of war the military can and will utilize, we can ensure that the progressive approach to war is the war the Pentagon will have to fight. The question of what specific projects are conducive to setting the stage for a progressive foreign policy is a matter that demands deliberate policy analysis and creativity from the Left.

A first step to formulating an answer, however, requires that progressives become more familiar with how the defense budget works. Without a greater understanding of the inner workings of military operations and the investments that facilitate them, there can be no policy rebuttal to the neoconservative tide. Without awareness and concern, there can be no popular demand or movement for a progressive defense budget and a Democratic candidate compelled to reflect that popular liberal demand. For the progressive community here at Princeton, there are many opportunities to expand one’s grasp of defense theory and practice. The Center for International Security Studies hosts numerous educational programs open to the public on defense-related subjects. The Center’s upcoming Military 101 lunchtime series will explore the fundamental workings of US military operational structure. Progressive students should also consider the variety of

courses offered out of the Woodrow Wilson School and others departments that explore the anatomy of modern warfare and strategic affairs. Only by building a robust knowledge in defense can progressives comprehensively counter the Republican schema for defense appropriations rearing its head this election season.

The American Left stands at a critical juncture. The defense budget is now poised to shift in a way it hasn’t or will in a long time, as old strategic demands are replaced by the new. On a strategic plane, extricating the US from full-scale ground combat in the Middle East is fading as the opening acts of the Pivot to Asia grow more important. With changes to the budget inevitable and necessary, the present provides a unique opportunity for American progressives to steer defense appropriation and make a lasting left turn in US foreign policy as a whole. On a political plane, the winds of neoconservatism are returning in full force, galvanized by the subject of increased military spending. Progressives’ capitulation through silence on defense budgeting risks opening the floodgates for a full-scale return to neoconservative defense policies.

“Exceptionalism and patriotism is more than wearing a flag pin”. This is a criticism progressives often make against conservative hawks who advocate for defense policies with adverse consequences they rarely have to shoulder themselves. However, as progressives, it is important to reflect on our own disconnect from the building blocks of our national security apparatus. The integrity and efficacy of progressivism been harmed for too long by the absence of a strong stance on federal discretionary spending. Forging a progressive peace at home and abroad will only be achieved if the challenge set by defense appropriations is met and mastered. With vacancy now an unaffordable luxury and renewal a requirement, whether the American Left wins or or loses this election cycle may depend on how it faces a challenge it has long delayed confronting. ■



Dispatches from the War on Women

What the media misses in the discussion about Planned Parenthood

BY KELLY HATFIELD

The War on Women. I spent a day asking those around me to define this phrase. The initial reactions were similar—a shrug, a look of thoughtfulness, an attempt to deflect so as not to give a “wrong answer.” Many of the subsequent answers, though, were quite different. Taken together, they offered an insight into a wide range of issues that exist in middle-to-upper-class America. From persistent income inequality, to matters of language (the use of “female” instead of “woman,” for example), to recent statistics showing that 34% of Princeton undergraduate women responding to a survey have experienced nonconsensual sexual contact in the past year, time and time again these issues were framed as personal. By personal, I mean only that, when talking about particularly difficult topics (for example, those pertaining to oppression and privilege), many people are only able to do so with reference to issues that relate most closely to them or to people they know.

What surprised me, though, was that no one mentioned the way the media has deployed the term “War on Women” since July. That is, no one

mentioned Congress’ continued efforts to defund Planned Parenthood, even as many of them and many of their peers decided to attend rallies or change their Facebook profile pictures in support of the embattled organization in the last week of September. This even more troublesome, considering that they certainly are not apathetic or untouched by its services. The scope of Planned Parenthood’s care encompasses offers pregnancy tests, emergency contraception, female sterilization, vasectomies, reversible contraception, prenatal care, pap smears, breast exams, STI screenings and treatment, and abortions. As of a 2012 report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), 41% of the services provided are STI screenings and treatment, 34% are related to birth control, and only 3% are abortions. It is crucial to keep these statistics in mind when examining the conversations saturating the media. The majority of the current controversy lies within that very small 3%, in the ethics and morality of abortion and of the use of fetal tissue to further scientific research.

I am not here to navigate the waters of what constitutes a life, nor do I wish to examine the practice of utilizing fetal tissue, which has been around since the 1930s and heavily regulated since the 1990s. Instead, I want to look at the media’s proclamation of a “War on Women,” and I want to do so through a more specific lens. Undoubtedly, the House of Representatives’ treatment of Planned Parenthood President Cecile Richards during the last week of September was hostile enough to merit such hyperbolic language and the label of “war.” It was inappropriate, unbelievable, and many other words that begin with the prefixes “in-” and “un-.” As Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) said when the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee’s questions shifted in tone from those related to the organization to those attacking its president, “the entire time I’ve been in Congress [twenty-two years], I’ve never seen a witness beaten up and questioned about their salary. [...] I find it totally inappropriate and discriminatory.” This detail sheds light on the continued disparity in the treatment of women in power

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compared to men.

However, the recent attacks on Planned Parenthood primarily constitute a War on Low-Income Women. This fact has been referenced in the media, but it has nevertheless been lost in the general discourse. It is easier for media outlets, particularly those with near-constant pressure to churn out news, to create binary situations: you're either pro-life or pro-choice, for or against women, an advocate of child sacrifice or a civilized human being, depending on the slant of the news outlet. As a strategy, this polarization makes it easier to mobilize a mass of people, and it functions particularly well in the current political climate, which itself helps to perpetuate political, social, and



Parenthood does receive \$500 million from the federal government, but it is prohibited from using these funds to provide abortion, and so the remainder of the arguments of those in favor of defunding the organization are

handed down largely preserved the Affordable Care Act, but it limited the scope of Medicaid expansion by allowing the states to decide whether or not to go through with it. Ripple effects were felt in various cross-sections of America following the ruling, but perhaps the most important effect when framing the conversation in terms of the present is how the decision relates low-income women. In 2013, 53% of uninsured women had incomes at or below 138% of the federal poverty line. Twelve of the states that elected not to expand Medicaid under Obamacare had higher-than-average (greater than 20%) rates of uninsured women. It is important to scrutinize these facts alongside the demographics Planned Parenthood serves. From 2010 to 2013, according to the GAO Report, approximately 80% of the individuals who received care from Planned Parenthood had incomes at or below 150% of federal poverty levels. Specifically, half of women who received the crucial care that Planned Parenthood offers were able to do so only because of Medicaid. The current conversation about abortion must focus on this.

The statements of those who opposed the Supreme Court's 2015 ruling—primarily Republicans should be considered alongside what would have happened had the Court decided differently. According to Washington Post journalist Karen Tumulty, they would have faced "the challenge of having to come up with a

moot. This is particularly true, given the fact that recent investigations conducted in Missouri, Pennsylvania, Georgia, South Dakota, Indiana, and Massachusetts, have found Planned Parenthood to be fully in line with regulations pertaining to fetal tissue use and allocation of federal funds; shortly thereafter, other states, including Iowa, Delaware, Idaho, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Virginia, and Colorado, declined to conduct inquiries of their own.

Here is where the Affordable Care Act becomes important. Known popularly, and often pejoratively, as "Obamacare," the 2010 law enacted several major changes to the health-care system. Obamacare in its initial form expanded access to Medicaid for many low-income Americans, created incentives for small companies to provide health insurance to their employees, and created a state-based "market" system in which individuals could purchase insurance. In 2012, a Supreme Court decision

economic inequities. But, in doing so, those who purport to be champions of women's rights, in particular of reproductive rights, shift the current conversation away from that which it should rightly be about; namely, the continued disenfranchisement of oppressed groups for political gains.

The clearest demonstration of the poisonous politics of the recent abortion debate can be seen in Republicans' opposition to the Affordable Care Act, not the videos upon which the entire movement to defund Planned Parenthood was based. While this maybe the seed from which the entire matter has sprouted, there is a more complicated interplay of issues going on that cannot be lumped together into generality. And in any case, independent groups proved that these videos were doctored to portray employees as illegally selling fetal tissue, and acting callously toward what is framed as the slaughter of innocents. Planned

solution for the 6.4 million Americans – most of them in conservative states – who might have found their health insurance unaffordable [...] And as it moves into a presidential election season, the party can continue to galvanize the conservative base by railing against both the law and the high court."

At the same time, however, presidential hopefuls are being pressed for alternatives to Obamacare. Many have responded by making comments similar to Mitt Romney's in 2012: "Obamacare was bad policy yesterday; it's bad policy today. Obamacare was bad law yesterday; it's bad law today." Lambasting it as bad policy and bad law is not an argument: it is easy rhetoric. The same is true about the current discourse about Planned Parenthood. Referring to employees as "minions" and denouncing their work as "barbarism," as "The Princeton Tory" did recently says nothing of substance.

Defunding Planned Parenthood would disenfranchise oppressed and marginalized groups without distinguishing along party lines. Because of this, we, as Americans, have a collective responsibility to work to empower us all, no matter what combination of privileged and oppressed identities we hold as individuals. The media deemed Congress' efforts to be a War on Women, and this may make some people feel distanced from efforts at collective empowerment. However, the media is a reflection on and an extension of our present society. And language, particularly in an age of instantly-accessible language, holds a unique power. We must be precise and cognizant of intersectionality. For this is not just a War on Women (in this sense, I am glad that none of those individuals I asked linked the War on Women to Planned Parenthood), and we must not allow it to be framed merely as that. It is more than that; it is a war on equality and justice. It is an outgrowth of a historical system of disenfranchisement and oppression that we must oppose. ■

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