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President Obama does heavy lifting

He moves the center on gun violence

President Barack Obama has committed an unspeakable political sin. He has dared to speak truth about America's epidemic of gun deaths. What the president has said and done is what any responsible parent would do. There are plenty of such politicians who are smart enough to get that, but they are covered by the National Rifle Association.

There is a ridiculous fear, fed by the gun lobby, that any strengthening of background checks or sales of assault weapons is a precursor to taking guns away from responsible gun owners.

The stark reality of America's tide of gun violence is easily understood from the vantage point of our northern neighbor, Canada, or our industrialized ally, Japan. To people living in those countries, America appears barbaric in its willingness to tolerate massacre after massacre, knowing that children are prey in many of them.

The president stated the case succinctly in a column published by *The New York Times* last Friday. "Gun deaths and injuries constitute one of the greatest threats to public health and to the safety of the American people," wrote the

president. "Every year, more than 30,000 Americans have their lives cut short by guns. Suicides. Domestic violence. Gang shootouts. Accidents. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have lost brothers and sisters, or buried their own children. We're the only advanced nation on earth that sees this kind of mass violence with this frequency."

One could say Mr. Obama has merely stated the obvious. But in the upside down world the NRA creates, anyone who says we don't need to live with all this gun violence is deemed a dangerous person.

Consequential presidents do heavy lifting. That is what this president's actions and words were. A decade from now, Americans will recognize this moment when the center of gravity on gun violence shifted.

Crab is back; cash begins to flow

Partnerships between crabbers, the Coast Guard and fishery agencies are a pleasant contrast to enmity elsewhere

A 35-day delay in the start of crab season was a loud reminder of the continuing importance of this fishery for our region's economy and the well-being of local families.

Two decades ago, a lengthy crab closure was highly traumatic, putting many crab-industry families on the charity soup line.

Impacts this time were less visible, though still painful. Local crabbers were unable to capitalize on Christmas demand. Paychecks for boat owners and crews similarly were long delayed, suppressing enthusiasm for December spending. In some cases, this lack of cash continues, as processors don't immediately pay for deliveries — in effect borrowing from already cash-strapped fishermen.

It is a cause for real celebration to see crab boats coming and going in the river. Our story this week with accompanying amazing photographs by Joshua Bessex was a tribute to the U.S. Coast Guard's starring role in keeping the fleet safe.

A drop in marine toxin levels that permitted crab season to proceed also provided a green light for the start of razor clam-

ming this week on the Long Beach (Washington) Peninsula. A three-month delay subtracted as much as \$3 million in consumer spending from Pacific County retailers, restaurants, gasoline stations and others. In turn, this meant business owners and employees didn't have as much money to shop with at Christmastime at regional retail magnets like Warrenton, Astoria and Seaside.

Understanding, tracking and potentially mitigating the downsides of algal blooms will require a greater state investment in marine biology. Adaptive management that allows crabbers, clam diggers and other resource users to maximize harvests at times when toxins are low will be key to our economic well-being this century.

Coastal partnerships and collaborations between crabbers, the Coast Guard, fishery agencies and others are a pleasant contrast to the enmity in the news in southeast Oregon. All is not always perfect in citizen-government relations here, but by working together we'll have a better chance of dealing with a changing environment and other 21st century challenges.

Defy US, pay no price

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON — If you're going to engage in a foreign policy capitulation, might as well do it when everyone is getting tanked and otherwise occupied. Say, New Year's Eve.

Here's the story. In October, Iran test-fires a nuclear-capable ballistic missile in brazen violation of Security Council resolutions prohibiting such launches. President Barack Obama does nothing. One month later, Iran does it again. The administration makes a few gestures at the U.N. Then nothing. Then finally, on Dec. 30, the White House announces a few sanctions.

They are weak, aimed mostly at individuals and designed essentially for show. Amazingly, even that proves too much. By 10 p.m. that night, the administration caves. The White House sends out an email saying that sanctions are off — and the Iranian president orders the military to expedite the missile program.

Is there any red line left? First, the Syrian chemical weapons. Then the administration insistence that there would be no nuclear deal unless Iran accounted for its past nuclear activities. (It didn't.) And unless Iran permitted inspection of its Parchin nuclear testing facility. (It was allowed self-inspection and declared itself clean.) And now, illegal ballistic missiles.

The premise of the nuclear deal was that it would constrain Iranian actions. It's had precisely the opposite effect. It has deterred us from offering even the mildest pushback to any Iranian violations lest Iran walk away and leave Obama legacy-less.

Just two weeks ago, Iran's Revolutionary Guards conducted live-fire exercises near the Strait of Hormuz. It gave nearby U.S. vessels exactly 23 seconds of warning. One rocket was launched 1,500 yards from the USS Harry S. Truman.

Obama's response?

None. The Gulf Arabs — rich, weak and, since FDR, dependent on America for security — are bewildered. They're still reeling from the nuclear deal, which Obama declared would be unaffected by Iranian misbehavior elsewhere. The result was to assure Tehran that it would pay no price for its aggression in Syria and Yemen, subversion in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, and support for terrorism.



Charles Krauthammer

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Obama seems not to understand that disconnecting the nuclear issue gave the mullahs license to hunt in the region. For the Saudis, however, it's not just blundering but betrayal. From the very beginning, they've seen Obama tilting toward Tehran as he fancies himself Nixon in China, turning Iran into a strategic partner in managing the Middle East.

This is even scarier because it is delusional. If anything, Obama's openhanded appeasement has encouraged Iran's regional adventurism and intense anti-Americanism.

The Saudis, sensing abandonment, are near panic. Hence the reckless execution of the firebrand Shiite insurrectionist, Sheikh Nimr Baqr al-

Nimr, that has brought the region to a boil. Iranians torched the Saudi Embassy. The Saudis led other Sunni states in breaking relations with Tehran.

The Saudis feel surrounded, and it's not paranoia. To their north, Iran dominates a Shiite crescent stretching from Iraq, Syria and Lebanon to the Mediterranean. To the Saudi south, Iran has been arming Yemen's Houthi rebels since at least 2009.

The danger is rising. For years, Iran has been supporting anti-regime agitation among Saudi Arabia's minority Shiites. The Persian Gulf is Iran's ultimate prize. The fall of the House of Saud would make Iran the undisputed regional hegemon and an emerging global power.

For the United States, that would be the greatest geopolitical setback since China fell to communism in 1949. Yet Obama seems oblivious. Worse, he appears inert in the face of the three great challenges to the post-Cold War American order. Iran is only the most glaring. China is challenging the status quo in the South China Sea, just last week landing its first aircraft on an artificial island hundreds of miles beyond the Chinese coast. We deny China's claim and declare these to be international waters, yet last month we meekly apologized when a B-52 overflew one of the islands. We said it was inadvertent.

The world sees and takes note. As it does our response to the other great U.S. adversary — Russia. What's happened to Obama's vaunted "isolation" of Russia for its annexation of Crimea and assault on the post-Cold War European settlement? Gone. Evaporated. John Kerry plays lapdog to Sergei Lavrov. Obama meets openly with Vladimir Putin in Turkey, then in Paris. And is now practically begging him to join our side in Syria.

There is no price for defying Pax Americana — not even trivial sanctions on Iranian missile-enablers. Our enemies know it. Our allies see it — and sense they're on their own, and may not survive.

The self-reliant generation

By DAVID BROOKS

New York Times News Service

Last month Fox News released a poll showing Hillary Clinton leading Bernie Sanders in Iowa by 14 points. But the amazing part of the poll was the generation gap. Among likely caucusgoers under 45, Sanders was crushing Clinton 56 to 34 percent. Among the older voters, Clinton was leading 59 to 24.

When you look at numbers like that you get the impression that this millennial generation, having endured the financial crash and stagnant wages, is ready to lead a big leftward push.

Indeed, a Harvard Institute of Politics poll of Americans 18 to 29 found that 56 percent want a Democrat to win the White House while only 36 percent favor a Republican. The leftward shift is striking even within the GOP. According to the Pew Research Center, young Republicans are much more moderate than older Republicans. Among millennials who lean Republican, only 31 percent have consistently conservative views. About 51 percent have a mixture of liberal and conservative views.

But philosophically millennials are harder to pin down. According to the Harvard Public Opinion Project, 37 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds identify as liberal and 35 percent identify as conservative.

If you look at how millennials actually live, you certainly don't see a progressive counterculture. In fact, you see what you'd expect from a generation that lived through a financial crisis, family instability and political dysfunction. You see an abstract celebration of creative transformation but a concrete hunger for order, security and stability.

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, millennials change jobs less frequently than people in other generations. And a study of 25,000

millennials in 22 countries by Jennifer J. Deal and Alec Levenson found that at least 40 percent expect to stay with their current employer for at least nine years. Forty-four percent said they would be happy to spend the rest of their career at their current organization.

Millennials travel and move less than earlier generations. They are less likely to have cars, and their relative lack of driving time is not compensated for by the use of other modes of transportation.

Another glaring feature of millennial culture is they have been forced to be self-reliant and to take a loosely networked individualism as the normal order of the universe. Millennials have extremely low social trust. According to Pew Research, just 19 percent say most people can be trusted, compared with 40 percent of boomers.

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This leads to detachment from large entities. Just 32 percent of millennials say America is the greatest country on Earth, compared with 50 percent of boomers. Millennials are very suspicious of organized religion. Thirty-five percent say they are unaffiliated with any religious group, compared with 23 percent of Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980).

Just 26 percent of millennials are married, compared with 48 percent of boomers at that age. Only 42 percent



David Brooks

plan to have kids. They are also having less sex. A study in the Archives of Sexual Behavior projected that millennials would have eight sexual partners by middle age while boomers had 10 or 11. According to a survey from the online dating service Match, 49 percent of people in their 20s have not had sex in the past year.

The general impression one gets is of a generation that is stressed, energetic, creative, skeptical and in the middle of redefining, and thinning out, the nature of affiliation. Its members have been thrust into a harsher world where it is necessary to be guarded, and sensitive to risk. They want systemic change but there is no compelling form of collective action available. Their only alternative, which is their genius, is to try to fix their lives themselves, through technology and new forms of social interaction, rather than mass movements.

Their attitudes toward Social Security perfectly reflect this stance. Most millennials expect to see no Social Security benefits by the time they retire. But they oppose reforms to take money away from older workers to distribute it downward. They just figure they'll take care of retirement individually, often using algorithm-based investment vehicles like Wealthfront.

Politically, this means that millennials may lean Democratic, but unless Barack Obama (or Bernie Sanders) is on the ticket, they don't strongly attach to the party and it is not clear that they will vote. They didn't in the 2014 midterm elections. It could be they are more interested in improving their lives by having richer experiences, and not through the sort of income transfers that come out of Washington.

My own guess is that millennials will be a muted political force, at least in 2016. But there will be some giant cultural explosion down the road. You just can't be as detached from solid supporting structures as millennials now are and lead a happy middle-aged life. Something is going to change.

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