

KeizerOpinion

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Do not be goaded into war

When in doubt, cut taxes or send in American military troops. Those seem to be the only choices for some of the nation's politicians on the right.

No tax is good—taxes feed the government beast that has an insatiable appetite. Cut off its food source and government will shrink to a manageable size, whatever that is.

Taxes are especially bad when they fund things conservative politicians don't support—food stamps, unemployment benefits, clean air and water. For some the only good tax is the tax that feeds the military budget. That's especially true these days when some are calling for American boots on the ground and missiles in the air to fight the Islamic State. Or, to follow Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's exhortation to take out the regime in Iran before it gets any closer to a nuclear weapon.

In a recent *Keizertimes* web poll, 75 percent of the respondents were against an increase in the Oregon gas tax even if the money was earmarked solely for transportation and highway projects. The American people do not like taxes, a feeling that has been re-enforced by talking heads, pundits and politicians for decades. But there is always money to funnel to defense, which is the only governmental responsibility that gets universal approval.

There is no doubt that the United States needs to spend money on defense. The issue is what that money is being spent on. Millions of vehicles across the nation bear ribbon magnets with a "Support Our Troops" message. Yet, our troops remain woefully underfunded, either on the battlefield or once they get home. Congress and the Pentagon is pushing for the new F-35 fighter. Experts say that this state-of-the-art plane will not perform nearly as well as the two planes it is to replace: the A-10 and the F-16. The F-35 project is expected to cost upwards of \$1.5 trillion. Our troops could be very well supported with a portion of that kind of money. Better equipment in the field, more intelligence and certainly better care for them when they return home bruised, battered and/or broken.

National defense is important, but the defense game has changed over the past few decades. The United States is safe from other nations—no nation-state dare attack continental America. Our current defense strategies must address that some of our prime enemies are stateless and rely on goals other than conquest. There will not be a con-

voy of military ships heading for the U.S. across the Atlantic; there will be a convoy of jeeps and SUVs racing across the Middle East to build a caliphate the leaders say is the beginning of the End of Days.

The United States ended its major offense in Iraq four years ago and it has been drawing down in Afghanistan. Much of the equipment American used in those wars have been left to the governments with which we were allied. In Iraq much of that military hardware is now in the hands of fighters of the Islamic State (after U.S.-trained Iraq troops dropped their weapons and ran—not unlike our allies in south Vietnam 40 years ago).

American taxpayers have spent about \$2 trillion since 2001 to fight wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—two wars we did not win, nor did we lose. We just walked away, as some had been calling for from the very beginning.

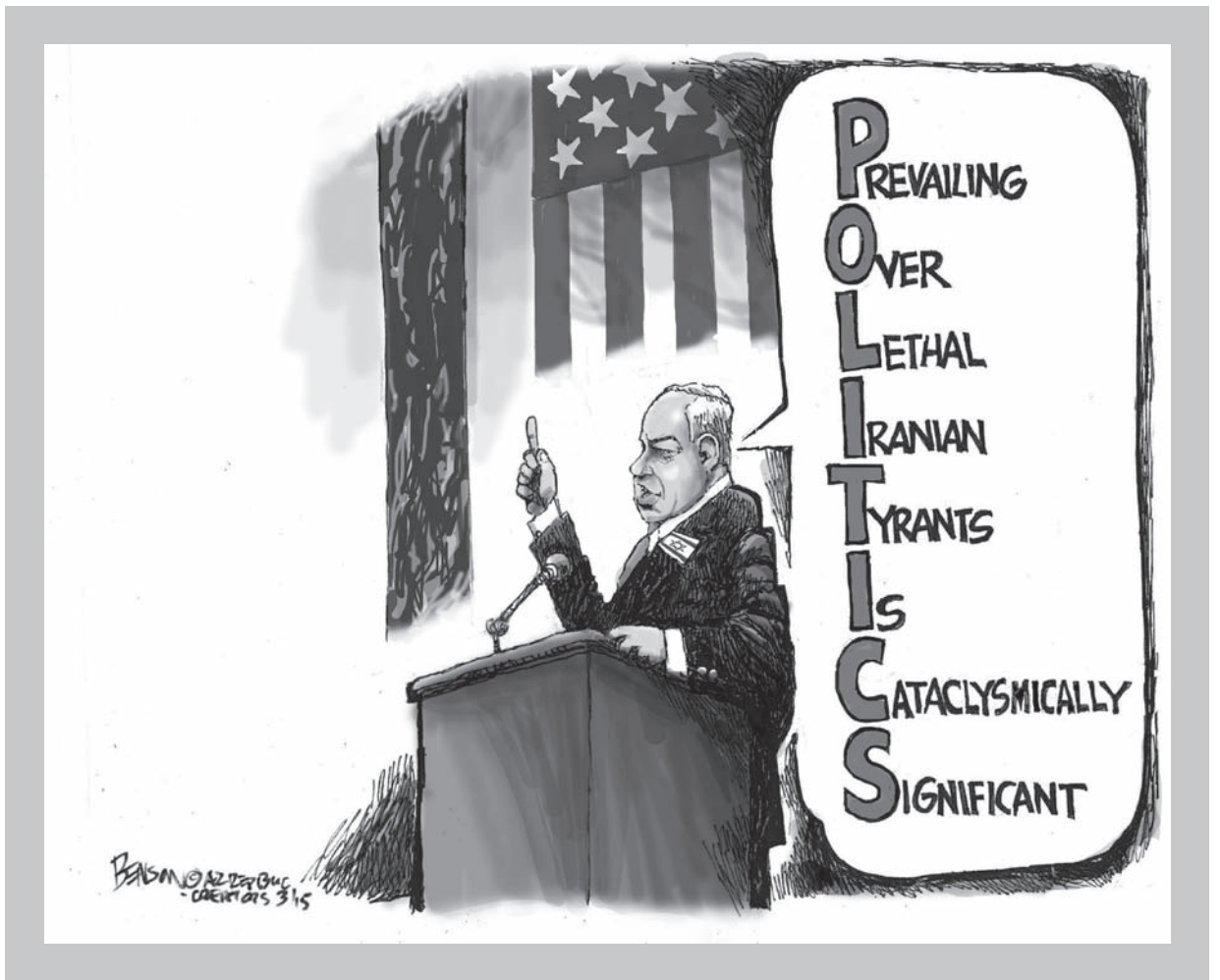
It's unfathomable that in the face of just concluding the longest war in our nation's history, that some politicians are again beating the war drums.

Should the American government spend money on solving the Middle East? Is there a solution? Regardless of Netanyahu's shameful anti-Obama speech, on American soil, in the midst of an Israeli election campaign, the administration should keep it steady as it goes. No one wants an Iran with nuclear weapons. That's what we said about North Korea and we did not attack that country. Iran is the target of war chanting because of its neighborhood.

The American people have war fatigue and do not want to see young American men and women sent overseas, especially in a conflict that has no U.S. interests involved. As Lyndon Johnson once said about a war 50 years ago, American boys should not be sent to fight when the people under attack should be fighting for themselves.

The American people do not want to pay more taxes, though most of the taxes they pay are from the state and local levels. Those politicians who have control of the nation's purse strings can certainly spin a rationale for war (even when it comes from a foreign leader). It would be nice if once in a while they could make the need for improved infrastructure here at home sound as necessary as buying a trillion dollar jet plane or sending America's youth back to the Middle East.

—LAZ



The Bibi-Boehner coalition

By E.J. DIONNE JR.

It was disconcerting to watch Congress cheer wildly as a foreign leader, the prime minister of one of America's closest allies, trashed an American president's foreign policy. It was equally strange that the speaker of our House of Representatives interjected the United States Congress into an Israeli political campaign.

It fell to Isaac Herzog, Benjamin Netanyahu's leading opponent in Israel's March 17 election, to make the essential point: that this week's speech was "a very harsh wound to Israel-U.S. relations" and "will only widen the rift with Israel's greatest ally and strategic partner."

The rapturous greeting Congress bequeathed on Netanyahu for his attack on President Obama's approach to negotiations with Iran no doubt created great footage for television ads back home and won him some votes at the right end of Israel's electorate.

But Herzog's observation stands: John Boehner's unprecedented act of inviting the leader of another nation to criticize our own president, and Netanyahu's decision to accept, threaten to damage the bipartisan and trans-ideological coalition that has always come together on behalf of Israel's survival.

Netanyahu may have spoken the words, "We appreciate all that President Obama has done for Israel," but the rest of his speech painted the president as foolish and on the verge of being duped on a nuclear deal by the mullahs in Tehran.

The Israeli leader reached for the most devastating metaphor available to him, the appeasement of the Nazis that led to the Holocaust. He urged the United States "not to sac-

other views

rifice the future for the present" and "not to ignore aggression in the hopes of gaining an illusory peace."

This is what he was accusing

Obama of doing. No wonder House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi described herself as "near tears" over Netanyahu's "condescension toward our knowledge of the threat posed by Iran."

Pelosi was on to something here because the differences between Obama and Netanyahu are not over whether the Iranian regime in its current form is trustworthy. Nobody believes it is. At stake is a balance of risks, a choice between two imperfect outcomes.

On the one side is a deal that buys at least a decade in which Iran will not be able to produce a nuclear weapon and will be subjected to inspections and other limitations. On the other side is a decision to blow up the current negotiations because the guarantees of any likely accord would not be sufficiently airtight.

Yes, the emerging deal does carry the risk that down the road, Iran could get nuclear weapons. But failing to reach an agreement will not necessarily stop Tehran from going nuclear, and an end to negotiations would in no way ensure that the rest of the world would return to effective sanctions. Netanyahu's rhetoric pointed toward his real goal, which is regime change, but how exactly could that happen without armed conflict?

Netanyahu evaded this by offering a thoroughly rosy scenario. "Now,

if Iran threatens to walk away from the table—and this often happens in a Persian bazaar—call their bluff," he said. "They'll be back, because they need the deal a lot more than you do." Really? If the Iranian regime is as horrible as Netanyahu says it is, why does he expect its leaders to be as flexible as if they were haggling over the price of a carpet?

The crux of the difference between Obama and Netanyahu is about a bet on the future. The Israeli prime minister argued that "the ideology of Iran's revolutionary regime is deeply rooted in militant Islam, and that's why this regime will always be an enemy of America." He added, "I don't believe that Iran's radical regime will change for the better after this deal."

Obama's bet, by contrast, is that a deal opening up space and time provides the best chance we have of encouraging political evolution in Iran. Of course there is no guarantee of this, but it's a reasonable assumption that ending the negotiations would set back the forces of change.

Skeptics of an agreement, Netanyahu included, can usefully push Obama to get the longest time line and the toughest guarantees he can, and American negotiators can try to use the threat of opposition in Congress to strengthen the final terms.

But Netanyahu never gave a satisfactory answer to the most important question: What is the alternative? As for Netanyahu's provocative and divisive intervention in American politics and Boehner's meddling in Israel's election, the voters of our friend and ally will render a judgment soon. (Washington Post Writers Group)

Gov. Brown replace key Kitz cronies

As noted in my most recent guest column, I speak with sincerity when I wish our new governor, Kate Brown, every success as she moves forward through the initial days and ensuing months of her time in office. I have one disappointment already, however, that I am not able to ignore, even during her "honeymoon." That is, according to media reports, Brown has decided to keep her predecessor's administrator and director appointees.

Based on what we know from emails, persons among the agency heads and their immediate subordinates, Cylvia Hayes was

able to boss these people around as though she was the governor. Only one of them, the now former communications director, Nkenge Harmon Johnson, had the strength of character to stand up for right over wrong, questioning Hayes' authority. She was fired for saying that state managers should keep a wary eye on Hayes as she appeared to be on her merry way to doing whatever she wished to do.

Meanwhile, Hayes was known to be pushing Michael Jordan, director of the Department of Administrative Services (who himself has been questioned

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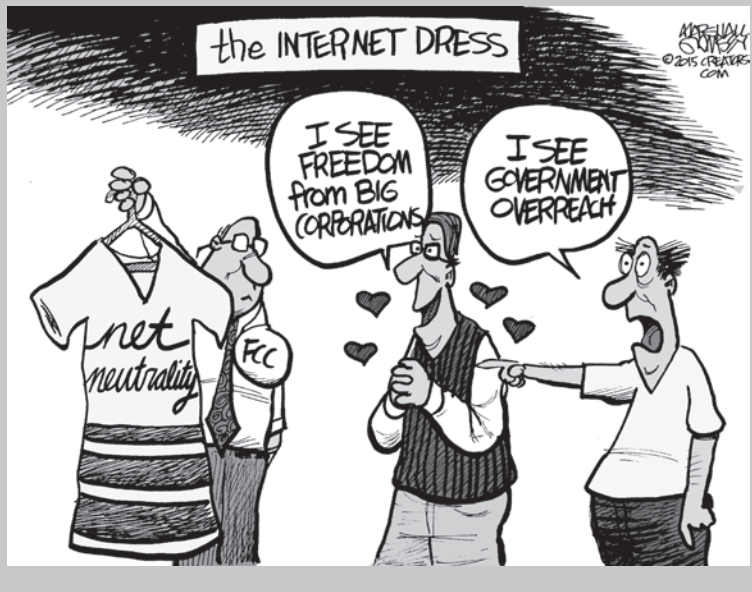
fully unacceptable spells "coward."

It all adds up to a bottom line where they should not be retained in the jobs they held under the Kitzhaber administration because they cannot be trusted. They should be replaced by persons known for their adherence to principles and practices of acceptable conduct.

Governor Brown has said she wants to restore faith in state government. Surely she does not want her legacy to be: She was much about talk without related action.

(Gene H. McIntyre's column appears weekly in the *Keizertimes*.)

high-paying state jobs had the courage to bring what should have been their concerns over Hayes to public attention. They should have threatened to resign if she wasn't reined in. Their acts of self-preservation in the face of what should have been patently obvious as ethically and law-



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